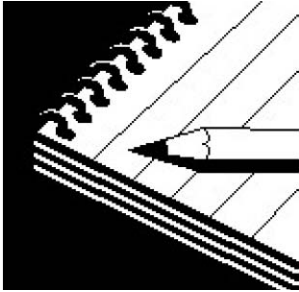




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Correspondence between a Roman Catholic priest and the Editor



Letter from Patrick McCafferty.

Dear Mr. Foster,

You state: "The benefits of Christ's work become the sinners upon believing the Gospel. In that moment, he is viewed by God as perfectly righteous. Therefore, he is not required to keep the law in order to be saved. It has been kept for him by Christ and there remains nothing more to be done". To support this view you make reference to the dying thief.

"There remains nothing more to be done". If your understanding of salvation is correct, then most of the teachings of Our Lord and exhortations of the New Testament are superfluous to the believer. For example, II Peter 3:14: "So then, my friends, while you are waiting, do your best to live lives without spot or stain so that He will find you at peace. Think of our Lord's patience as your opportunity to be saved". If "there remains nothing more to be done", Peter's advice to Christians is unnecessary.

I would point you to David's prayer in Ps 19:13: "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sin; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgressions". At best, your doctrine denies the free will of the human person in co-operating with and responding to God. This, of course, is the inevitable follow through of Calvin's reasoning. At worst, your doctrine teaches that the "saved" (in your understanding of the term) can do as they please and it will have no bearing on his/her eternal salvation. Again, read Ezekiel 18:24.

Your position on our eternal salvation is unscriptural. There certainly remains very important and vital work to be done. God is Faithful. It is impossible that God will not keep His Covenant with us in the essential matter of our salvation. We, however, must keep and continue to keep, our side of the agreement. As Paul tells the Church at Philippi we must "work out your salvation in fear and trembling" The whole Law that we must faithfully keep now is summed up by the Lord as love of God and love of neighbour. The Author of that Law has synopsisized it for us.

Earlier I referred to its excessive and scrupulous demands in former times. Let me give you an example: "You will not mate your cattle with those of another kind; you will not sow two kinds of grain in your field; you will not wear a garment made from two kinds of fabric"; (Lev19:19) "You will not round your hair off at the edges or trim the edges of your beard". (Lev19:27). The New Law is concise: "you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself". On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the prophets also" (Mt22:35-40).

The keeping of this Law is what remains to be done, on a daily basis, for the true believer, the faithful Christian. The keeping of this Law is the "working out" of our salvation accomplished by Christ. This Law indeed is our delight, our love and our joy. "How pleasant Your promise is to my palate, sweeter than honey in my mouth!" (Ps 119:103). "I open wide my



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mouth, panting eagerly for your commandments" (Ps 119:131). The Law is Jesus Christ living and loving in us by the grace of His Holy Spirit. The daily and constant keeping of this Law is the light referred to by the Lord Jesus in Mt 5:14-16: "No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way, your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they will give the praise to your Father in Heaven". Love is the shining light of our Faith in Jesus Christ. Love that is real and active (I Jn 3:18) and manifest in works of kindness and compassion. These are the good deeds that will go with us into the very Presence of God. (Rev 13:14). Without these works of love, faith is dead as the New Testament clearly teaches in James' Letter Ch 2:14-26. "Do you not see that by works a man is justified and not by faith only?" This portion of James' Epistle is the end of the teaching that "there remains nothing more to be done".

Our perseverance and remaining faithful is what remains to be done. As Paul writes to Timothy: "If we persevere, then we shall reign with him. If we disown Him, then He will disown us. If we are faithless, He is faithful still, for He cannot disown His own self". (II Tim 2:12-13). Jesus says, "if you love Me, keep My commandments (John 14:15) and "if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments". (Mt 19:16-19). "This is what the Love of God is: keeping His commandments" (I Jn 5:3). Saving Faith is the ongoing living out, our constant "coming forth" in the New Life of Jesus Christ. Living daily in love is the vital sign of whether we are truly His disciples. On the Last Day, all those who belong to Christ will be clearly seen. There will be sheep whom some expected to be goats and there will be goats who thought they were going to be sheep. At the end of the Day we will all be judged on love – you and I and everyone else.

Paul says: "For we shall ALL stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ" (Rms 14:10); and "So then EVERY ONE OF US shall give account of himself to God". (Rms 14:12). See also Rms 2:5-9. The apostle Paul clearly disagrees with your apprehension of eternal salvation, for he states: "For we must ALL appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ; that EVERY-ONE may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad". (II Cor 5:10). He also cautions: "Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou CONTINUE in His goodness: OTHERWISE THOU ALSO SHALT BE CUT OFF" (Rms 11:22).

Paul also says in relation to himself: "But I keep under my body and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor 9:27). One can only conclude from the Scriptures that our salvation for eternity is conditional and dependent upon our faithfully following Jesus Christ, never drawing back, never disowning Him. See Matt 10:32-33. Our salvation for eternity depends on our becoming more and more like a little child (Mt 18:3). "For unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven". When the Lord Jesus spoke about the woman who anointed His feet with ointment and her tears, He said: "I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love". (Lk 7:47). The same can be said of the penitent thief to whom you have referred. The sign of forgiveness and newness of life is "great love". The dying thief made a supreme act of love, faith and trust in the Lord Jesus and, indeed, went to be with Him in Paradise. We too, if we have been truly reconciled and forgiven, will show "much love" in our daily lives. We will show that we love Christ by keeping His commandments – loving



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God and your neighbour as yourself.

