

The Sum of Saving Knowledge

With the Practical Use Thereof

by David Dickson and James Durham¹

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”
(John 6:37 ESV)

A brief Sum of Christian Doctrine as Contained in Holy Scripture, and set forth in the Confession of Faith and the Catechisms as Agreed upon by the Divines at Westminster, and received by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

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Rendered into Contemporary American English

by Tom Sullivan, Editor

¹ The authors were seventeenth century Scottish ministers held in high repute by many. More information may be found in Appendix 2.

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Important Note to the Reader

In seventeenth century Scotland when this *Sum* was written, knowledge of the Holy Bible and of particular then-current theological concepts was general among the population, even among non-Christians; the authors of this *Sum* thus wrote accordingly.

Some modern American readers may therefore find some parts and concepts of this *Sum* confusing or difficult to understand. To rectify this, the editor has included the sections *Prerequisite Knowledge* and *More Helpful Background Information*, as well as appendixes 4 and 5, which have more detailed information.

The reader who finds the material in these introductory and chapters and appendixes familiar will lose little time skimming over them, while the reader previously unfamiliar with the material will find them greatly helpful to his or her profitable and enjoyable reading of this modern translation of the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*.

Preliminary Material

Editor's Introduction

In the title and elsewhere, *sum* combines the meanings of *summary* and *essentials*. Thus, the *Sum of Saving Knowledge* will reveal as briefly as reasonably possible what is essential to know about how to be saved from spending eternity in Hell. Now, it might seem longer than strictly necessary, but that is because this *Sum* also explains *why* certain things are true. The *why* is essential for us to remember, internalize, and embrace the *what*, and most importantly, to motivate us to do the hard work of living for Christ. Both this *Sum* and the editor's auxiliary text are intended to be useful to all people, whatever their present relationship to Jesus Christ may be, if any.

In any field of knowledge, humans tend to forget things over time, and we need to refresh our memories. The same is true in the Christian life. Especially in the Law of Moses and in the Epistles, the word *remind* or *reminder* appears some one and a half dozen times in the Holy Bible, depending on the translation. **“Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have”** (2 Peter 1:12 ESV). The problem is made more acute by our normal sinful tendency to forget those teachings that prick our consciences. It is thus as a reminder of many basic truths that this *Sum* will be useful to the believer in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This *Sum* is also a good opportunity for those unfamiliar with Jesus Christ and His way of salvation to quickly learn the basics of how to get off the path to Hell and onto the way to eternal life in Heaven with Christ. Some may relearn what they had long forgotten from Sunday school as children, while others may never have had knowledge of the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Both will find all they need to know in order to gain eternal life in Heaven with God.

However, this *Sum* does not stop there, but also tells how one can *know* that he has eternal life. In addition to the text of the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*, there are helpful sections before and after the *Sum*. **Footnotes** explain terms and concepts that may be unfamiliar to some, whereas **endnotes** are used to give credit where due.

Navigation sections like the one just below, in Arial Font are independent of the *Sum's* original titles and help the reader see where he is relative to other major sections.

Navigation:

Past: Editor's Introduction gave reasons why all people, wherever they are spiritually, may expect to benefit from this *Sum*.

Present: Prerequisite Knowledge and More Helpful Background Information enable all readers to be “on the same page” as this *Sum* and profit from it, provided they are willing to at least suspend prior false beliefs for the sake of understanding this book.

Future: The Sum of Saving Knowledge, and then how to put that knowledge to good use.

Prerequisite Knowledge

Due to great changes between seventeenth century Scotland and twenty-first century America, it is necessary to put forth some necessary assertions, lest some modern readers reject, perhaps unconsciously, the vital truths expressed in this book or even fail to comprehend what they are reading.⁴ The Lord Jesus castigated those who obscured knowledge that is essential to understanding how to enter into eternal life. **“Woe to you lawyers!⁵ For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering”** (Luke 11:52 ESV). Likewise, there are many of Satan’s slaves today who labor vigorously to so confuse, obscure, and distort God’s truths, that those who seek God and His salvation in Jesus Christ are kept from the truth and perish eternally in Hell. In the spirit of this *Sum*, the following items are brief and without proof except for a few Scripture⁶ references. In many cases, an appendix is cited which gives further information. Further study, especially of the Holy Bible, is much encouraged.

You already know, if only hidden deep in your heart, that Almighty God exists and that He will call you to account for your sins,⁷ **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools”** (Romans 1:18–22 ESV).

In this *Sum*, the reader will notice that the Bible is assumed to be true and authoritative. This assumption is correct because the Holy Bible is the Word of God, Who created each of us and the universe in which we live in six days, and God cannot lie or be mistaken. If we consider human frailty and limitations next to the power, majesty, skill, and wisdom of a God Who can create this entire universe in six twenty-four-hour days, with all its intricacies of physics, mathematics, life, and humanity, it is clear that humans are woefully unqualified to evaluate or pass judgment on God or His Word, the Holy Bible. Therefore, the only rational response is to trust God and His Word. Any teaching, religion, philosophy, or ideology that contradicts the Holy Bible is thus necessarily false and must be rejected lest such take away the key of knowledge. More information on this topic is in Appendix 4.

4 When this book was first written, knowledge of the Holy Bible was general and substantially complete among all the population, even among those who lived lives contrary to its teachings or intentionally rejected Christ. In addition, succeeding centuries saw the introduction of immensely destructive false philosophies and attacks on the Holy Bible.

5 These lawyers were supposed experts in the Law of Moses.

6 The terms *Bible*, *Holy Bible*, *Scripture*, *the Scriptures*, *the Word*, *the Law*, *the Law of God*, and *the Word of God* are basically synonymous, but have slightly different connotations.

7 Sin is any violation of God’s Law, even if the sinful act is against a human, and whether or not it violates civil law.

Any supposedly “Christian” sect that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity or denies one or more of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit is false. Such teachings take away the key of knowledge. **“Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also”** (1 John 2:23 NKJV).

All religions do *not* lead to God, but to Hell. There is one exception: biblical Christianity that trusts in Jesus Christ alone.

A person lives only one life on earth. Upon death, the soul goes either to Hell or Heaven (see Appendix 4 for more information).

The laws of nature are fixed and unchanging because God operates the universe in detail in a manner consistent with His perfect wisdom and faithfulness. Miracles are just when God does something different for some good reason. Just as God’s faithfulness ensures that natural laws do not ever change, so God’s faithfulness and perfect holiness ensures that His moral laws never change and are not subject to human opinion. Engineers who design aircraft or rockets must give careful attention to the laws of nature. Or else. The same inflexibility is even more true with regard to God’s moral laws (see Appendix 4 for further explanation).

It is not judging or judgmentalism for a person to speak or write against sins, immoral behavior, or wickedness, or to warn of God’s wrath against violations of God’s commands. Such a one is merely a messenger of the Judge before whom all of us will one day stand.

God’s Moral Law forbids lying and commands truthfulness and diligent effort to maintain truth and sift out falsehoods. This is in great contrast to false religions such as Islam and Communism, which require and encourage lying in order to advance their causes. Further, no lie is either “little” or “white.”

Due to the above three points, the inanity of, “That is your truth, but not my truth,” relativistic thinking is just as absurd in the realm of truth, knowledge, religion, and philosophy, as it is with respect to the law of gravity. The law of gravity cannot be broken, but many bones have been broken by gravity. Likewise, many humans will be eternally broken in Hell by God’s Law; in this life, people only think they are breaking God’s Law with impunity.

Hell is eternal, horrendous, extreme torture of soul and body; its horror is beyond the worst we can imagine. The horror of Hell should drive us straight to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Instead, many pretend Hell does not exist, or blaspheme God as vicious in sending people to Hell. Both false ideas stem from thinking that our sin does not matter much and from not recognizing the infinite value of God’s glory and holy Name—value that is hideously besmirched by even “little” sins. God’s perfect holiness, glory, and justice require Him to punish all sin. And humans naturally and sinfully think way too highly of themselves.

Hell and its horrendous tortures of body and soul are real and eternal, and most people go there. Is there some valid reason why you think you are not also on the road to Hell? How to be saved by

Christ is the topic of this *Sum*. Please take it personally and extremely seriously. God does not want to have to send you to Hell. But if you insist on rejecting the Lord Jesus that is where you are going!

To summarize the prerequisites:

Dear reader, do not let the false ways and false ideas of this world keep you from profitably reading this *Sum of Saving Knowledge* concerning the way to eternity in Heaven with God and the way away from the dreadful way leading to eternal hellfire. Make the determined choice to trust God and His Word, the Holy Bible, not human sinners, whatever their “expertise.” By trusting God’s Word, the Holy Bible, completely, you will have a firm grip on the key of knowledge.

More Helpful Background Information

As the title page tells us, the *Sum of Saving Knowledge* is a partial summary of the Westminster standards.⁸ These standards contain certain biblical truths that today are unknown or rejected by most people, even by some churches and denominations. Similar to the Prerequisite Knowledge above, the editor presents some of these matters so that the reader may better understand and benefit from this *Sum*, whether or not he agrees with the views presented in this introduction. Appendix 5 expands on the information in this subchapter.

Good Works

The almost universal view of the religions of the world is that one may earn the favor of God (or some other supposed deity) by doing “good works” (or some variant of that idea). The truth is that *only* saving faith in Jesus Christ *alone* saves from Hell. This may be summarized with simple equations:

False: Good Works → Salvation

False: Saving Faith + Good Works → Salvation

False: Saving Faith + Christ + Good Works → Salvation

False: Saving Faith + Christ + *Anything* Else → Salvation

True: Faith in *Jesus Christ alone* → Salvation in Christ + Genuinely Good Works for God’s Glory

Faith

In the English Holy Bible, *believe* is the verb form, and *faith* is the noun form of what is basically the same Greek word meaning to trust and be committed to; less importantly, it can mean persuasion, confidence, and assurance. The Old Testament is full of exhortations to *trust* God. *Faith* is rarely used to translate the Hebrew, but the *trust* is the same as *faith* in the New Testament where that word is widely used. Faith is *not just* persuasion, but an act of the will, a choice we make, and must make, to trust in God and Christ, even in the face of apparently absent or contrary evidence.

The Elect and the Sovereignty of God

Speaking of faith, it is a matter of trusting God and honoring His majesty that we leave many mysteries to Him. It is to be expected that since God created this entire vast universe with all its intricacies, He certainly perfectly understands a great many things that are beyond human understanding. The term, *Elect*⁹ appears frequently in this *Sum*. Scripture teaches that due to original sin, all people not only come into the world as rebels against God, but due to their sin nature, are completely *unable* of their own power to make the choice to repent and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. They do not even *want* to be saved. **“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day”** (John 6:44 ESV). Even before Creation

⁸ Translations of these works into contemporary American English may be found at <https://beforgiven.info/HostedLiterature.htm>

⁹ The editor capitalizes *Elect* as is common for names of people groups.

however, God chose or *elected* some people whom the Holy Spirit would regenerate so as to make them able and willing to savingly repent and believe in Christ. The rest of mankind, God simply passed over, leaving them to the just punishment for their sins in eternal hellfire. The Apostle Paul, speaking for God, sternly rebukes those who would complain that God is somehow not fair or somehow does not “respect” our own choices: **“But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?”** (Romans 9:20 ESV).

Please! Do not let this doctrine get between you and Christ! If you want to be saved and you obey the Gospel as offered, Christ will most certainly save you from your sins. Your desire is strong evidence that you are one of the Elect. **“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out”** (John 6:37 ESV).

Covenant Theology

In the Holy Bible, a *covenant* is similar to a contract, an agreement between two or more parties. However, unlike a business contract, a biblical covenant may be unilaterally given by God. This *Sum* primarily speaks of three covenants: the Covenant of Works, the Covenant of Redemption, and the Covenant of Grace. God gave the *Covenant of Works* to Adam and his descendants, promising eternal life upon condition of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience to God. But—even before Creation, knowing Adam would fall—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit agreed between themselves that the Son would suffer and die as the Last Adam on the Cross to redeem the Elect, and that the Father would accept Christ’s perfect obedience, suffering, and death on behalf of the Elect and thus give the Elect eternal life. This agreement was the *Covenant of Redemption*. The outworking of the Covenant of Redemption on Earth is the *Covenant of Grace* in which God promised salvation to the Elect upon condition of saving faith in Jesus Christ. Covenants with people throughout history, such as the covenant with Abraham, with the Israelites at Sinai, with David, and so on, while different in administration, were outworkings of the same Covenant of Grace.

Navigation:

Past: [Prerequisite Knowledge](#) and [More Helpful Background Information](#) enable all readers to be on the same page as this *Sum* and profit from it, provided they are willing to at least suspend prior false beliefs for the sake of understanding this book.

Present: [The Sum of Saving Knowledge](#), especially salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God.

Future: How to put that knowledge to good use

The Sum of Saving Knowledge

by David Dickson and James Durham

The sum of saving knowledge may be covered by these four topics:

1. The woeful condition that all people are in naturally due to breaking the Covenant of Works
2. The remedy provided for the Elect¹⁰ in Jesus Christ by the Covenant of Grace
3. The means appointed to make the Elect partakers of this Covenant
4. The blessings that are effectually conveyed to the Elect by these means

These four topics are explained below, each of them in a few statements.

Topic 1: Our Woeful Condition that All People Are in Naturally Due to Breaking the Covenant of Works

“It is your destruction, O Israel, That you are against Me” (Hosea 13:9 NASB).¹¹

The Almighty and Eternal God is three distinct persons¹²—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equally infinite in all perfections—in one and the same undivided Godhead. Before time,¹³ God most wisely decreed for His own glory whatever comes to pass in time. He most holily and unfailingly brings about all His decrees, but without being a partaker of the sin of any creature.¹⁴

In six days, God made all things out of nothing, all very good in their own kind.¹⁵ In particular, He made all the angels holy, and He made our first parents, Adam and Eve, the root of mankind, both upright and able to keep the Law¹⁶ written in their heart. This Law they were naturally bound to obey

10 God does not choose to save everyone, thus those whom God elects to save are often termed the *Elect*. The word is capitalized here and elsewhere as is normal for names of people groups.

11 In the NASB and NKJV, words that do not appear in the original language text are in italics. This does not mean that those words should not be there. Both Hebrew, and especially Greek, are *inflected* languages. The forms of the root words and the grammar convey information that is not in the bare root words; this additional information must be conveyed in additional English words for the translation to be complete.

12 The term, *persons*, does not imply humanity. Some writers prefer to use *substances* or other terms. Because we cannot really understand the Trinity, *persons* expresses our ignorance at least as much as our understanding.

13 We now know that time, in any one place, is subject to change by gravity and speed. This shows that the time we experience is a part of this created universe, not part of the eternity that God “inhabits.” Even ancient writers understood the difference without the help of Relativity. Because we are made in God’s image, it may be that God knows some analog in His eternity to our created time, but unlike us, God’s eternity does not in any way control Him; quite the reverse.

14 Today, we mostly use *creature* as a synonym for *animal*, but in this *Sum*, the word refers to anything that God created, that is, anything in this universe.

15 In spite of the widely accepted misinterpretations of observable phenomena by mainstream scientists, we must make the choice to trust that God is perfectly honest and capable of telling a straight story in a simple narrative. If we think we cannot trust God in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2, how can we know that we can trust Him in the beloved John 3:16 promises? For further information, the reader may consult the quite accessible [Simple Proof of 144 Hour Creation](https://beforgiven.info/ContemporaryWorks.htm#Bookmark%20),

<https://beforgiven.info/ContemporaryWorks.htm#Bookmark%20> accessed June 10, 2025, and <https://answersingenesis.org>.

16 Throughout this *Sum*, *Law* or *Moral Law* (capitalized) refers to all of the moral law commanded by God in the Holy Bible, summarized in the Ten Commandments, and by **“And he answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself’”** (Luke 10:27 ESV). However, in the New Testament, especially Paul’s Epistles, “the Law” often refers to the ceremonial and

under pain of death, but God was not bound to reward their service. Yet God bound Himself when He entered into a Covenant or contract with them and their posterity to give them eternal life upon condition of perfect personal obedience, but threatening death¹⁷ if they should fail. This is the Covenant of Works.

Both angels and humans were subject to the change of their own free will as experience proved. (God has reserved to Himself the incommunicable¹⁸ property of being naturally unchangeable.) Many angels, of their own accord, fell by sin from their first state and became demons. Satan, one of those demons, spoke in a serpent and enticed our first parents into breaking the Covenant of Works by eating the forbidden fruit. By this sin, our first parents and their descendants (being in their loins, so to speak) as branches of the root, and thus included in the same Covenant with them, became not only liable to eternal death, but also lost all ability to please God.¹⁹ Indeed, they become, by nature, enemies to God and to all spiritual good, and inclined to only evil continually. This is our original sin, the bitter root of all our actual transgressions, in thought, word, and deed.

Topic 2: The Remedy Provided in Jesus Christ for the Elect by the Covenant of Grace

“It is your destruction, O Israel, That you are against Me, against your help” (Hosea 13:9 NASB).

Mankind, having brought himself into this woeful condition, is neither able to help himself, nor is he willing to be helped by God out of it. But rather, mankind is inclined to lie inert and insensible of his woeful condition until he perishes. Yet God, for the glory of His rich grace, has revealed in His Word a way to save sinners, to wit, salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God. This way of salvation is by virtue of, and in accordance with, the Covenant of Redemption that was made and agreed upon between God the Father and God the Son in the counsel of the Trinity before the world began.

The sum of the Covenant of Redemption is this: God, having freely chosen for life²⁰ a certain number of lost mankind for the glory of His rich grace, gave them, before the World began, to God the Son, the appointed Redeemer. The Covenant of Redemption stipulated that God the Son would:

Levitical ordinances that were fulfilled and abrogated by the Lord Jesus. Prior to Christ’s fulfillment, these laws were part of the moral law.

17 It is clear from the context of Scripture as a whole that *life* is used to indicate life on earth in some places, but eternal life in Heaven with God in other places. Likewise *death* may refer to either death from earth into an eternal state (Heaven or Hell) or eternal death in Hell. In this paragraph, *death* refers both to death from earth and death into eternal Hell. Had Adam obeyed perfectly, he would have not experienced either earthly death or eternal death. Scripture seems silent as to whether Adam ever savingly repented. *Life* may also refer to being born again from above, followed by spiritual awakening on earth and eternal life in Heaven. Context must determine which of all these meanings applies.

18 An incommunicable property or attribute is one that is intrinsically unique to God, whereas a communicable property is one that God has perfectly in Himself, but can create into his some of His creatures, for example, the ability to love in mankind (but absent in bacteria).

19 Both of our first parents did sin and brought death and a depraved nature upon themselves. But Scripture is clear that original sin and its horrible consequences also passed from Adam to his sons and daughters, and likewise, original sin is passed down from father to sons and daughters in each generation (but not from mothers). The propagation of original sin is not by physical or biological means, but spiritual. Hence, there is no hope of excising original sin by, for example, manipulation of DNA.

20 In this context, *life* refers to eternal life, as opposed to eternal death in Hell.

- Humble Himself so far as to assume a human nature, including a soul and a body, into personal union with His Divine nature
- Submit Himself to the Law as the substitute and security for the Elect
- Satisfy justice for the Elect by giving obedience in their name, even to suffering the cursed death of the Cross
- Ransom and redeem the Elect all from sin and death
- Purchase for the Elect righteousness and eternal life, with all saving graces that lead toward them
- Apply the purchase to every one of the Elect by means of His own appointment, in due time,

The Son of God (who is Jesus Christ our Lord) accepted the stipulations of the Covenant of Redemption before the world began, and in the fullness of time:

- Came into the world
- Was born of the virgin Mary
- Subjected Himself to the Law
- Completely paid the ransom on the Cross

By virtue of the aforesaid agreement made before the world began, in all ages since the fall of Adam, Christ is still engaged in the work of actually applying the purchased benefits to the Elect. He does this by keeping and providing a covenant of free grace and reconciliation with them through faith in Himself. By this covenant, He makes over to every believer a right and possession in Himself and to all His blessings.

In order to accomplish the Covenant of Redemption and to make the Elect partakers of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, Christ Jesus²¹ was invested with the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. He was made a prophet in order to reveal all saving knowledge to His people and to persuade them to believe and obey that knowledge. He was made a priest in order to offer up Himself as a sacrifice for all the Elect, once for all time, and to intercede continually with the Father for making their persons and services acceptable to Him. Christ was made a king in order to subdue the Elect to Himself, to feed and rule them by His own appointed ordinances, and to defend them from their enemies.

²¹ *Jesus* is the personal name of Our Lord, and *Christ* refers to His office as Son of God, prophet, priest, king, savior, and so on. Both word orderings are found in Scripture; the matter is similar to either “President George Washington” or “George Washington, the President.”

Topic 3: The External Means Appointed to Make the Elect Partakers of This Covenant and to Make All the Rest That Are Called to be Inexcusable

“For many are called” (Matthew 22:14 ESV).

The external²² means and ordinances for making people partakers of the Covenant of Grace are so wisely dispensed that the Elect shall be unfailingly converted and saved by them. But the reprobate,²³ not being among the Elect, are justly allowed to continue in unbelief and thus perish in Hell. The means God uses to make people partakers of the Covenant of Grace are especially these four:

1. The Word of God
2. The Sacraments
3. Church Government
4. Prayer

1. In the *Word of God* preached by sent messengers,²⁴ the Lord makes the offer of grace to all sinners upon condition of faith in Jesus Christ. Whoever confesses his sin, accepts Christ as offered, and submits himself to Christ’s ordinances, both he and his children²⁵ will be received into the honor and privileges of the Covenant of Grace.
2. By the *Sacraments* God seals the Covenant, confirming the Covenant on the aforesaid conditions.
3. By *Church Government*²⁶ God will hedge him in and help him forward in keeping the Covenant.
4. And by *Prayer*, God will have his own glorious grace that He promised in the Covenant daily drawn forth, acknowledged, and employed. All these means are followed either really, or in

22 *External means* refers to means other than the Holy Spirit’s internal work in the believer’s heart.

23 As not all people are Elect, those whom God passes over without saving them are generally termed *reprobate*.

24 Among some Puritans, and continuing to this day, there have been two views of the following verse: “**Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God**” (2 Corinthians 5:20 ESV). In this first view, since Paul is the speaker, proclamation of the Gospel is seen as primarily the responsibility of ordained ministers. The other view, without denigrating the authority and usefulness of ordained elders, views participation in the propagation of the Gospel as also a primary responsibility of all believers. The former view may have been the opinion of Dickson and Durham. At the same time, while the basic Gospel is simple and easy to understand, there is enormous benefit in a deep and thorough understanding of the Holy Bible. Thus, as Reformer John Calvin pointed out in his sermon on Deuteronomy 5:22, it is not enough for believers to read the Bible on their own, though daily personal Bible reading is a necessary and highly profitable holy duty. The Holy Bible is a thick, complex, and unfathomably rich volume. When ministers are intelligent, well trained, and godly, they can and must explain the Bible in whole and in its various parts to their congregations. This enables the laity to daily read their own Bibles with much greater understanding, appreciation of God’s magnificent grace, and ability to apply the Word to their lives, all to God’s glory. (Farley, Benjamin W., *John Calvin’s Sermons on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 1980), 252-3.)

25 This does not imply that baptized children are automatically saved at the time of baptism, but some children do grow up never knowing a day in which they did not have faith in Christ. Others repent and believe later in life or never. And of those who do not live long enough or are mentally handicapped so that they are never capable learning about the Gospel, some are Elect; the Holy Spirit does not depend on human ability.

26 Church discipline of its members is a potent spiritual benefit and a necessary mark of a true church according to Scripture. Unlike civil authorities, no church is allowed to use force or the threat of force, but uses personal counseling, spiritual shepherding, public admonition or rebuke, and, ultimately, excommunication. In Presbyterian church government, members have the right to appeal to higher judicial bodies if they believe they have not been disciplined fairly. In America, the godly practice of church government is sadly neglected for the most part.

profession only, according to the quality of the covenanters, as they are true or counterfeit believers.

The Covenant of Grace set down in the Old Testament before Christ came, and in the New since He came, is one and the same in substance, although different in outward administration. The Covenant in the Old Testament was sealed with the sacraments of circumcision and the paschal lamb; these set forth Christ's death to come and the benefits purchased by Christ under the shadow of bloody sacrifices and various ceremonies. However, since Christ came, the Covenant is sealed by the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These sacraments clearly show forth Christ already crucified before our eyes, victorious over death and the grave, and gloriously ruling heaven and earth for the good of His own people.

Topic 4: The Blessings that Are Effectually Conveyed by These Means to the Lord's Elect or Chosen Ones

"For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14 ESV).

By these outward ordinances [listed in Topic 3], our Lord makes the reprobate inexcusable. Likewise, by the power of His Spirit, He effectually applies to the Elect all of the saving graces purchased to them in the Covenant of Redemption, and makes a change in their persons.²⁷ In particular:

1. He converts, that is, regenerates them by giving spiritual life to them by:
 - a. Opening their understandings
 - b. Renewing their wills, emotions, and mental abilities for giving spiritual obedience to His commands
2. He gives them saving faith by a sense of their deserved condemnation so that they heartily consent to the Covenant of Grace and embrace Christ Jesus unfeignedly.²⁸
3. He gives them repentance by making them turn from all iniquity to the service of God by godly sorrow in the hatred of sin and love of righteousness.
4. He sanctifies them by making them go on and persevere in faith and spiritual obedience to the Law of God. Both of these are manifested by fruitfulness in all duties and doing good works as God offers occasion.

²⁷ Do you want to be among Elect by the power of the Holy Spirit? Then count the cost; there will be things in your life, often cherished relationships, that will have to change in obedience to God. Then persevere in commitment and trust in Jesus Christ, by exercising the grace of faith. And God the Father, Who can neither lie nor fail in a promise, has promised: **"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"** (Luke 11:13 ESV). So ask with a sincere heart and God will give you His Holy Spirit to give you saving faith and repentance and to be in you forever. If you do these things in sincerity and persevere to the end of your earthly life, know that it was not of yourself, but of God's choosing you for eternal life and giving you His Holy Spirit for the power to live the Christian life. (You can safely leave God's mysteries to God.)

²⁸ The word *unfeigned* (meaning not feigned, not counterfeit, not hypocritical, real), appears multiple times in this *Sum* as a warning that only genuine believers are saved and go to Heaven. Hypocrites, including self-deceived hypocrites who do not take their Christianity and Christ wholeheartedly and seriously, go to Hell.

Together with this inward change of the persons of the Elect, God also changes their states; for as soon as they are brought by faith into the Covenant of Grace:

1. He *justifies* them by:
 - a. Crediting to them that perfect obedience that Christ gave to the Law
 - b. Crediting to them the perfect satisfaction that Christ gave to justice on the Cross²⁹ in their name [in their place as their substitute]
2. He *reconciles* them, and makes them friends of God, who were before enemies of God.
3. He *adopts* them so that they will be no longer children of Satan, but children of God, and thus enriched with all spiritual privileges of His sons.
4. After their warfare in this life is ended, at their deaths, God *perfects* their holiness and the blessedness of their souls in Heaven.
5. Finally, on the last great Day when Christ comes again:
 - a. The souls and resurrected bodies of believers will be joyfully joined together again.
 - b. In His glorious judgment, all the wicked will be sent away to Hell with Satan whom they have served.
 - c. But Christ's own chosen and redeemed ones—true believers, students of and strivers after holiness—will remain with Christ forever in the state of *glorification*.

Navigation:

Past: *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*, especially salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God

Present: *The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge*, or how to put the saving knowledge, especially of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, to good use

Future: Appendices

²⁹ Partly by the visible emotional, spiritual, and physical sufferings He endured as man from His betrayal to His death, and partly by His Divine capacity and power, our Lord Jesus Christ endured the equivalent of eternity in Hell in the place of each of the Elect. Put another way, He took the rap for us. Since Christ paid the full penalty due to the sin of each of the Elect, there is nothing left for God to punish.

The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge

Contained in Scripture, and Stated Briefly in the Previously Mentioned *Confession of Faith and Catechisms*³⁰

The chief general use of Christian teaching is to convict a person of *sin* and of *righteousness* and of *judgment* (John 16:8),³¹ partly by the Law, or Covenant of Works, that he may be humbled and repent, and partly by the Gospel, or Covenant of Grace. These Covenants are given that he may become an unfeigned believer in Jesus Christ, and be strengthened in his faith upon solid grounds and warrants,³² and give evidence of the truth of his faith by good fruits, and so be saved.

Navigation, Practical Use:

Past: Overview of the Practical Use

Present: Quotations from the Word of God, the Holy Bible form the foundation of logical reasoning by which the reader may be convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment, leading to saving faith and repentance to eternal life, away from eternal hellfire. The reader has already encountered the concept of salvation by faith in Christ, or trust in God. This trust also implies trusting what God tells us in the Scriptures, the Holy Bible. Because God is perfect, knows all things, and is incapable of lying, His Word is absolutely true, and logical reasoning built on that foundation is rock solid. Thus, the reader will do well to put away any prejudice he may have against the Holy Bible.

Future: Closing a personal covenant with Jesus Christ for eternal life

30 This *Sum* has what is almost a new title page with this header, indicating a section break, but still very much part of the book with the previous material.

31 **“And when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”** (John 16:8 ESV). Some Bible translations render *convince* instead of *convict*. The Greek is ἐλέγγω [el-eng'-kho, to convict, confute, admonish, rebuke, reprove; also prove, convince, or treat with contempt, etc]. To *convince* does convey part of its meaning, but to *convict* fits the context of this verse and its subsequent exposition far better, for this conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit, not mere intellectual persuasion. Also, an older definition of *convince* is, “to overpower; to overcome; to subdue or master; to overcome by argument; to force to yield assent to truth.” In light of these things, in most places, the editor has translated *convince* to *convict* in the general text of this *Sum* to be consistent with the Scripture, and to remind the reader of the seriousness of the matter before us; God demands conviction of His truths, not mere opinions. On another note, Dickson and Durham use this verse as a theme for much of this *Sum* without giving an exegetical exposition of John 16:8–15. It was common for Puritan preachers to use passages of Scripture as illustrations, themes, or analogies in much the same way that modern preachers may use illustrations from sports or novels. Still the use of John 16:8 as a launching pad is very well done; the convicted or struggling reader is assured that he does not have to practice his faith by his own strength, but with the help of the Holy Spirit. John 16:9–11 gives a single example of reasons the Holy Spirit will convict people for each of sin, righteousness, and judgment. But Scripture also clearly teaches in many places that the work of the Holy Spirit is far more extensive in each of the areas of sin, righteousness, and judgment than those examples.

32 A *warrant* is permission or authority that allows one to do something that is normally forbidden. For example, a search warrant allows police to search a person or place, something otherwise unconstitutional. The use of *warrant* in this *Sum* is a bit antiquated, but perfectly fits, so it is retained. A believer has solid reasons for strong faith because God has decreed many precious and gracious promises to him that are not given to unbelievers.