In relation to your final point: " ... you cannot say you will be in Heaven for you teach that you may yet fall away ... " You and I will be in Heaven if we remain faithful to Jesus Christ. We must run the race to the finish. We must live our lives according to Mt 5: 3-10. We must strive to be poor in spirit "for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs". We must be gentle "for they shall inherit the earth". We must be merciful in order to receive mercy. We must strive to be pure in heart, so as to see God. We must be peacemakers so as to be known as God's children. I am not trusting in myself or my works, for they are not my works. It is all God's Work; but I must co-operate with Him and allow Him to work in and through me. Any goodness that is in any faithful Christian is all the produce of God working in us.

To God Alone be the glory! We boast about Him not ourselves. The fact that we, who are infinitely less than nothing, have been thus chosen and called, all the more magnifies God's peerless greatness and eternal love. What remains to be done is found in Hebrews 12: 1-4. Referring to all the great heroes of Faith in Chapter 11, the Holy Spirit says: " Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus ..."

We must never for a moment take our eyes off Jesus. As the Psalmist says: "my eyes are always on the Lord till He show us His mercy". We must beware of sin. The Saviour, in the prayer that He gave us as the exemplar of all prayer, taught us to say constantly to His Father and our Father: "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" Mt6: 12. Finally, I repeat what I have said previously in reference to the Good Samaritan. It is true that this parable is a beautiful illustration of all the Lord has done for us. Remember, however, that He told them his parable to illustrate how we are supposed to treat one another. "Who is my neighbour?" The Lord Jesus Christ, Who loved us and gave Himself up for us, commands us: "go and do the same yourselves" Lk10: 37. For "this has taught us love, that He gave up His Life for us, and we too ought to give up our lives for one another" (I Jn3: 16).

Yours sincerely,

Patrick McCafferty.

Reply from Ivan Foster.

Dear Mr. McCafferty,

The teachings of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament may be summarised as follows:

Instructions to sinners as to the way by which they may be saved :— i.e., by grace alone through faith alone in the Holy Scriptures alone. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the



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only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16-18). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). I might add Acts 10:43, Romans 1:16 and 4:6 as a very small example of the very many such texts found in God's Word.

Commands given to those who are saved in which is set forth the pattern of the life of victory and blessing which may be enjoyed by the believer. For the one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e. believes on His finished work of atonement at the cross and His on-going work of intercession on behalf of His elect before His Father's throne in heaven) there is no more work for them to do in order to safeguard or secure their salvation. That has all been accomplished.

But the person who is truly converted is exhorted by Christ to walk in the light of God's Word, not that they may save themselves, but that they may walk in the enjoyment of the salvation Christ has procured for them and bring honour and glory to God through the manifestation of His power to save. Thus we are told by Peter: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Again, James shows that works of holiness are a manifesting of the new life begun within us through faith. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). What this verse teaches is that the faith that saves the sinner also produces holiness of life. The leper cleansed by Christ in Mark 1:40-45 illustrated this order of events. He was healed and then commanded to offer the appropriate sacrifices for a testimony of what was already his, not in order to obtain healing from leprosy.

There are very many, the Saviour tells us in Matthew 7:21-23, who profess the name of Christ, some of whom even go under the name of being servants of God, who were never truly converted. The means of distinguishing between the true and the false is seen in who keeps God's Word and who does not. Holiness then in the believer is not only a testimony to the world of the change God has made in the true Christian but it is also a comfort and an assurance to those walking in obedience that they are indeed the possessors of eternal life, 2 Peter 1:10-11; 1 John 3:24.

My position, you say, on eternal salvation is unscriptural. Yet you have not addressed the verses I gave you in support of this particular truth. I will quote just one of them again. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). The Saviour here gives a triple affirmation of the eternal, imperishable and impregnable salvation which is the present possession of the Christian the moment he comes to Christ in faith. I most certainly deny the doctrine of the freedom of the will of depraved and fallen man. Man is a free agent, doing what he so desires but he cannot freely choose to do what is right and holy for his will is depraved. What he chooses to do, he does so freely, but what he chooses to do is always evil. Mankind, as a result of Adam's transgression, is a slave to sin. Regeneration involves, among other things, a renewal of the will whereby the dead sinner is enabled by God to answer the call in the gospel to repentance and faith and to walk in the light of God's Word. You mention



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Philippians 2:12. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). That working out is the direct result of the working of God within the regenerated sinner as the next verse states. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). It is God, not the exercising of some inherent ability of our own, that enables obedience. This working out of our salvation is not a working in order to obtain salvation but a working out or manifesting that we possess salvation. A very different matter indeed!

What is absent from any of your responses is a reference to the workings of the old nature or "the flesh," "the old man" within the Christian. Regeneration brings about the creation of a new nature within the one converted to Christ: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). The convert has now two natures — the old and the new. Between these two natures there is constant warfare. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Paul goes on to state in that passage: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24-25). What he is here saying is that truth pictured for us in the scene which immediately follows Lazarus arising from the dead. He came forth in the clothes of the grave but was immediately aided in his removing them and donning new clothes. This he did, not in order to be made alive, but as a result of him being made alive! Thus the truly converted manifest their possession of new life by donning the garments of holiness. Daily they put off the old and put on the new. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). This is sanctification, a work of God within the believer which follows His act of regeneration. The Saviour's exhortations are all about Christians persevering, by God's enabling grace, in the way of holiness, not that we might be saved, but rather, as an evidence to ourselves and to all around that we are saved.

Contrary to that which you claim, if we persevere we will indeed reign with Him, not as a result of our persevering, but as a result of His saving grace in us which enabled us to persevere. Perseverance is a result of God's saving grace not a means to our salvation. The apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree rather than it being an apple tree because it bears apples. Its nature determined the fruit rather than the fruit determining its nature. The fruit displays the nature of the tree. The true Christian perseveres to heaven as a result of the work wrought in him by God at his regeneration — it is his nature to persevere — rather than (as you would have us all believe) he is in heaven because he added his own work, that of persevering, to that which God did within him. The Christian does not get to heaven because he voluntarily cooperated with God to bring it about, but rather he gets to heaven because God sought him out, lifted him, cleansed him, carried him and presented him " faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 1:24). His persevering is part of the saving work of grace wrought within his soul at the moment of his regeneration.

The true child of God mourns over his not being able to live as he wishes for he wishes to



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live in holiness, not as you imply, in sinful indulgences. True Calvinism does not teach Antinomianism, but rather the perseverance of the true saint in holiness throughout his earthly pilgrimage. The exhortations to the Christian in the Bible pertain, not to his obtaining of salvation but to his enjoyment of it during life's pilgrimage. The general rules of health and hygiene are not written for babies to ensure that babies obey them and thus safeguard a safe birth for themselves! Rather, they are rules by which the life begun may continue in its fulness.

The verses to which you refer do not teach that the true believer may lose his salvation and be lost eternally as you (and Pelagius and Arminius) claim. Rather, they contain warnings of the danger of the believer falling from his steadfastness through the deceptions of his old nature, the evil influences of the wicked world around us and our enemy the devil. To avoid falling, the Saviour and His apostles urge us to "grow in grace." Going on with God in obedience is the means to enjoying the sweetest assurance that we are truly saved. The true child of God is filled with horror at the prospect of being a false professor and so he doubtless will pray many times as did David in Psalm 51:11: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." I have mentioned Peter before as an example of this truth though I notice you did not refer to him and his falling away and most wickedly denying the Saviour. He did not cease to be a Christian but for a season he lost the enjoyment of the fellowship of Christ. I doubt if a true believer could act more treacherously toward Christ than did Peter, yet he never ceased to be a true believer. Let us remember that Paul indicated that some in the Corinthian church had so offended God by their sins that He had smitten them with sickness and others had actually died as a result of their disobedience. What is to be noticed is that Paul uses the Christian term for death, sleeping, when referring to their departure. I believe that he indicated that Christ had removed to heaven those whose actions were an offence to Him and a hindrance to His work in Corinth. Their death was a chastening from the Lord that they might not be condemned with the world (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). That being so, where is your doctrine of falling away and being lost?

God's grace is free grace. He does not impose conditions. Grace is undeserved and is not earned as you would teach. The Covenant of Works, into which God entered with Adam and his posterity, was one in which life was promised to Adam on his obedience. He failed, and consequently the penalty of the broken law fell upon Adam and all his offspring. The terms of the Covenant of Grace, by which God purposed to save a people out of sin, are simply that God promises eternal life to His elect on the grounds of Christ's meritorious obedience. To this covenant Christ refers in the following verses. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now



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I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:4-12). Christ fulfilled the Father's will and triumphantly cried on the cross, "It is finished." Having done so, He has sent forth His Spirit to call His elect out of their state of sin and misery by quickening them to life and enabling them to embrace by faith the benefits of the New Covenant. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-7).

Christ and Christ alone is the author of true salvation. As God determined to save Noah and revealed to him the means of salvation and enabled him to build the ark, even so God has determined to save an elect people. To them is revealed the way of salvation and to them is granted enabling grace to lay hold upon eternal life and to walk in holiness through this world to the heaven that was prepared for them before the worlds began.

In your closing paragraphs, you claim no honour for yourself but give to God alone the glory. And yet your whole thesis is based upon your being saved through YOU availing of Christ. You will be lost if YOU fail to do your part. You are thus claiming a part in your salvation. Surely you must see that. If salvation is truly of Christ and you are resting in His finished work, then the outcome is assured and you cannot be lost any more than could the sheep, resting on the shepherd's shoulders, fail to be brought all the way home, where the Shepherd cries, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (Luke 15:6). He found and he brought home. Even so it is with the true believer.

Yours sincerely,

Ivan Foster.