The sum of the Covenant of Works, or of the Law, is this: “If you do all that is commanded and not fail in any point, you will be saved. But if you fail, you will die” (see Romans 10:5, Galatians 3:10–12)³³

The sum of the Gospel, or Covenant of Grace and reconciliation, is this: “If you flee from deserved wrath to the true Redeemer, Jesus Christ (who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him), you will not perish, but have eternal life” (see Romans 10:8–11).³⁴

Convicting a Person of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment by the Law

For convicting a person of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment by the Law, or Covenant of Works, let these Scriptures, among many more be used:

Sin

For convicting one of sin by the Law, consider, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings”** (Jeremiah 17:9–10 NKJV). Here the Lord teaches these two things:

First, the source of all our miscarriages and actual sinning against God is in the heart. The [biblical, spiritual] heart includes the mind, will, affections [emotions, feelings], and all the powers of the soul, which powers are corrupted and defiled by original sin. The mind is not only ignorant and incapable of saving truth, but also full of error and enmity against God. The will and affections are obstinately disobedient against all God’s directions and bent toward only that which is evil. **“The heart,”** says God, **“is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”** Yes, and unsearchably wicked; thus **“Who can know it.”** And, **“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Genesis 6:5 ESV), says the Lord, whose testimony we must trust in this and all other matters. And experience also may teach us that, until God makes us deny ourselves, we never look to God in anything; rather fleshly self interest alone rules us and moves all the wheels of our actions.

33 **“For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them”** (Romans 10:5 ESV). **“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’ But the law is not of faith, rather ‘The one who does them shall live by them’”** (Galatians 3:10–12 ESV).

34 **“But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame’”** (Romans 10:8–11 ESV).

Second, the Lord brings our original sin (wicked inclinations) and all the actual fruits produced by it into reckoning before His judgment seat,³⁵ for **“I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds”** (Jeremiah 17:10 ESV).

Hence Let Everyone Reason Thus:

“What God and my guilty conscience bears witness of, I am convicted that it is true. And God and my guilty conscience bear witness that my heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked and that all the imaginations of my heart, by nature, are only evil continually. Therefore I am convicted that this is true.” Thus one may be convicted of sin by the Law.

Righteousness

For convicting a person of [his lack of] righteousness by the Law, consider **“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them’”** (Galatians 3:10 ESV). Here the Apostle teaches us three things:

1. By reason of our natural sinfulness, the impossibility of anybody being justified by the works of the Law is so certain, that any who do seek Justification by the works of the Law are liable to the curse of God for breaking of the Law. **“For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse,”** says God.
2. Keeping one or two of the precepts, or doing some or all of the duties (if it were possible) for only a time does not qualify as perfect fulfilling of the Law. This is because the Law requires that a person **“abide by [continually do] all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”**
3. Because nobody can come up to this perfection, everybody is by nature under the curse, for the Law says, **“Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”** Now, to be under the curse includes all the displeasure of God, with the danger of God’s wrath breaking forth more and more upon soul and body, both in this life and after death perpetually, if grace does not prevent the full execution of it.

Hence Let Everyone Reason Thus:

“According to the Covenant of Works, everyone is liable to the curse of God for breaking the Law times and ways out of number. Therefore, nobody can be justified or find righteousness by the works of the Law. But I,” may everyone say, “according to the Covenant of Works, am liable to the curse of God for breaking the Law times and ways out of number. Therefore I cannot be justified, or have righteousness by the works of the Law.” Thus may everybody be convicted of [his lack of] righteousness; it is not to be had by his own works or by the Law.

³⁵ Contrary to what is taught by some, the wicked inclinations that come out of our wicked and deceitful hearts due to original sin are themselves sin and must be repented of. Care and sanctification of our hearts is vital. **“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life”** (Proverbs 4:23 ESV).

Judgment

For convicting everyone of judgment by the Law, consider: “... **when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed**” (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10 ESV). In this passage, we are taught that our Lord Jesus, who now offers to be Mediator for those who believe in Him will come armed at the last day with flaming fire to judge, condemn, and destroy all those who have not believed God, have not received the offer of grace made in the Gospel, nor obeyed the teaching of the Gospel, but remain in their natural state under the Law or Covenant of Works.

Hence Let Everyone Reason Thus:

“The righteous Judge has forewarned me about what will be done on the last day. I am sure it is just judgment. But the righteous Judge has forewarned me that if I do not believe God in time³⁶ and obey the teachings of the Gospel, I will be isolated from His [benevolent] presence and His glory at the last day and will be tortured in soul and body for ever. Therefore I am convicted that this is just judgment. And I have reason to thank God heartily Who has forewarned me to flee from the wrath that is to come.” Thus everyone may, by the Law or Covenant of Works, be convicted of judgment if he continues under the Covenant of Works or does not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Convicting a Person of Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment by the Gospel

As for convicting a person of sin, righteousness, and judgment by the Gospel or Covenant of Grace, he must understand three things:

1. Not believing in Jesus Christ or refusing the Covenant of Grace offered in Christ is a greater and more dangerous sin than all other sins against the Law. This is because the hearers of the Gospel who do not believe in Christ reject God's mercy in Christ, the only way of freedom from sin and wrath. Such refuse to yield [to God] so as to be reconciled to God.
2. Everyone must understand that perfect remission of sin and true righteousness are to be had only by faith in Jesus. This is because God requires no other condition but faith, and He testifies from Heaven that He is well pleased to justify sinners upon this [one] condition.
3. All people must understand concerning the righteousness received by faith that judgment will follow in one of two ways:
 - a. In the believer, the works of the Devil will be destroyed in him, and by God's power his sanctification will progress toward perfection.³⁷
 - b. For those who refuse to accept righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, judgment will follow to the condemnation of the unbeliever and destruction of him with Satan and his servants forever.

³⁶ *Time* here refers to the need to believe prior to one's death or Christ's Second Coming, whichever comes first. After either of these one-time events, there are no second chances.

³⁷ Both of these gifts are part of the Father's loving discipline and chastisement of His adopted children.

Sin

For this purpose, let these passages of Scripture, among many others, serve to make obvious the greatness of the sin of not believing in Christ. One may also see how great is the sin of refusing the offer of the Covenant of Grace to us, that is, the offer of Christ to us, by looking closely at what is being refused. Here is the fair offer of Grace as it is made: **“Incline your ear, and come to me,”** says the Lord, **“Hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David”** (Isaiah 55:3 ESV). That is, if you will believe Me and be reconciled to Me, then by Covenant, I will give to you Christ and all saving graces in Him with **“steadfast, sure love.”** (This is repeated in Acts 13:34.³⁸)

Again consider that this general offer is equivalent in substance to an offer made to each individual person in particular. This is shown by the Apostle’s making use of it, [when speaking to one person]: **“And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household’”** (Acts 16:31 ESV).³⁹ Observe the reason that motivated God to give the offer: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”** (John 3:16 ESV). We see then, that this great salvation is offered in the Lord Jesus. Thus, whoever does not believe in Him, but looks for happiness some other way, what else does he do, except observe lying vanities and forsake his own mercy that he might have had in Christ? **“Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD”** (Jonah 2:8–9 NASB). What else does one who does not believe do except blaspheme God in his heart? As it is said, **“Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son”** (1 John 5:10–11 ESV). There is no sin against the Law as bad as this sin. Christ testifies, **“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin”** (John 15:22 ESV). This may convict people of the greatness of this sin of not believing in Christ.

Righteousness

To convict every person that righteousness is to be had only by faith in Christ, consider [what the Apostle Paul said concerning all who do not believe the Gospel], in this case the unbelieving Jews: **“For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness”** (Romans 10:3 ESV). And so they perished. **“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes”** (Romans 10:4 ESV). Consider also: **“And by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses”** (Acts 13:39 ESV). And, **“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7 ESV).

38 **“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David’”** (Acts 13:34 ESV).

39 In Isaiah 55:3 and Acts 13:34 (just above), the second person pronouns are plural. But in the statement of the promise to the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31), the second person pronouns are singular.

Judgment

For convicting people of judgment [if a person does not embrace this righteousness]: **“Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil”** (1 John 3:8 ESV). But, if a person does embrace this righteousness, **“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God”** (Hebrews 9:14 ESV).

But if someone does not embrace this righteousness, his condemnation is pronounced: **“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil”** (John 3:18–19 ESV).

Hence Let the Repentant Person Who Desires to Believe, Reason Thus:

- “What suffices to convict all the Elect in the world of the greatness of the sin of not believing in Christ, or the sin of refusing to flee to Him for relief from sins done against the Law and from wrath due to such refusal?” [**“Whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”**⁴⁰]
- “What suffices to convict all the Elect that righteousness and eternal life are to be had by faith in Jesus Christ, that is, by consenting to the Covenant of Grace in Him?” [**“Whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”**]
- “What suffices to convict all the Elect of the judgment to be exercised by Christ for destroying the works of the devil in a person, and sanctifying and saving all who believe in Him?” [**“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”**]

“These same things might suffice to convict me also. But what the Spirit has said in the Scriptures quoted above or other like Scriptures suffices to convict the Elect world of the aforesaid sin and righteousness and judgment. Therefore what the Spirit has said in these and other like Scriptures, does serve to convict me thereof also.”

Navigation, Practical Use:

Past: Quotations from the Word of God, the Holy Bible form the foundation of logical reasoning by which the reader may be convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment, leading to saving faith and repentance to eternal life, away from eternal hellfire

Present: Closing a personal covenant with Jesus Christ for eternal life

⁴⁰ In the original *Sum*, these three questions were not answered. The editor thought it prudent to answer them from Scriptures quoted above.

Future: Logical reasoning from Scripture designed to strengthen new and old believers in their faith and walk with God

Therefore, let the repentant person who desires to believe take with him words,⁴¹ and say heartily to the Lord: “Because you say, ‘seek my face,’ my soul answers to you, ‘your face, Lord will I seek.’ I have read the offer of an everlasting Covenant of all saving mercies to be had in Christ, and I do heartily embrace your offer. Lord, let it be a signed and sealed covenant. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. Behold, I give myself to you to serve you in all things forever, and I hope your right hand will save me and the Lord will perfect that which concerns me. Your mercy, O Lord endures for ever; forsake not the works of your own hands.” Thus a person may be made an unfeigned believer in Christ.⁴²

Navigation, Practical Use:

Past: Closing a personal covenant with Jesus Christ for eternal life

Present: Logical reasoning from Scripture designed to strengthen new and old believers in their faith and walk with God, in two parts:

1. The apparent conflict between God’s sovereignty in bringing all things to pass and the believer’s personal responsibility is practically resolved by:
 - a. God’s command to exercise faith by being diligent to obey all God’s commands
 - b. God’s provision of the Holy Spirit to the believer to direct and empower the believer to walk in the Spirit, in divinely given strength
2. It can be difficult to be assured that God wants you to be His lovingly adopted child, yes, you individually and personally, with all your sins, weaknesses, and defects. Four warrants from God’s Word are presented to show that God really means it.

Future: Logical reasoning from Scripture by which a believer can examine himself and validate the existence of true saving faith in himself, or the contrary.

41 This phrase comes from “**Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips’**” (Hosea 14:2 NKJV). The Hebrew translated *sacrifices of our lips* is difficult, but in this New Testament age: “**Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name**” (Hebrews 13:15 ESV). “Take with him words” tells the repentant person to seriously consider beforehand what he will say to God, to seriously say what he means and mean what he says.

42 This and similar *sinner’s prayers* do not themselves save anyone. But when prayed truly and from the heart, however imperfectly, they are outward evidence of having been inwardly born again from above by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For Strengthening the Faith of One Who Has Agreed to the Covenant of Grace

Many true believers are weak and seriously doubt if they will ever be sure of the soundness of their own faith and effectual calling⁴³ or be made certain of their justification and salvation. This is exacerbated when they see that many who profess faith are found to have deceived themselves. Let us see how every believer may be made strong in the faith and sure of his own election and salvation upon solid grounds by sure warrants and true evidences of faith. For this purpose, among many other Scriptures, take these following.

First, for laying solid grounds of faith, consider: **“Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall”** (2 Peter 1:10 ESV). [These qualities are faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and love, which qualities are further discussed later in this *Sum*.] In these words, the Apostle teaches us these four things for help and direction concerning how to be made strong in the faith.

1. Those who believe in Christ Jesus and are fled to Him for relief from sin and wrath, even though they are weak in the faith, they are indeed children of the same Father with the Apostles. For so he considers them by calling them *brothers*.⁴⁴
2. Although we may not be sure of our election or of the time of our effectual calling, yet we may be made sure of both, if we use diligence; this is implied by: **“be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election.”**
3. We must not be discouraged when we see many seeming believers prove to be rotten branches and defect from Christ. Rather, we must take better heed to ourselves: **“Therefore, brothers,”** he says, **“be all the more diligent.”**
4. The way to be sure both of our election and effectual calling is to make sure work of our faith by laying the grounds of it solidly and bringing forth the fruits of our faith in new [and growing and improving] obedience constantly. **“For if you practice these qualities,”** he says, **“you will never fall,”** understanding by **“these qualities,”** what he had said concerning sound faith in 2 Peter 1–4,⁴⁵ and what he had said of the bringing out of the fruits of faith in 2 Peter 1:5–8.⁴⁶

43 God continually calls all people to Christ. The Elect were chosen before the world was even created. Then there comes a time in the life of an elect person when the Holy Spirit actually regenerates his or her heart and grants saving faith and repentance. This event is called *effectual calling* in theology or *getting saved* in colloquial discourse.

44 Notice also the phrase, **“a faith of equal standing with ours”** in verse one below. The emphasis is not on the strength of the faith, but on the standing with respect to God brought about by the gift of faith. **“Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 1:1 ESV).

45 **“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: ²May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire”** (2 Peter 1:1–4 ESV).

46 **“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep**

To this same purpose, consider: **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”** (Romans 8:1–4 ESV). In this passage, the Apostle teaches us these four things for laying the ground of faith solidly:

1. Everyone is a true believer, who:
 - a. From the sense of his sin and from fear of God’s wrath, flees for full relief from both of them to Jesus Christ alone, the only Mediator and all-sufficient Redeemer of men, and
 - b. Being fled to Christ, strives against his own flesh, or corrupt inclination of nature. He also studies and strives to follow the rule of God’s Spirit set down in His Word.

For the one whom the Apostle here blesses as a true believer is a person in Christ Jesus **“who walks not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”**

2. All who have fled to Christ and strive against sin, however much they may possibly be exercised under the sense of wrath and fear of condemnation, they are not actually in any danger, for **“There is no condemnation,”** he says, **“for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”**
3. The Apostle himself (brought in here by way of example) and all other true believers in Christ are by nature under the Law of sin and death, also called the Covenant of Works. It is called the “Law of sin and death” because it binds sin and death upon us till Christ sets us free. Yet the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, or the Covenant of Grace, sets the Apostle and all true believers free from the Law of sin and death, or the Covenant of Works. The Law of the Spirit of Life is called so, because it enables and enlivens a person to a spiritual life through Christ. Thus, everybody may say with the Apostle, “The Law of the Spirit of life, or Covenant of Grace has freed me from the Law of sin and death, or the Covenant of Works.
4. The source and first ground from which our freedom from the curse of the Law flows is the Covenant of Redemption, established between God the Father and God the Son as the God-Man.⁴⁷ In this Covenant, Christ takes the curse of the Law upon Himself for sin, so that the believer, who could not otherwise be delivered from the Covenant of Works, may be delivered from it. And the Apostle shows forth this teaching in these four branches:
 - a. That it was utterly impossible for the Law, or Covenant of Works, to bring righteousness and life to a sinner because it was weak.
 - b. That this weakness and inability of the Law, or Covenant of Works, is not the fault of the Law, but the fault of sinful flesh, which is neither able to pay the penalty of sin, nor able to

you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. ¹⁰Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall” (2 Peter 1:5–10 ESV). These passages will be further explained later in this *Sum*.

⁴⁷ When Mary conceived the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God attached to Himself a full and complete human nature of body and soul. Both His divine and human natures are full and complete in one Person, but without mixture between the two. This event is frequently termed the *incarnation* of Christ.

give perfect obedience to the Law (presupposing past sins were forgiven). The Law was weak, he said, **“through the flesh.”**⁴⁸

- c. That the righteousness and salvation of sinners, which were impossible to be brought about by the Law, are brought to pass by sending God’s own son, Jesus Christ in the flesh, in whose flesh sin is condemned and punished to make satisfaction on behalf of the Elect that they might be set free.
- d. That by this means, the Law is fully satisfied because the righteousness of the Law is best fulfilled this way: First by Christ, giving perfect active obedience in our name to the Law in all things. Next, by His paying the penalty in our name (due to our sins) in his death. And lastly, by His working sanctification in us who are true believers and who strive to give new, [growing, and improving] obedience to the Law and **“who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”**

Navigation, Practical Use, Present: It can be difficult to be assured that God wants you to be His lovingly adopted child, yes, you individually and personally, with all your sins, weaknesses, and defects. Four warrants from God’s Word are presented to show that God really means it.

The First Warrant to Believe

God’s hearty invitation

For building our confidence upon this solid ground, these four warrants and special motives to believe in Christ may serve. The first is God’s hearty invitation that He shows forth in: **“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you”** (Isaiah 55:1–5 ESV).

After setting down the precious ransom of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ, and the rich blessings purchased to us thereby in the two former chapters (Isaiah 53, 54), in this chapter:

1. The Lord makes an open offer of Christ and His grace by proclamation of a free and gracious “market” of righteousness and salvation to be had through Christ to every soul without exception that truly desires to be saved from sin and wrath. **“Come, everyone who thirsts,”** says He.⁴⁹

48 **“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh”** (Romans 8:3 ESV).

49 Readers unfamiliar with Isaiah chapters 53 and 54 will do well to read them now. Also, those unfamiliar with the symbolism of the Old Testament and Scripture as a whole may question whether the authors of the *Sum* are correctly interpreting and applying the above quoted passage (Isaiah 55:1–5) to our lives today. The answer is “yes,” as attested by numerous highly respected Bible commentators and theologians, including the reformer John Calvin (*Calvin’s Commentaries, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House, 1984) pp. 153–65.)

2. The Lord invites all sinners that stand at a distance from God for any reason to come and take from Him riches of Grace running in Christ as a river to wash away sin and to abate wrath. **“Come to the waters,”** says He.
3. Lest any should stand back from a sense of his own sinfulness or unworthiness and inability to do any good, the Lord calls upon such persons especially, saying, **“He who has no money, come.”**
4. The Lord craves no more of His “customer,” except that he will be pleased with the wares offered, which are grace and more grace, and that he will heartily consent to and embrace this offer of grace, that he may accept God’s wares and accept a formal Covenant with God. **“Come, buy ... without money,”** says He. **“Come, buy and eat!”** That is, consent to have and take to yourself all saving graces, make the wares your own, possess them, and make use of all blessings in Christ. Take whatever makes for your Spiritual life and comfort. Use and enjoy it freely without paying anything for it. **“Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,”** says God.

5. The Lord knows how much we are inclined to:
 - a. Seek righteousness and life by our own works
 - b. Give our own satisfaction for our sins
 - c. Have righteousness and life by means of our works

God also knows how greatly reluctant we are to embrace Christ Jesus and to take life by way of free grace through Jesus Christ upon the terms with which it is offered to us. Therefore the Lord lovingly calls us off these things, our crooked and unhappy way, with a gentle and seasonable admonition; He gives us to understand that we will only lose our labor by going our own way. **“Why do you spend your money,”** He says, **“for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?”**

6. The Lord promises us solid satisfaction in the walk and life in the grace of Christ, even true contentment, and fullness of spiritual pleasure, saying, **“Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”**
7. Because faith comes by hearing, He calls for attentive listening to the explanation of the offer. He calls for listening to and believing the truth, which is able to beget the application of saving faith and to draw the soul to trust in God. **“Incline your ear, and come to me,”** says He. For this purpose, the Lord promises that this offer, when received, will enliven the dead sinner. And, upon welcoming this offer, He will put into effect the Covenant of Grace with the person that will consent to it, even an inviolable perpetual Covenant of perpetual reconciliation and peace. **“Hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant.”** God declares that He will put this Covenant into effect and assign and make over to the believer of all the saving graces that David (who is Jesus Christ)⁵⁰ has bought for us in the Covenant of Redemption. **“I will make with you an everlasting covenant,”** says God, **“my steadfast, sure love for David.”** By sure love, He means saving graces, such as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, adoption, sanctification, and glorification, and whatever belongs to godliness⁵¹ and eternal life.

and Matthew Henry (*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume 4* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), pp 248–51).

50 **“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David’”** (Acts 13:34 ESV).

51 The word *godliness* means: Careful observance of, or conformity to, the laws of God; piety; loving obedience to the will of God, and earnest devotion to His service.

8. To confirm and assure us of the real grant of these saving mercies, and to persuade us of the reality of the Covenant between God and the one who believes His Word, the Father has made a four-part gift of His eternal and only begotten Son:
- a. Christ was made the God-Man and born for our sakes the offspring of *David*. Because David was a type⁵² of Christ, He is called here and in Acts 13:34, *David*. Christ is the true and everlasting King of Israel and the great gift of God to mankind, as implied in **“Jesus answered her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, “Give me a drink,” you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water”** (John 4:10 ESV).⁵³
 - b. God made a gift of Christ to be a *witness* to the people, both of the sure and saving mercies granted to the redeemed in the Covenant of Redemption, and also of the Father’s willingness and purpose to apply those mercies. Christ is also a witness to the promise to make believers secure in the Covenant of Reconciliation, which is made with those who embrace the offer. **“Behold, I made him,”** says the Lord here, **“a witness to the peoples.”** And truly he is a sufficient witness in this matter in many respects, because:
 - i. He is one of the Persons of the blessed Trinity and Covenanter for us in the Covenant of Redemption before the world was.
 - ii. In His office as Mediator, Christ is the messenger of the Covenant, and has received a commission to reveal it.
 - iii. Christ actually began to reveal the Covenant in the Garden in Paradise, where He promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent.
 - iv. Before His coming, Christ set forth His own death and sufferings and the great benefits that would thus come to us in the types and figures of sacrifices and ceremonies.
 - v. Christ gave more and more light about this Covenant, speaking by His Spirit from age to age in the holy prophets.
 - vi. Christ Himself came in the fullness of time, and bore witness of all things belonging to this Covenant, and of God’s willing mind to take believers into it. Christ did this by:
 - Uniting our nature in one person with the Divine Nature
 - Preaching the good tidings of the Covenant with His own mouth
 - Paying the price of Redemption on the Cross
 - Continuing to deal with people from the beginning to this day, to draw and hold the redeemed into this Covenant
 - c. God has made a gift of Christ, **“a leader ... for the peoples,”** to bring us into life by this Covenant, and that through all difficulties, all afflictions, and all temptations. And He it is, and no other, Who indeed leads His own into the Covenant, and in the Covenant, all the way on to salvation:
 - i. By the direction of His Word and Spirit
 - ii. By the example of His own life, in faith and obedience, even to the death of the cross

52 In theology, a *type* of something, is an earlier thing or person that prefigures or illustrates one or more characteristics of another and later person or thing. So a *type of Christ* is someone who illustrates or prefigures one or more characteristics of the incarnate Christ. David prefigured Christ in many ways because he was an anointed king of Israel, a man after God’s own heart, a successful warrior against God’s enemies, a recipient of God’s promises, and so on.

53 Whether the interpretation of *gift* in this passage is correct or not, certainly, Christ is a great gift of God to man.

- iii. By His powerful working while they go up through the wilderness,⁵⁴ bearing His redeemed ones in His arms and causing them to lean on Him
- d. God has made a gift of Christ to His people, as a **“commander for the peoples.”** He faithfully exercises this office by giving to his Church and people, Laws and Ordinances, pastors, civil officials, and all necessary officers, by keeping courts and assemblies among them to see that His Laws are obeyed. He subdues by His Word, Spirit, and discipline His people’s corruptions, and by His wisdom and power, guards them against their enemies.

Hence, anyone who has accepted the Covenant with God may strengthen his faith by reasoning after this manner: Whoever heartily receives the offer of free grace made here to sinners, who thirsts for righteousness and salvation, then by everlasting Covenant, Christ, the true David, belongs to him, with all his sure and saving mercies. “But I,” may the weak believer say, “do heartily receive the offer of free grace made here to sinners who thirst for righteousness and salvation. Therefore to me belongs Christ Jesus, with all his sure and saving mercies, by an everlasting Covenant.”

The Second Warrant to Believe

God’s earnest request for reconciliation with us in Christ

The second warrant and special motive to embrace Christ and believe in Him is the earnest *request*⁵⁵ that God makes to us to be reconciled to Him in Christ: **“That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”** (2 Corinthians 5:19–21 ESV).

In this passage, the Apostle teaches us these nine doctrines:

1. The Elect world, that is, the redeemed souls of the world are by nature conceived in the state of enmity against God. This is presupposed in the word *reconciliation*, for reconciliation, or renewing of friendship can only exist between those who have been at enmity.
2. In all past time since the fall of Adam, Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, as Mediator, and the Father in Him, have been about [the work of] making friendship (by his Word and Spirit) between Himself and the Elect world. **“God,”** He said, **“was reconciling the world to Himself.”**
3. In all ages, the way of reconciliation was one and the same in substance: Forgiveness of the sins of those who acknowledge their sins and their enmity against God and who seek reconciliation and remission of sins in Christ. For **“God,”** He said, **“was reconciling the world to Himself”** by way of **“not counting their trespasses against them.”**

54 *Wilderness* is here symbolic of life’s difficulties, struggles, and temptations as the Israelites had as they wandered in the Wilderness for forty years.

55 God sometimes expresses His commands in the form of humble entreaties in order to communicate His great love for sinners and His full intent to keep His promises. **“Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”** (Ezekiel 33:11 ESV). **“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents”** (Luke 15:10 ESV).

4. The purpose and scope of the Gospel and whole Word of God, is threefold:
 - a. It serves to make people aware of their sins, of their enmity against God, and of their danger if they should be stubborn and not fear God's displeasure.
 - b. The Word of God serves to make people acquainted with the course that God has prepared for [repentant sinners] to make friendship with Him through Christ, to wit, if anyone will acknowledge the enmity, and will be content to enter into a Covenant of friendship with God through Christ, then God will be contented to be reconciled with him freely.
 - c. The Word of God serves to teach people how to behave themselves toward God as friends after they are reconciled to Him, that is, to be loath to sin against Him, and to strive heartily to obey His Commandments. Therefore the Word of God is here called **"the message of reconciliation,"** because it teaches us what need we have of reconciliation, how to be reconciled, and how to keep the reconciliation of friendship that is being made with God through Christ.
5. That although hearing, believing, and obeying this Word belongs to all those to whom this Gospel comes, yet the office of preaching it *with authority* belongs to none but to those men whom God calls to this ministry and sends out with commission for this work. This the Apostle sets forth, in these words of verse 18, **"entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."**
6. Ministers of the Gospel should behave themselves as Christ's messengers, and should closely follow their commission set down in the Word in Matthew 28:19–20.⁵⁶ And when they do so, they should be received by the people as ambassadors from God, for here the Apostle, in all their names, said, **"We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us."**
7. Ministers of the Gospel, in all earnestness of affections, should exhort people to acknowledge their sins and their natural enmity against God more and more seriously, consent to the Covenant of Grace and Christ's Scriptures more and more heartily, and evidence more and more clearly their reconciliation by a holy lifestyle before God. This He sets forth when He says, **"We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."**
8. That in the ministers' affectionate dealing with the people, the people should consider that they actually have to do with God and Christ Who are requesting them through the ministers to be reconciled. Now there cannot be a greater inducement to break a sinners hard heart than God making a request to him for friendship. We have done so many wrongs to God that it was appropriate for us to go to God to seek friendship with Him. But He anticipates us and enables us to do so. And O wonder of wonders! He requests us to be content to be reconciled with Him! Therefore, most fearful wrath must hang over those who disdain this request and do not yield when they hear ministers with commission saying, **"We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."**
9. To make it clear how it comes to pass that the Covenant of Reconciliation could be so easily implemented between God and a humble sinner fleeing to Christ, the Apostle leads us to the cause of it: the Covenant of Redemption, the sum of which is this: "It is agreed between God [the Father] and the Mediator Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Surety for the redeemed, as parties covenanting together, that the sins of the redeemed will be accounted to innocent Christ (hence no longer on the sinner's account) and He both condemned and put to death for the redeemed. The only condition is that only those who heartily consent to the Covenant of

⁵⁶ **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:19–20 ESV).

Reconciliation offered through Christ will, by God's crediting Christ's obedience to them, be justified and deemed righteous before God." **"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,"** said the Apostle, **"So that in him we might become the righteousness of God."**

Hence, a weak believer may strengthen his faith by reasoning from the ground stated above after this manner: By the mouth of God's ministers (who have a commission to that effect), God and Christ are making a loving request to him. He, who in response has embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and purposes by God's grace as a reconciled person to strive against sin and serve God with all his power constantly, may be sure to have righteousness and eternal life given to him by the obedience of Christ being credited to him. He may be as sure of this as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed that were laid on Him.

"But I," the weak believer may say, "on the loving request of God and Christ made to me by the mouth of his ministers, have embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and purpose by God's grace, as a reconciled person, to strive against sin and serve God with all my power constantly. Therefore, I may be as sure to have righteousness and eternal life given to me for the obedience of Christ credited to me, as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed that were laid on Him."

The Third Warrant to Believe

The command of God

The third warrant and special motive to believe in Christ, is the strict and awful *command* of God that charges all hearers of the Gospel to go to Christ in the way that God commanded and to believe in Him: **"And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us"** (1 John 3:23 ESV). In this, the Apostle gives us to understand these five Doctrines:

1. If anyone does not accept the sweet *invitation* of God, nor the humble and loving *request* God made to him to be reconciled, he shall find he has to do with the sovereign authority of the highest Majesty: **"This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ,"** says He.
2. If anybody looks upon this command as he has previously looked on the neglected commandments of the Law, he must consider that this is a command of the Gospel, given later than the Law, and given for making use of the remedy for all sins. If it is disobeyed, there is no other command to follow but this: **"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'"** (Matthew 25:41 ESV). Obedience of this commandment to believe is most pleasant in God's sight when **"... we keep his commandments and do what pleases him"** (1 John 3:22 ESV). **"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him"** (Hebrews 11:6 ESV).
3. Everyone who hears the Gospel must make conscience of the duty of lively faith in Christ.⁵⁷ The weak believer must not think it presumption to do what is commanded. The person inclined to desperation must pick himself up and think carefully about obedience to this sweet and

⁵⁷ Faith and obedience cannot be separated; one who believes God will believe that His commands are perfect and the absolute best thing to do is obey Him fully.

saving command. The strong believer must dip yet more into the sense of his need of Jesus Christ, and more and more grow in the obedience of this command. Yes, even the most unrepentant, profane, and wicked person must not thrust himself out or be thrust out by others from careful aiming at this duty, no matter how desperate his condition seems to be. For He Who commands everyone to believe in Christ also implicitly commands everyone to believe that they are damned and lost without Christ. Thus, God commands all people to acknowledge their sins and their need of Christ. In effect, God commands everyone to repent, that they may believe in Him. And whoever refuses to repent of his past sins is guilty of disobedience to this command given to all hearers, but especially to those who are within the visible Church, for **“this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ,”** says He.

4. The one who obeys this commandment has built his salvation on a solid ground. For:
 - a. He has found the promised Messiah Who is completely furnished with all perfections for the perfect execution of the offices of *Prophet*, *Priest*, and *King*. This is that Christ in whom the person believes.
 - b. He has embraced a Savior who is able to save to the uttermost and who effectually saves every one who comes to God through Him, for He is *Jesus* the true Savior of his people from their sins.
 - c. He who obeys this command has built his salvation on the Rock, that is, on the Son of God, Who has absolutely perfect right to be considered equal to the Father, and who is worthy to be the object of saving faith and of spiritual worship. For **“this is his commandment,”** says He, **“that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.”**
5. He who has believed on Jesus Christ, although he is freed from the curse of the Law, he is not freed from the command and obedience of the Law, but tied to it by a new obligation and a new command from Christ. This new command from Christ draws down help to obey the command. To this command from Christ, the Father adds his authority and command also. **“And this is his commandment,”** says John, **“that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us”** (1 John 3:23 ESV). The first part of this command enjoins belief in Him, which necessarily implies *love to God*, and thus obedience to the first Table,⁵⁸ for believing in God and loving God are inseparable. And the second part of the command enjoins love to our neighbor (especially to the household of faith) and thus obedience to the second Table of the Law.

Hence a weak believer may strengthen himself by reasoning from this foundation after this manner: Whoever in the sense of his own sinfulness and fear of God’s wrath, at the command of God flees to Jesus Christ, the only remedy of sin and misery, and has engaged his heart to the obedience of the Law of love, his faith is not presumptuous or dead, but true and saving faith. “But I,” may the weak believer say, “in the sense of my own sinfulness and fear of God’s wrath, am fled to Jesus Christ the only remedy of sin and misery, and have engaged my heart to the obedience of the Law of love. Therefore my faith is not a presumptuous and dead faith, but true and saving faith.”

58 It is traditional in Christian writings to divide the Ten Commandments into two “tables,” the first of which is the first four Commandments, those that pertain to our duty to God. The second table then refers to the six other Commandments, those that pertain to our duty to mankind. The division is hardly exact because, for example, the fourth Commandment forbids making one’s servant work on the Sabbath, and coveting is a matter of the heart and primarily an offense against God.

The Fourth Warrant to Believe

Assurance of life to believers, but destruction to those who do not obey

The fourth warrant and special motive to believe in Christ is that much assurance of life is given to people who will obey the command to believe, but a fearful certification of destruction is given to people who do not obey: **“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him”** (John 3:35–36 ESV).⁵⁹

These two verses show forth to us these five following Doctrines.

1. That the Father is well satisfied with the undertakings of the Son, Who became Redeemer and Surety to pay the ransom of believers, and perfect them in holiness and salvation. **“The Father loves the Son,”** said God. The Son stands Mediator in our name, undertaking to perfect our redemption in all points. The Father **“loves the Son,”** that is, heartily accepts His offer to do the work, and is well pleased with Him. The soul⁶⁰ of God the Father delights in Him and rests upon Him, and makes Him, in this His office, the receptacle of love, grace, and good will to be conveyed by Him to believers in Him.
2. Jesus Christ, in His capacity of Mediator, and as He is God incarnate,⁶¹ the Word made flesh, so that He may fulfill the Covenant of Redemption, the Father has given Christ all authority in Heaven and Earth. For the same reason, the Father completely furnished Christ with the riches of grace, Spirit, and life, with all power and ability, that is required due to:
 1. The union of the Divine Nature with the human, or
 2. The fullness of the Godhead dwelling substantially in His human Nature, or
 3. That which is implied by the indivisible all-sufficiency and omnipotency of the inseparable, everywhere present Trinity, or
 4. The work of redemption.⁶²**“The Father,”** said Christ, **“has given all things into his hand”** for accomplishing his work.
3. Great assurance of life is held forth to all who will heartily receive Christ and the offer of the Covenants of Grace and Reconciliation through Him, **“Whoever believes in the Son,”** said God, **“has eternal life.”** It is made secure to him:

59 Some Bible versions render “whoever does not obey the Son” as “whoever does not believe the Son.” There is no significant textual variant or question as to the meaning of the Greek. It appears that some translators, because disobedience is set in opposition to belief, translate as disbelieve or similar, rather than simply following the text. But it is perfectly logical that disobedience may be set in opposition to belief because true faith generates good works. Using disobedience instead of unbelief as the standard of measure makes self-deceit more difficult and also more obvious to others.

60 God is a transcendent Spirit Whose being and essence is unknowable by humans. As such, He does not possess anything like a human or created soul. Scripture does occasionally refer to God’s soul; this is anthropomorphic language that refers to God’s deepest and most intimate inner being (a description that is itself essentially anthropomorphic). An example is **“Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations”** (Isaiah 42:1 ESV).

61 When Mary conceived the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God attached to Himself a full and complete human nature of body and soul. Both His divine and human natures are full and complete in one Person, but without mixture between the two. This event is frequently termed the *incarnation* of Christ.

62 This point (2.) is a bit complex, but it all boils down to the fact God the Father has given the God-man, Jesus Christ, as the God-man, everything He needed in order to do the work of saving sinners and ruling as Mediatorial King. As God, the Lord Jesus is eternally self-sufficient. But as man, the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus needed the resources of the Holy Spirit without measure.

- a. In God's purpose, and irrevocable decree, because the believer is a person *elected* to life
 - b. By the effectual calling of him into life by God, Who, as He is faithful, so will He do it
 - c. By promise and everlasting Covenant sworn by God in order to give the believer strong consolation in life and death upon immutable grounds
 - d. By a pledge and investment under the great seal of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as often as the believer comes to receive the symbols and pledges of life
 - e. In Christ, Who is the source and head of life. He was given a charge as attorney for believers, and in Christ our life is so laid up that it cannot be taken away
 - f. By the beginning of possession of spiritual life, regeneration, and a kingdom. This kingdom, consisting in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, is built up within the believer as down payment of the full possession of everlasting life.
4. A fearful certification is given if a person does not receive the teaching concerning righteousness and eternal life to be had by Jesus Christ. **"Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life."**⁶³ He will not so much as understand what the teaching means.
 5. God further certifies, that if someone does not receive the Doctrine of the Son of God, he will be burdened twice with the wrath of God. First, as a born rebel by nature, he will bear the curse of the Law, or the Covenant of Works. Second, he will endure a greater condemnation because light has come into the world and was offered to him, but he rejected it and loves darkness rather than light. This double wrath will be fastened and fixed immovably upon him so long as he remains in the condition of unbelief. **"The wrath of God remains on him,"** said God.

Hence may the weak believer strengthen his faith by reasoning from this foundation after this manner. Whoever believes the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and finds himself partly drawn powerfully to believe in Him by the sight of life in Him, and partly driven by fear of God's wrath, and clings to Christ, may be sure of the right to, and investment in eternal life through Him. "But, sinful and unworthy I," may the weak believer say, "do believe the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and do feel myself drawn powerfully to believe in Him by the sight of life in Him, and also I am driven by the fear of God's wrath to cling to Christ. Therefore I may be sure of my right to, and investment in eternal life through Christ."

Navigation, Practical Use:

Past: Logical reasoning from Scripture designed to strengthen new and old believers in their faith and walk with God

Present: Logical reasoning from Scripture by which a believer can examine himself and validate the existence of true saving faith in him, or the contrary

Future: Appendix 1: Getting Started in the Christian Life and the Holy Bible

⁶³ Some versions render "whoever does not obey" as "whoever does not believe." There is no significant textual variant or question as to the meaning of the Greek. It appears that some translators, because disobedience is set in opposition to belief, translate as disbelieve or similar, rather than simply following the text. It is perfectly logical that disobedience may be set in opposition to belief because true faith generates good works.

The Evidences of True Faith

Having laid the foundations of faith and warrants to believe, it is now necessary to consider what fruits must be evident to validate the existence of true saving faith. These four things are indispensable:

1. The believer must be soundly convicted in his judgment of the obligation to keep the whole Moral Law all the days of his life. And that not the less, but so much the more as he is delivered by Christ from the Covenant of Works and curse of the Law.
2. The believer must endeavor to grow in the exercise and daily practice of godliness and righteousness.
3. The course of the believer's growing obedience must come from the right sources, namely through faith in Christ and through a good conscience for all the duties of love toward God and people.
4. The believer must maintain solid communion with the source of grace, Christ Jesus, from Whom grace must be conveyed to produce the believer's good fruits.

The First Indispensable Thing

Conviction of the obligation to keep the Moral Law

The first indispensable thing necessary to validate the existence of true saving faith is to convict the believer in his judgment of his obligation to keep the Moral Law. Among many passages, consider: **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. ¹⁷Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:16–20 ESV). In this passage:

1. Our Lord gives commandment to believers, who are justified by faith, to give evidence of the grace of God in them in the presence of people,⁶⁴ by doing good works. **“Let your light shine before others,”** the Lord Jesus said, **“so that they may see your good works.”**
2. He induces believers to do good works by showing that although they are not justified by works, spectators of their good works may be converted or edified. Thus glory may redound to God by their good works when the witnesses of them **“give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”**

64 Superficially, the command to do good works within the view of other people would appear to contradict: **“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”** (Matthew 6:3 ESV). However, this command was directed at those who did good works to gain the approval of people. The Matthew 5:16–20 passage assures us that it is unnecessary to hide our good works with “nuclear weapons secrets level” security. More importantly, it is our *light*, that is Jesus Christ and His grace in us, that we are to display in the presence of people, so that they may give God glory. Matthew 6:3 and the present passage, taken together, would seem to imply that whether or not to give anonymously is a matter of wisdom and sound judgment.

3. He gives them no other rule for their growing obedience than the Moral Law as set down and explained by Moses and the Prophets. **“Do not think,”** said Christ, **“that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.”**
4. He gives them to understand that the doctrine of grace and freedom from the curse of the Law by faith in Him is readily misunderstood. People can think, due to their corrupt judgments, that grace loosens or slackens the obligation of believers to obey the commands and be subject to the authority of the Law. This error is indeed a destroying of the Law and the Prophets, something Christ will in no case ever endure in any of his disciples. It is completely contrary to the purpose of his coming, which is first to sanctify and then to save believers [at death]. **“Do not think,”** said Christ, **“that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.”**
5. The Lord Jesus teaches that the⁶⁵ purpose of the Gospel and Covenant of Grace is to procure people’s obedience to the Moral Law. **“I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”**
6. The obligation of the Moral Law in all points and all holy duties is perpetual and will stand until the world’s end, that is, **“until heaven and earth pass away.”**
7. Just as God has had a care for the Scriptures from the beginning, so will He have a care of them to the world’s end, that **“not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law.”**
8. If someone breaks the Moral Law and defends the transgression of it by saying it is not sin, this excludes him both from Heaven, and, justly also, from the fellowship of the true Church. Likewise, obedience of the Law and teaching others to do the same, by example, counsel, and teaching, according to one’s calling,⁶⁶ proves a person to be a true believer, in great estimation with God, and worthy to be much esteemed of by the true Church (verse 19).
9. The righteousness of every true Christian must be more than the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, for several reasons:
 - a. The Scribes and Pharisees, although they took great pains to discharge some various duties of the Law, taught only part of the Law.
 - b. So that the Law might not appear to condemn their practices, they carefully did the outward part of a duty, but neglected the inward and spiritual part of it.
 - c. They discharged some less important duties carefully, but neglected the more important duties of judgment, mercy, and the love of God.
 - d. In a word, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and rejected the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus.

But a true Christian must have more than all this or else he cannot be saved. He must:

- a. Acknowledge the full extent of the spiritual meaning of the Law, and have a respect to all the Commandments
- b. Labor to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and Spirit
- c. Not lay weight upon what service he has done, or will do, but clothe himself with the righteousness of Christ credited to him; only Christ’s righteousness can hide his nakedness.

So says Christ in the Scriptures, **“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:20 ESV).

⁶⁵ The original has *the*; but clearly the Gospel and Covenant of Grace have multiple purposes.

⁶⁶ *According to one’s calling* refers to whatever authority, influence, opportunity, and so on a person may have according to his or her station or roles in life. For just one example, in given particular circumstances, some can only speak in humble entreaties, while others can issue lawful orders and make them stick.

The Second Indispensable Thing

Practice and grow in obedience daily

The second indispensable thing necessary to validate the existence of true saving faith is that the believer must endeavor to put the rules of godliness and righteousness into practice, and to grow⁶⁷ in the daily exercise of them, as Peter shows forth: **“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 1:5–8 ESV). In this passage,

1. To obtain valid evidence of precious faith in themselves, the Apostle teaches believers to endeavor to add to their faith seven other sister graces:
 - a. The first is *virtue*, or the active exercise and practice of all moral duties, so that faith may not be idle, but put forth itself to work.
 - b. The second is *knowledge*, which serves to furnish faith with information concerning the truth to be believed, and to furnish virtue with direction about what duties are to be done and how to go about them prudently.
 - c. The third is *self-control*, which serves to moderate the use of all pleasant things, that one may not be clogged with them nor be made unfit for any duty to which he is called.
 - d. The fourth is *steadfastness*, which serves to moderate a person’s emotions when he meets with any difficulty or unpleasant thing. Steadfastness thus keeps one from becoming weary of the pains required in doing well, from dejection when the Lord chastises him, and from murmuring when the Lord hampers his plans.
 - e. The fifth is *godliness*, which may keep him steadfast in all holy duties of Christianity and means of grace, inward and outward. By these, he may be furnished from God for all other duties which he must do.
 - f. The sixth is *brotherly affection*, which keeps up esteem and affection for all the household of faith and for the image of God in everyone, wherever they are.
 - g. The seventh is *love*, which keeps the heart in readiness to do good to all people whoever they are, whenever God should offer an occasion.
2. It is true that there is much corruption and infirmity in the godly. Yet the Apostle commands all people to honestly endeavor and do their best as they are able to join all these graces one to another, and to grow in the measure of exercising them. **“Make every effort,” he said, “to supplement your faith,”** and so on.
3. He assures all who profess to be believers that they will profit from obeying the directions in this passage. They will also thus profitably prove the soundness of their own faith. If they lack these graces, they are assured that they will be found blind deceivers of themselves **“For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins”** (2 Peter 1:9 ESV).

⁶⁷ The importance of the duty of growth in grace must not be underestimated. A disciple is one who learns from his Master. One who does not grow in knowledge and skill in the Christian life is thus no disciple.

The Third Indispensable Thing

Obedience must come from love, faith, a pure heart, and a good conscience, not from bad motives, such as favor of people or to establish one's own supposed righteousness

The third indispensable thing necessary to validate the existence of true saving faith is that the course of the believer's growing obedience must come from the right sources, namely through faith in Christ, [a pure heart, and a good conscience]. **"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"** (1 Timothy 1:5 ESV). In this verse, the Apostle teaches these seven Doctrines:

1. The obedience of the Law must flow from love, and at that, love from a pure heart. A pure heart results from a good conscience, and a good conscience results from sincere faith.⁶⁸ He declares that this is the only valid source of good works. **"The aim of our charge is love,"** and so on.
2. The purpose of the Law is not that people may be justified by their obedience to it, as the Jewish rabbis falsely taught. That is because it is impossible for sinners to be justified by the Law. Rather, sinners are damned by the Law for their every transgression. The purpose of the Law is not such as the Jewish Doctors taught, **"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes"** (Romans 10:4 ESV), and **"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"** (1 Timothy 1:5 ESV).
3. The true purpose of the Law (preached to the people) is that the Law will show them their deserved condemnation. Thus, they should flee to Christ unfeignedly and be justified by faith in Him. So says the text, which teaches that **"Love ... issues from ... sincere faith"** (1 Timothy 1:5 ESV).
4. Nobody can set himself in love to obey the Law, except in so far as his conscience is quieted by faith or is seeking to be quieted in Christ, for **"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"** (1 Timothy 1:5 ESV).
5. Feigned faith goes to Christ without reckoning with the Law. So without serious consciousness of sin, there is no felt need for Christ's atonement. But unfeigned faith reckons with the Law, and thus, as often as it finds itself guilty for breaking of the Law, is forced to flee for refuge to Christ for righteousness since Christ is the end of the Law. **"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes"** (Romans 10:4 ESV).
6. That the fruits of love may come forth in outward works, it is necessary that the heart be brought to the hatred of all sin and uncleanness and to a steadfast purpose to follow all holiness in all of its parts without any exception. **"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart."**
7. Unfeigned faith is able to make the conscience good, the heart pure, and the person lovingly obedient to the Law. This is because when Christ's blood is seen by faith to satisfy God's justice, then the conscience becomes quiet also and will not allow the heart to entertain the love of sin. Unfeigned faith also sets one to working to fear God for His mercy and to obey all His commandments out of love to God on account of His free gift of justification by grace bestowed

⁶⁸ The passage actually connects the three source virtues with *and*: **"The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith"** (1 Timothy 1:5 ESV, underlining added). That is different from this *Sum's* causal sequence: love flowing from a pure heart, a pure heart flowing from a good conscience, and a good conscience flowing from sincere faith. Yet, the causal sequence is not entirely wrong; a sincere faith gives trust in Christ's atonement and forgiveness, clearing the conscience. Also sincere faith is something commanded, so a pure heart is impossible without it.

on him. For this is indeed the purpose of the Law: by unfeigned faith, the Law obtains more obedience from a person than from any other way.

The Fourth Indispensable Thing

Close connection to Christ

The fourth indispensable thing necessary to validate the existence of true saving faith is keeping strict and close communion with Christ, the source of all grace and all good works. **“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing”** (John 15:5 ESV). In this verse, by using a similitude from a grape vine, Christ teaches us:

1. By nature we are wild barren briars until we are changed by coming to Christ. Christ is that noble vine having all life and sap of grace in Himself. He is able to change the nature of everyone who comes to Him and is able to communicate Spirit and life to as many as will believe in Him. **“I am the vine,”** Christ said, and **“you are the branches.”**
2. Christ loves to have believers so firmly united to Him that:
 - a. They are not separated at any time by unbelief.
 - b. There may be a mutual indwelling of them in Him by faith and love, and of Him in them by His word and Spirit, for He joins these together as things inseparable: **“... abides in me and I in him.”**
3. Unless a person is grafted⁶⁹ into Christ and united to Him by faith, he cannot do even the smallest of good works by his own strength. In fact, except in so far as a person draws Spirit and life from Christ by faith, the works that he does are naughty and devoid of any goodness in God’s judgment, **“for apart from me,”** Christ said, **“you can do nothing.”**
4. This mutual indwelling is the source and unfailing cause of constant continuing and abounding in well-doing. For **“Whoever abides in me and I in him,”** says Christ, **“he it is that bears much fruit.”** Now our abiding in Christ presupposes three things:
 - a. That we have heard the joyful sound of the Gospel making offer of Christ to us who are lost sinners by the Law
 - b. That we have heartily embraced the gracious offer of Christ
 - c. That by receiving Him we have become children of God **“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,”** (John 1:12 ESV).

⁶⁹ Grafting is the process of joining a scion onto a stock, both being woody plants. The stock is an already rooted plant. The scion may be of a same or (usually) different species and may be a branch or whole plant above the roots. The grafting process involves making a special cut on the trunk or a branch of both the stock and scion so that the two may be joined and bound. Done right, the scion and stock become as one plant, the stock providing water and nutrients and the scion providing the products of photosynthesis. Both remain their own original species.

And we are incorporated into His mystical⁷⁰ body, that He may dwell in us as His temple, and we dwell in Him as in the residence of righteousness and life. So our abiding in Christ implies three other necessary things:

- a. Believers must draw on grace from Christ in all our addresses to God and in all our service to Him, of whatever kind.
- b. Believers must be contented with Christ's sufficiency without going away from Him to seek righteousness or life or support in the supposed worthiness of ourselves or any other creature for any reason.
- c. A steadfastness in
 - i. Our believing in Him
 - ii. Our drawing on His grace and relying on Him
 - iii. Our contentment in Him, and adhering to Him

So that no

- Allurement
- Temptation of Satan or the World
- Terror or trouble

May be able to drive our spirits from

- Firm adherence onto Him
- Constant avowing of His truth
- Obeying His commands

For Christ has loved us and given Himself for us. In Christ, not only our life is laid up, but also the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus Christ by reason of the substantial and personal union of the Divine and human nature in Him.

Hence let every watchful believer, for strengthening himself in faith and obedience, reason after this manner: "Whoever daily draws on Christ Jesus for cleansing his conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the Law and draws on Him to enable him to give obedience to the Law in love, he has the evidence of true faith in himself. But I," may every watchful believer say, "do daily draw on Jesus Christ for cleansing my conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the Law and draw on Him to enable me to give obedience to the Law in love. Therefore I have the evidence of true faith in myself."

And hence also let the sleepy and sluggish believer, for his own stirring up,⁷¹ reason thus: "Whatever is necessary for giving evidence of true faith, I must give careful attention to doing it. Otherwise I will deceive myself and perish. But to draw upon Christ Jesus daily for cleansing my

⁷⁰ Our Lord Jesus has a glorified physical body, which has a true human nature from His mother, Mary. That body is in Heaven at the right hand of the Father. Scripture also speaks of the universal Church as being the body of Christ: "**For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior**" (Ephesians 5:23 ESV). But, Scripture also speaks of the universal Church as Christ's bride (Revelation 19:7), while also speaking of believers being invited to the marriage supper of Christ (Revelation 19:9). Clearly, there is much *mystery* surrounding Christ's body, the universal Church. Hence, the universal Church is sometimes called Christ's *mystical* body.

⁷¹ *Stir up* here, and as frequently used in Scripture, refers to stirring a still-hot bed of wood coals and ashes so as to knock ashes down and allow oxygen to reach the coals. By this means, especially if new fuel is added, the coals will burst anew into flame.

conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the Law and to draw on Him to enable me to give obedience to the Law in love, is necessary to produce evidence of true faith in me. Therefore, I must give careful attention to do all that is required. Otherwise I will deceive myself and perish.”

And lastly, seeing that Christ Himself has pointed out these things as undoubted evidence of a person elected by God into life and given to Jesus Christ to be redeemed, *if he come to Him*, that is, embrace His Covenant and keep communion with Him, as He teaches us, saying, **“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out”** (John 6:37 ESV). Let every person who does not in earnest draw on Christ for remission of sin and amendment of life, reason from this and all other evidence, after this manner, that his conscience may be awakened: “Whoever is neither by the Law nor by the Gospel so convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make him come to Christ and draw upon Him daily for remission of sin and amendment of life—he lacks not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all evidence of his election so long as he remains in this condition. But I,” may every unrepentant person say, “am neither by the Law nor Gospel so convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make me come to Christ and draw on Him daily for remission of sin and amendment of life. Therefore I lack not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all evidence of my election, so long as I remain in this condition.”

FINIS.

Appendices

Navigation:

Past: Logical reasoning from Scripture by which a believer can examine himself and validate the existence of true saving faith in him, or the contrary.

Present: Appendix 1: Getting Started in the Christian Life and the Holy Bible

Future: Appendix 2: Authors and Historical Background

Appendix 1: Getting Started in the Christian Life and the Holy Bible

Let us first summarize this *Sum of Saving Knowledge*:

1. The woeful condition that all people are in naturally, due to breaking of the Covenant of Works: **“As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one;” (Romans 3:10 ESV). “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8 ESV). “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15 ESV).**
2. The Remedy provided for the Elect in Jesus Christ by the Covenant of Grace: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 ESV).**
3. The means appointed to make the Elect partakers of this Covenant.
 - a. The Word of God. **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16 ESV).**
 - b. The Sacraments. **“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38 ESV). “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19–20 ESV).**
 - c. Church Government. **“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Hebrews 13:17 ESV).**
 - d. Prayer. **“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Peter 3:12 ESV). “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7 ESV).**

4. The blessings that are effectually conveyed to the Elect by these means. **“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him”** (Romans 8:15–17 ESV). **“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison”** (2 Corinthians 4:17 ESV).

Are you ready to become a disciple of Jesus Christ? First you should count the cost.⁷² It is common knowledge that those who “get saved” or “get religion,” as the world often expresses it, will need to make some changes to how they live. Love, obedience, and service to God must come first in your life. **“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”** (Deuteronomy 6:5 ESV). The Lord Jesus must come first in all things in your life. **“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple”** (Luke 14:26 ESV). The *hate* here is figurative language to express how the Lord Jesus must have absolute priority in your life. For example, many Muslims who become Christians are rejected by their families. They must choose between Jesus Christ and their loved ones. The correct choice is to choose Jesus Christ and take the consequences of possible rejection and separation from family and friends. But they are still charitable and love their families, for we are commanded to love even our enemies. Jesus Christ is Lord and takes absolute priority. What is more, we cannot predict the future, so we cannot perfectly count the cost. Therefore, we must be permanently committed to Christ no matter what. **“Whoever does not bear his own cross⁷³ and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him”** (Luke 14:27–29 ESV).

Have you counted the cost, and are you ready to give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ and thus gain eternal life instead of eternal Hell? If so, please read and carefully consider the prayer reproduced from this *Sum* below. Does it express the desire of your heart? This and similar “sinner’s prayers” do not themselves save anyone. But when prayed truly and from the heart, however imperfectly, they are outward evidence of having been inwardly born again from above by the power of the Holy Spirit. Say heartily to the Lord:

Because you say, “seek my face,” my soul answers to you, “your face, Lord will I seek.” I have read the offer of an everlasting Covenant of all saving mercies to be had in Christ, and I do heartily embrace your offer. Lord, let it be a signed and sealed covenant. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. Behold I give myself to you to serve you in all things forever, and I hope your right hand will save me and the Lord will perfect that which concerns me. Your mercy, O Lord endures for ever; forsake not the works of your own hands.

⁷² The one glaring defect in this *Sum* is that it does not directly challenge the reader to count the cost of following Christ.

⁷³ There is a common idea that *cross* refers to suffering or hardship. This is not true as exemplified by Christ’s cross. Christ did not come to earth to suffer, but to save sinners. That was His calling, or mission in life. Christ did a lot more in His earthly life than get crucified. And, given the opposition He faced, most of His work caused Him suffering. And of course, paying the penalty for the sins of the elect on the cross involved hideous suffering. So our own crosses are the work or mission(s) to which Christ our Lord has called us in this life. And, like Him, we must do that work while enduring faithfully whatever suffering or hardship comes with it.

After thus closing with Christ, you should tell your close friends and family, especially those whom you know to be believers, what you have just done. You may be surprised to find one or more of them have been praying for your conversion and are eager to help you in your new walk with Christ.

For newcomers to the Bible, it can be a daunting book at first. This “Quick Start” may help. There are four things that are essential, or greatly helpful to getting the most out of your Bible:

1. The one essential thing is to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you; the help of the Holy Spirit allows you to comprehend all the Spirit-ual truth in the Bible. **“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”** (Romans 8:14 NASB). Notice the one-to-one correspondence between the set of believers and the set of those led by Christ’s Holy Spirit. **“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”** (Galatians 4:6 ESV). If you have not closed with Christ as you were encouraged to do by the *Sum* and just above, you really do need to go back and read it closely and seriously, and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Otherwise, you still lack the Holy Spirit and are still a slave of Satan; you are still fodder for Hell. If you have closed with Christ, but doubt whether you have the Holy Spirit, you may claim this promise: **“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”** (Luke 11:13 ESV). So sincerely ask; there is no other condition to the promise.
2. Find a good Bible believing church and become part of it and its life. This may take much prayer and hard work as America is thoroughly infested with fake and spiritually weak congregations and denominations. But the effort is worth it; just as one can learn much from an old and experienced craftsman who knows all the tricks and dodges of the job, so older, mature believers can be an inestimable help to growing in Christ. Look at church websites and learn what you can about prospective churches. Avoid Roman Catholic, Mormon (Latter Day Saints), Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Science, Unitarian, and similar “churches” like the plague, for they are not Christian outfits at all. Also look out for an emphasis on material prosperity, especially in response to giving money to that “church”; such are dens of thieves and money changers. Good things to look for include:
 - a. A firm commitment to the absolute authority of the Holy Bible as the very Word of God.
 - b. The exercise of church discipline in which the church calls to account those found in any sin and helps them into genuine repentance. But the stubbornly unrepentant must be excommunicated.
 - c. The sermons preach Christ and make Scripture passages plain and understandable.
 - d. The *Westminster* standards are subordinate to the Scriptures, but if adopted (with perhaps some minor exceptions upon Scriptural grounds), it indicates a solid understanding of Scripture in that church.
 - e. But, red flags and “flashing Check Engine lights” include: women pastors or elders, acceptance of homosexual practices or lifestyles, acceptance of marijuana use, failure to keep Sunday as the Christian Sabbath, or embracing or teaching Marxist, socialist, DEI, Nazi, racist, feminist, or other unbiblical ideologies. (These are not all necessarily the most vile sins, but are evidence of compromising God’s truth with current fads and falsehoods.)
3. For various reasons, extended reading, especially of books seems to be falling out of favor these days. Some people may read few or no books. However, this editor has observed that God tends

to renew the intellects and minds of new believers as part of the salvation “package.” Books have a number of advantages that other media do not:

- a. Books can cover topics more thoroughly than other reading material such as articles in magazines, newspapers, or the web.
 - b. There is a vast number of Christian books—many are bad, many are useless, but there are plenty of good ones—that explain topics such as marriage, family, Creation, the person of Christ, honest business practices, and so on. Others are *commentaries* that take the reader through different books of the Bible helping the reader to understand the Bible. *Systematic theologies* cover a range of topics in one book, explaining the Bible as a whole. There are also commentaries on the entire Bible such as *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*.
 - c. Books allow the reader to absorb information at his or her own pace, stop reading and pick up later, interrupt the reading to explore questions raised by the material or go back and re-read earlier passages, and so on.
 - d. In light of the above points, in addition to the Bible itself, new believers should read books designed to introduce them to the Bible and Christian life. Here are some suggestions in what may be a helpful reading order:
 - i. Re-read this *Sum*.
 - ii. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*.⁷⁴
 - iii. *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* by Sinclair B. Ferguson
 - iv. *The Bond of Love: God’s Covenantal Relationship with His Church* by David McKay
 - v. *Biblical Teaching on the Doctrines of Heaven and Hell* by Edward Donnelly
 - vi. *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* by R. C. Sproul
 - vii. *The Westminster Confession of Faith*
 - viii. *The Westminster Larger Catechism*
 - ix. *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* by Loraine Boettner (The title is misleading; it is actually a systematic theology that is clear and very accessible to the layman.)
4. A *study Bible* is a Bible that has extensive footnotes, cross references, maps, embedded brief explanations, historical notes, and so on that allow the reader to better understand the text. Examples include the *Reformation Study Bible*, *The Geneva Study Bible*, and *The MacArthur Study Bible*. They are less complete and detailed than most other commentaries, but they have the advantage of helping the reader “on the spot” as he reads, without needing recourse to another book. However, they have the disadvantage that the reader is tempted to put the human notes on a level with Scripture by letting the notes unduly interpret or even twist the Word of God.

Daily Bible reading is essential to the Christian life. Eventually, one will want to have read the entire Bible multiple times. But starting out, it is undesirable to read from cover to cover; one will lack the context with which to understand many passages for want of knowledge that is elsewhere in the Bible. Ligonier Ministries has some resources that can help those who are new to the Holy Bible at <https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/get-basic-overview-bible>. A good start in Bible reading that covers the

⁷⁴ Translations of the *Westminster* standards into contemporary American English may be found at <https://beforgiven.info/HostedLiterature.htm>. Also, there is an *Easy* version of the *Shorter Catechism* at <https://beforgiven.info/HostedLiterature.htm#wsceasy>.

most important matters in a short time would be: Genesis chapters 1–4, then the Gospel of John, and then the Epistle to the Ephesians. After that, Ligonier also has a number of links to Bible reading plans at <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/bible-reading-plans>; of which <https://reasonabletheology.org/wp-content/uploads/Redemptive-Historical-Bible-Reading-Plan.pdf> will help the reader study the Bible in rough chronological order while simultaneously helping him to connect the various Bible books to one another, especially in the area of redemptive history, something greatly helpful in understanding Covenant Theology. When systematic Bible reading is combined with reading the suggested books in 3.b., above, a growing, solid, grounding in theology is possible.

Navigation:

Past: Appendix 1: Getting Started in the Christian Life and the Holy Bible

Present: Appendix 2: Authors and Historical Background

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Far Future: More appendices, indexes, and endnotes

Appendix 2: Authors and Historical Background

None of the original facsimiles collected by the editor named either author on the *Sum*'s title page. The editor inserted the author's names, David Dickson and James Durham, due to modern sensibilities and to accommodate normal searching and indexing. Further, nearly all of the facsimiles were not of the *Sum* alone, but although it had an independent title page, it was printed along with the various Westminster standards. This was not at all inappropriate, as the *Sum* was specifically intended as a summary of the most important and fundamental teachings of those standards. For this reason, a brief overview of the history of the Westminster Assembly appears below.

David Dickson

David Dickson was born in 1583 in Glasgow, Scotland.^L He obtained his Master of Arts degree from the University of Glasgow and was appointed professor of philosophy and Greek there in 1610. He was ordained a minister in 1618 in Irvine, Ayrshire, and had an extraordinarily fruitful ministry. He was suspended between 1622 and 1623 by Archbishop Spottiswood for his Presbyterian beliefs against Anglicanism. When he returned, he resorted to street preaching with great fruit. Dickson was then highly instrumental in preparations for the National Covenant and in the Presbyterian movement. In 1640, Dickson became professor of divinity at Glasgow University, transferred to Edinburgh University ten years later, and thence to St. Giles. A large portion of the ministers of the Church of Scotland who were active in the Westminster Assembly were trained by Professor Dickson. He was ejected from his professorship and the ministry in 1662 due to his refusal to compromise his Covenanter beliefs and died of broken health two months later. It was about 1650 that he and James Durham produced *The Sum of Saving Knowledge*.

James Durham

James Durham was born in 1622 in Scotland and studied at St. Andrews University, but dropped out to pursue the life of a country gentleman.^M Shortly after marriage, Durham was converted, and then intense study of the Scriptures and his experiences as a captain in the Scottish Army led him to assurance of salvation. David Dickson overheard Durham praying with his soldiers and was so impressed that he advised him to study for the ministry. Durham did give up his life of luxury for theological studies, earning his Master of Arts in 1647 and served as a minister for three years. In 1650, he was appointed professor of divinity at Glasgow University, replacing David Dickson (who transferred to Edinburgh University). However, he was soon appointed by the General Assembly as chaplain to the king, but, due to war between England and Scotland in which the king fled to Europe, lost that post. He became minister of St. Mungo's church in Glasgow where he served until his death in 1658. He was known for piety, wisdom, scholarship, and humility. Besides his work on the *Sum*, he wrote many books.

Historical Background

Prior to the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church insisted that civil authorities enforce conformity to Catholic teachings and practice. Those deemed heretics were punished and even executed. As the Reformation progressed, some civil authorities were convinced of the validity of Protestantism. This resulted both in wars between Protestant regions and Catholic regions and caused many refugees to flee. It was later accepted in some places that, “the religion of the prince determines the religion of that land.” From 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door, all the way until 1791, when in America, the Bill of Rights was ratified, it was normal for each country to have a national religion established and enforced by law. Even after 1791, some American States had established churches as late as 1833.^N Although there were places and periods of religious toleration, such as in Holland, the usual state of affairs was persecution of those not practicing the official religion as prescribed by civil authorities or the established church.⁷⁵

The absolutist King James (of KJV fame), king of England and Scotland, died in 1625. His son, Charles I, of like temperament, then became king. As the episcopal⁷⁶ system of church government resembles that of a civil monarchical government, King James, Charles, and others like them used the maxim, “no bishop, no king.”^O The Scottish people were largely Presbyterians, but King Charles attempted to jam episcopal and Roman Catholic type government and worship practices down the Scots’ throats. The Scots would have none of it, and successfully enforced their desires by the National Covenant of 1638 and against the king in 1639–40 with military force.^{P, Q}

In the meantime, King Charles was also making a mess of things in England by religious persecution and intolerable civil and religious tyranny, including oppressive substitutes for legal taxes. Only parliament could authorize more taxes, and parliaments⁷⁷ refused to do so, upon which Charles would dismiss that parliament. Finally, the *Long Parliament* refused to disband. The king was going to have to get his way with military force. Parliament was militarily much weaker than the king, so they appealed to the Scots for aid, to make a civil league with Parliament.

Now, the Church of England had been orthodox and Reformed in basic doctrine, but their worship and church government were largely after the Roman Catholic model; the king was effectively

⁷⁵ God has commanded believers to propagate His Word and Gospel to unbelievers and erring believers, and the Holy Spirit is often pleased to use Scripture, preached, shared, and applied, to convert the lost and sanctify believers. But only the Holy Spirit is able to convert and sanctify a sinner’s heart. Alas, the evil and futility of using government force to try to do the Holy Spirit’s work of changing hearts has been a hard lesson for the Church to learn.

⁷⁶ Broadly speaking, there are three main systems of ecclesiastical government: In the *episcopal* system, authority flows from top down. The Roman Catholic Church is a prime example; the Pope is an absolute monarch. In the *presbyterian* system, congregations elect their ministers, elders, and other officers, subject to approval by the body of existing elders, often called a *session*. A plurality of elders is required. Each congregation sends elder delegates to the next higher body, the *presbytery*, and higher level bodies are over the presbyteries if the denomination is large enough. While most matters are settled by elders at the congregational level, appeal may be had to the presbytery, and upward to the highest body. Important matters of church government and statements of doctrine and belief are approved or generated in higher courts, but subject to approval by a specified numerical majority of sessions. In the *congregational* system of church government, full authority resides in each individual congregation. In practice, most congregational denominations have denominational associations.

⁷⁷ The king could dissolve a parliament, so there was no Parliament as a permanent institution. Parliaments succeeded one another and were thus distinguished one from another. This was different from the modern *sessions* of Parliament.

the “Pope” of the Church of England. But most of Parliament leaned Presbyterian. And, most Puritans⁷⁸ were Congregationalists, often termed *Independents*. Their beliefs were otherwise close to those of Presbyterians. Besides that, there were many in the Church of England who believed in the episcopal form of church government, but were otherwise doctrinally close to the Independents and Presbyterians. Parliament was of course well aware of the mess the king was making in the Church of England and of the divisions among themselves. Thus, they resolved to call an assembly of *divines* (their term for what today we call ministers, pastors, or preachers) to advise Parliament and help settle differences. The first task of this assembly, later known as the Westminster Assembly, was to revise the *Thirty Nine Articles*, the doctrinal standard of the Church of England.

The Scots had nothing to gain from aiding Parliament, and were certainly not about to unequally yoke themselves with non-Presbyterians after their hard fight to regain their ancient liberties. But Parliament was in no position to bargain, and the Scots’ help was largely motivated by charity and also by hope that England would be less of a future threat. The result was the *Solemn League and Covenant* of 1643. In it, Scotland, England, and Ireland made what was both a civil alliance and a religious covenant to establish a uniform Presbyterian and Calvinist church in the three countries. Obviously, given the situation, there were a lot of details to be worked out.^R

Working out the details thus became the main task of the Westminster Assembly. There were four main areas of work for them as assigned by Parliament: a Directory for Worship, a Form of Church Government, a Confession of Faith, and a Catechism, later produced as the *Larger Catechism* and *Shorter Catechism*. All of their work was produced with great and careful thought, discussion, and prayer. The first of these two were most important in the minds of Parliament and the Scottish Commissioners to the Assembly. While the Scottish Commissioners participated in and advised the Assembly, they were not actually part of it; they reported to the Church of Scotland instead.^S

The Westminster Assembly met from 1643 to 1652, a troubled time during which Charles I was beheaded, Oliver Cromwell rose to power, and Charles II ascended the throne of Scotland. The *Confession of Faith* was finished in 1647 and the two *Catechisms* in 1648.^T These three documents have seen very wide distribution all over the world, typically with some modifications due to denominational doctrinal differences. The *Directory for the Public Worship of God* was finished in 1644 and remains in use in a few denominations to this date.^U The Form of Church Government was far and away the most controversial due to the mix of Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Independent delegates, and was subject to much weakening by compromise of language and content. Although the majority of divines were Presbyterians, they had no desire to be tyrants to their brethren. Also, many in Parliament wanted civil control of the Church, something absolutely intolerable to the Scots. And, the Independents insisted that there would be no higher authority than the individual congregation. As a result of this disunity, the Divines finally left out much of the theology, and submitted a *Practical Directory for Church Government* to Parliament in 1645. This was adopted in part and published by Parliament in 1648, but never adopted by either of the Churches of England or Scotland.^V Copies exist, but are in little use. Once all four documents were done, the Scottish commissioners returned home, and most of the remainder of the Westminster Assembly’s time was taken up in examining candidates for ministerial office.

⁷⁸ Puritans (also called *Precisionists* back then) have been greatly maligned, largely because their zeal for piety infuriated those of loose morals—a situation that persists to this day. Like everybody else back then, they enforced some of their beliefs with civil force, a matter often exaggerated by modern critics.

The history of the Westminster Assembly reminds one of the famous first transatlantic voyage of Christopher Columbus. He was commissioned to find a westward sea route to India and utterly failed. But in the process, he discovered the Americas, the Americas stayed discovered, and the world has greatly benefited. Likewise, the Westminster divines failed at Parliament's most important mandate, to unify the form of church government in three kingdoms, and their work on worship is little regarded today. But what was then regarded as their less important work, the *Confession* and *Catechisms*, has become a great blessing for Christians around the world for centuries. And, this *Sum of Saving Knowledge* is the concentrate of that blessing. It is still printed in Scottish editions of the Westminster Standards and has been instrumental in many conversions to Christ^w and the edification of many believers, all to the praise and glory of God.

Appendix 3: Cherished Sins

Sin, any sin, unrepentantly cherished in the heart is extraordinarily dangerous. The one who cherishes any known sin or knowingly refuses to repent of and fight against all known sin can have no assurance of salvation. This is the common teaching of nearly all good Bible commentators, though most do not expound on the matter at length. However, Puritan preacher Richard Alleine did expound on this at length throughout his book, *The Vindication of Piety*,^x and he is more emphatic than most:

A Christian not only accepts the promises of the Gospel as good and comfortable words, but can heartily write “Good is the Word of the Lord” on every precept. He likes his duties as well as his privileges, his work as well as his reward. This heart-acceptance is set forth in expressions regarding a willing mind, a ready mind, and an eager mind. And as his heart is toward his work, so it is for any work to which the Lord calls it. He has respect for all the commandments. He would not wish to be without one leaf, no, not one line of the whole Word of God. He is ready for every good work. He would not wish one duty lifted from him of all that God requires. He would not have one sin allowed to him of all that God forbids. He who says concerning any one word in the whole will of God, “This I must have struck out or be dispensed with before I can be a Christian,” is one whose heart is not upright. He who wishes to have any one sin to be no sin, any one duty to be no duty, any one sin to be allowed to him, or any duty to be lifted from him is no Christian.⁷⁹

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31–32). In light of this, the analogy of marriage appears frequently in Scripture and Bible commentaries with respect to Christ and His universal Church. Commentators also use marriage as an analogy for a believer’s mystical union with Christ **“For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God”** (Deuteronomy 4:24). So, with respect to an unrepentantly cherished sin, consider what would happen in a marriage if the husband brought home a prostitute with whom to spend the night, right past his wife, even just once a year?

There was one of Jesus’s disciples who cherished a hidden sin. This hidden sin showed the condition of his heart; a horrible condition that was openly displayed near the end of his life: **“But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it”** (John 12:4–6). By his habitual, cherished sin, Judas effectively

⁷⁹ From a translation into contemporary English at <https://beforgiven.info/TranslatedWorks/vin/vindicationpiety.pdf>, p. 83, (accessed March, 7, 2020). These appear to be overly strong and severe statements, but there is an excellent reason why they are true: God is innately and essentially perfect and holy in His being. His law is not an arbitrary choice, but is a reflection of His holy character and very being. If He were less than perfect and holy, He would be something other than God, or in the context of the present discussion, an idol of one’s imagination. A believer may indeed struggle with interpretations and applications of God’s Word, and he will often find putting off sins and accepting duties to be difficult. But the believer is a bondsman (δοῦλος [*doulos*]) of Christ, and, perhaps after a struggle with his own sinful desires, will thus willingly submit his will to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Such struggles need not rise to the level of wishing God would change His mind about His Word. Still, Alleine perhaps might have better said something like, “He who *unrepentantly* wishes to have any one sin...” Also, it should be noted that some new believers may not live long enough to reach this level of sanctification, such as the thief on the cross.

rejected the Lord Jesus, Who dismissed him; thus Judas left himself open to another master. **“Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘What you are going to do, do quickly’”** (John 13:27 ESV).

It is important to realize that, while a particular cherished sin may not, in itself, be as heinous as some other sins, both what that cherished sin reveals about the heart that cherishes it and its corrosive effect on the heart make it far more dangerous than may outwardly appear.

Appendix 4: Prerequisite Knowledge Expanded

Because God is perfectly holy, cannot lie, and has a care for His Word, the original autographs of the Scriptures are perfect, without error, and cannot contain error. Due to God's providential care to bring about careful scholarship, the high redundancy in the Bible, and the Bible's frequent repetition of important teachings in various ways and literary genres, the important teachings of Scripture, as transmitted to us and as translated by honest scholars are completely reliable and dependable.⁸⁰

The scale of God's created universe with its (according to one estimate) 200 million trillion stars is astoundingly vast. God also created many plants, animals, and ecologies that show His intricate engineering. The process by which cells generate proteins is just one other example of God's intricate engineering. And, God is mankind's Creator. The idea that any human is qualified to judge or evaluate God, any of His doings, or His Word is thus ridiculous and absurd on the face of it. It is thus necessary to trust in God and always *assume* that the Holy Bible is always true. There is no other logical alternative. The absolute inability of humans to evaluate God or His Word makes trusting God and His Word the only rational response.

From Genesis chapters 1 and 2, and the Gospel of John chapter 1, we learn that:

- We live in a real world; neither life nor this world is an illusion.
- The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created this entire vast universe and its contents in six days (144 hours), all by exacting design with great skill and wisdom for His Glory. Big-Bang cosmogony⁸¹ and Darwinist macroevolution⁸² are false hypotheses with no proof.⁸³ These false hypotheses are largely motivated by the desire to pretend that there is no Creator God Whom we must all obey. They are fables constructed according to scientific knowledge to make them appear real.
- God made the earth to be inhabited by mankind and endowed the earth with resources such as minerals, fuels, metals, plants, and animals for mankind's benefit and wise use. To this end, God gave dominion over the earth and its non-human contents to mankind. The earth is not a deity, endowed with intelligence, or "sacred."
- God made mankind in two sexes, male and female, and instituted heterosexual, monogamous, life-long marriage for companionship and procreation.
- God made mankind to glorify Him and able to communicate truly and rationally with God and one another.

80 Alone of all religious writings and "holy books," The Holy Bible is true to observable reality, was written by many human authors over about 1,500 years, and each human author's contribution agrees with the other human authors. It includes many fulfilled prophecies of future events. This is because God directly inspired His human authors. By contrast, the "holy books" of other religions were written or released to the world by single or a very few authors in a single human lifetime, do not reflect the real world, or are morally repugnant in many or most of their teachings.

81 *Cosmogony* refers to secular theories of the origin of the universe as it now exists.

82 *Macroevolution* refers to the idea that all present life forms have evolved from lower forms by time and chance, as claimed by, for example, Charles Darwin. This is in contrast to *microevolution*, in which small changes in characteristics allow species to survive changes in their environments without loss of the species. It is one of God's designed methods of making species and ecologies fault-tolerant.

83 Strictly speaking, no human theory of origin even qualifies as a hypothesis, much less a theory because such are not falsifiable.

- God is transcendent, that is, entirely outside of and separate from His creation, even as He brings all things to pass. He is omnipresent, and intimately aware of every minute detail in the universe. God is no part of the universe, and the universe is no part of God. Nothing in the universe is “spiritual” or is divine in any way.

“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering” (Luke 11:52 ESV).

Based on the authority and reliability of Scripture (as seen above), a number of false teachings that take away the key of knowledge may be dismissed out of hand, such as:

- Other religions, including close counterfeits of Christianity, such as Islam, non-Messianic Judaism, Buddhism, Mormonism, and all forms of animism, polytheism, monism, or pantheism
- Philosophies or teachings that contradict the Holy Bible, such as the teachings of Marx, Darwin, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth, Bultmann, and so on
- Movements that contradict the Holy Bible, such as Marxism, Nazism, Communism, DEI and other “Woke” ideologies; or acceptance of homosexuality, transgenderism, free love (extramarital sex), feminism, and many others

In sum, only the world view and philosophy taught by the Holy Bible itself is true.

There are also false ways of reading or interpreting the Holy Bible that also take away the key of knowledge:

- From Creation forward, the Bible records, as true history, many miracles and fulfilled prophecies. These really happened, but many unbelieving “scholars” brazenly reinterpret the Scriptures, thinking that “science” disproves the existence of miracles and true prophecies of future events. For example, prophecies in the Holy Bible are deemed to be dated at the time of their fulfillment, and accounts of miracles are attributed to natural phenomena, observational error, or fraud. Please do not fall for these kinds of lies. They are false teachings that take away the key of knowledge.
- Because God is Truth Itself, the teachings of the Holy Bible must not in any way be subordinated to, interpreted in light of, or syncretized with or by any other religion, philosophy, dialectic, or way of thinking. The Holy Bible must be the *only* foundation for thought, knowledge, world view, metaphysics, and philosophy. Put another way, the Holy Bible must be interpreted *only* according to its *own* presuppositions, philosophies, and epistemology.⁸⁴ Any ideology that sets itself above the Holy Bible to determine its interpretations or teachings takes away the key of knowledge.
- In common with classical sound principles of literary interpretation, the reader must submit himself to the author’s original intent. For example, poetry must be read according to the rules for poetry (Hebrew or Greek), narratives must be read according to the rules of factual narratives, and so on. For another example, the medieval practice of interpreting the Bible allegorically was completely invalid and took away the key of knowledge.

⁸⁴ *Epistemology* is the theory of the grounds of knowledge and science of the methods of obtaining true knowledge.

There are a number of teachings in the Holy Bible that are assumed or only briefly mentioned in this *Sum*, that are important keys of knowledge by which one may benefit from this *Sum*.

- A person lives only one life on earth. Upon death, the soul goes either to Hell or Heaven. At the Last Judgment, everyone's body is resurrected and body and soul are joined together again. Bodies of those in Hell will be transformed into bodies able to experience and endure eternal torture without being consumed. Bodies of believers in Christ will be transformed into glorified bodies. For souls, there is no annihilation, soul sleep, reincarnation, transmigration or second chance at life on earth. Neither, as Plato taught, are souls preexistent; God gives a new soul to each child at biological conception.
- The laws of nature are fixed and unchanging because God operates the universe in detail in a manner consistent with His perfect wisdom and faithfulness. Miracles are just when God does something different for some good reason. Thus God's faithfulness and constancy enable the benefits of science, engineering, and progress. God's perfect and rational nature is why natural laws are most accurately expressed and related to one another in mathematics. Whatever happens, happens because God did it. This fact does not conflict with human responsibility for reasons known to God but incomprehensible to humans.
- Just as God's faithfulness ensures that natural laws do not ever change, so God's faithfulness and perfect holiness ensure that His moral laws never change and are not subject to human opinion. Engineers who design aircraft or rockets must give careful attention to the laws of nature pertaining to material strength, aerodynamics, weight and balance, and so on. If they were to pretend to make up their own laws of nature to do their designs, they would not work and would possibly kill people. The same inflexibility of the laws of nature is even more true with regard to God's moral laws.

Appendix 5: Helpful Background Information Expanded

As the title page tells us, the *Sum of Saving Knowledge* is a summary of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, and the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*.⁸⁵ These beloved works and derivatives from them have formed the doctrinal basis of many churches and denominations. Underlying the Westminster standards are certain biblical truths that are unfortunately rejected even by some churches and denominations. Similar to the Prerequisites above, the editor presents some of these matters with some simple evidences so that the reader may better understand and benefit from this *Sum*, whether or not he agrees with the views presented in the introduction or in this appendix.

Good Works

The almost universal view of the religions of the world is that one may earn the favor of God (or some other supposed deity) by doing “good works” or if one’s “good works” outweigh one’s bad deeds and faults. A variant of this is that the work of Jesus Christ *plus* “good works” results in salvation or entrance into Heaven. These ideas are utterly false. **“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Genesis 6:5 ESV). The truth is that *only* saving faith in Jesus Christ *alone* unites the believer to Christ and procures forgiveness of sins by His shed blood. By the Holy Spirit of Christ, Who is given to all believers, a believer can do actual good works because Christ removes the sin from them. This may be summarized with simple equations:

False: Good Works → Salvation

False: Saving Faith + Good Works → Salvation

False: Saving Faith + Christ + Good Works → Salvation

False: Saving Faith + Christ + *Anything* Else → Salvation

True: Faith in *Jesus Christ alone* → Salvation in Christ + Genuinely Good Works for God’s Glory

Faith

Faith is a word thrown about even by irreligious politicians seeking votes. It is also sometimes used as theological jargon, tending to obscure its true meaning. In the English Holy Bible, *believe* is the verb form and *faith* is the noun form of what is basically the same Greek word. Thus, *faith* and *believe* refer to the same concept: to trust and be committed to; less importantly, persuasion, confidence, and assurance. The English words *trust* and *believe*, on the other hand, are slightly different from one another; we may trust someone completely, but not believe a particular statement he makes. With respect to our Lord Jesus Christ, that is never acceptable thinking. The Old Testament is full of exhortations to *trust* God. *Faith* is rarely used to translate the Hebrew, but the concept is the same as *faith* in the New Testament where that word is widely used. Thus, there is great continuity between the Testaments concerning one of the most important commands of God to us. As noted above, no human is *able* to evaluate or judge God, His being, or His works. Therefore, trusting God, having faith in God,

⁸⁵ Translations of these works into contemporary American English may be found at <https://beforgiven.info/HostedLiterature.htm>

is the *only possible* rational and acceptable response of the human to God. Obedience and love of God and neighbor will naturally flow from true saving faith in God.

There is nothing wrong with seeking evidences in the Scriptures or good history or science in order to strengthen our assurance or persuasion of particular truths about God; such can be helpful and edifying. But fundamentally, faith is *not just* persuasion, but an act of the will, a choice we make, and must make, to trust in God and Christ, even in the face of apparently absent or contrary evidence. In this sense, faith resembles courage. Courage is not absence of fear, but doing the right thing in spite of fear. Likewise, faith is exercised when one obeys God and trusts in Christ, even if there is supposed evidence to the contrary or we have emotional doubts or intellectual uncertainty. And, the exercise of faith builds persuasion.

The Sovereignty of God

Speaking of faith, trusting God and honoring His majesty demands that we leave many mysteries to Him. Perhaps chief among these mysteries is the problem of why God allows (but is never the originator of) evil. It is to be expected that if God can create this entire vast universe with all the complexities of physics and biology and humanity in just six days, He certainly perfectly understands a great many things that are beyond human understanding. The term, *Elect* appears frequently in this *Sum*, a term that is right at the heart of questions regarding God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

Why is one child born into a well-off family of two loving parents in America while another child is born to a destitute drug-addicted single mother in a third-world dictatorship? Why does one senior die peacefully in comfort in his own bed while another is wracked with terrible agony from the disease that will soon kill him? Clearly, God does not treat all people "equally" in the physical world. Why then should we expect that God must treat all people "equally" with respect to salvation? The Apostle Paul, speaking for God, sternly rebukes those who would complain that God is somehow not fair or somehow does not "respect" our own choices: **"But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?'"** (Romans 9:20 ESV).

The Holy Bible clearly teaches that:

1. All of us are conceived in original sin, sinners, and rebels against God. Of ourselves, we are dead in our sins and thus *incapable* of exercising saving faith and repentance by our own strength.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ To *repent* means much more than sorrow or remorse over earthly consequences for sin. To *repent of sin* means to resolutely turn away from the sin and to God for grace against committing that sin again. Saving repentance is a wholesale resolute turning away from all sins and to God for grace.

2. But God, even before the creation of the world, in His unfathomably rich grace⁸⁷, did *elect*, that is choose, some people to receive the gift of regenerated hearts. The regenerated heart is thus *capable* of saving faith in Jesus Christ alone and saving repentance. This gift of salvation is called in Scripture being *born again / from above*.⁸⁸
3. The rest of mankind, those not chosen, not elect, God simply passed over, leaving them to the just consequences of their sins. Everyone who goes to Hell does so only because of his or her sinful, wrong choices.
4. How God's sovereignty and our responsibility are compatible with one another is God's problem, not ours. Our duty is to obey God. Each of us has the duty to obey God and repent of our sins and believe and accept Jesus Christ as our own Lord and Savior. We also have the duty to help propagate the saving Good News of Jesus Christ to those who are on the horrible road to Hell.

The reader is now equipped to understand the frequent use of *Elect* in this *Sum*.

As a practical matter, all true Christians do believe in and accept God's sovereignty and right to order things as He sees fit. All of us have unsaved family and friends who are clearly on the road to Hell. When we pray for their salvation, do we want God to "respect their freedom," or do we want God to lovingly reach down, grab hold of them, and save them—whether they like it or not? (And once saved, they will like it and greatly rejoice and thank God!)

Covenant Theology

Among American Evangelicals, there are two main organizing views of the Bible: *Covenant Theology* and *Dispensationalism*. Dispensationalism is quite new, originating only in the middle 1800s. By contrast, Jewish and Christian scholars have written for millennia on Covenant Theology, which concerns the covenants found in Scripture. Reformers, and especially the Westminster Divines, were instrumental in further elucidating Covenant Theology. It is no surprise then that this *Sum*, since it summarizes the Westminster Standards, presupposes Covenant Theology and mentions covenants very frequently.

In the Holy Bible, a *covenant* is very similar to what today we would call a contract, such as a business contract. In most contracts, there are stipulations as to the obligations of each party and penalties for a party that fails to meet its obligations. There are often provisions for *succession*, such as payments to beneficiaries or in case of mergers and acquisitions of companies. Biblical covenants will contain most or all of these elements. But the most significant difference between human contracts and the covenants God has given to mankind is that God unilaterally dictates the terms of His covenants in His mercy, goodness, and grace, for His glory.

87 *Grace*, in theological contexts, refers generally to any gift from God. Any gift from God is of His free choice and completely undeserved and unearned by any person. This was even true of Adam prior to the fall. Now, after the fall, since all people are sinners (even the Elect), any gift from God is even more contrary to what we deserve. The term *grace* emphasizes that God's gifts to us are given to us purely because of God's love and mercy and in spite of the fact we do not deserve anything but wrath from God.

88 The Greek can mean either *again* or *from above*. Given the richness of the Greek language, this editor contends that Scripture intends both meanings to be true; the "ambiguity" is deliberate.

The history of the presentation of Laws and teachings given in the Holy Bible does *not* reflect the state of the art of the theology of any historical period. For example, Adam's son Abel knew to sacrifice the firstborn of his flock and the fat—details of the ceremonial law that were not recorded in Scripture until the time of Moses. Also, relatively few of the divinely-inspired words uttered by prophets were recorded in the Scriptures. It is thus irrational to view the Holy Bible as presenting a series of different or changing theologies. Consequently, Covenant Theology views the entire Holy Bible as a whole, integrated literary work in which God (the actual Author), at various times, revealed, in writing, progressively more and more detailed information. The various covenants in the Bible reflect this, from the Covenant of Works with Adam to the Covenants of Grace with Noah, Abraham, Israel at Sinai, David, and so on. Unlike the case with human contracts, God unilaterally dictated each of these covenants to His people in love and grace. God typically promised (often implicitly) punishment for violating the covenant, but rewards for obeying Him. Often, as a sign or foretaste of eternal consequences, God included earthly punishments or rewards. The covenants of grace were earthly manifestations of the one eternal Covenant of Redemption (sometimes also called the Covenant of Grace) made among the Trinity in eternity, before Creation, to save sinners. All the covenants point to Jesus Christ and thus contain eternal promises, even to those Jews who have since rejected their Messiah; some day many of them will return to God, bringing great blessing on earth. Usually in this *Sum*, the covenant made in eternity by the Trinity is called the *Covenant of Redemption*, while its outworking as applied to believers on earth is called the *Covenant of Grace*.

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things” (Ephesians 3:8–9 ESV). Although many matters are made more clear in the New Testament, many of the teachings of the New Testament are also revealed in the Old Testament as may be seen by careful reading. Things such as the need to obey and glorify God are abundantly clear. For another example, there are dozens of commands to trust God. **“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God”** (Psalm 20:7 ESV). And *trust* is the core meaning of *faith*, a word found so frequently in the New Testament. To summarize: people were saved the same way in Old Testament days as now and, though progressively revealed in increasing detail, God's Word to mankind has always taught the same messages to us.

Just as parents will teach their children unchanging virtues such as obedience, kindness, and charity in all circumstances, but will have a few different rules for when they are at home, at the campground or beach, and as a guest in someone's home, so God gave some different rules appropriate to different circumstances in history, but his Moral Law and the way of salvation are unchanging. In brief, *Covenant Theology* is simply the study of the Covenants and surrounding historical events and prophecies in Scripture in their progressing historical context to learn more and more of God and of His magnificent gift of Jesus Christ to those who put their trust in Him.

We now briefly turn to Dispensationalism. Dispensationalism is hardly the only false organizing framework for interpreting the Scriptures, but it has been extremely popular and influential. There are many strains of Dispensationalism, but in general, Dispensationalism teaches:

- That God has changed His Moral Law at different times in human history

- That God changed his plans because the Jews crucified their Messiah
- Dispensationalism has placed great emphasis on certain past predictions of events to come during the “End Times,” which predictions failed to materialize

Many readers will be old enough to recall the numerous predictions by various writers, based upon Dispensational theology, that Christ would return in certain years, mostly from 1985 to 2000. None of these predictions came to pass. This fact alone is sufficient to discredit Dispensationalism. More importantly, the idea that God changes His Moral Law or is taken by surprise by human actions contradicts His unchangeableness, omniscience, and eternal wisdom.

Appendix 6: Editorial Philosophy and Processes

Motivation

This editor was given a copy of *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* done by another editor/author and found it to be spiritually helpful. It also occurred to this editor that it could serve as the foundation for an excellent Gospel tract. It is neither so long as to discourage readers from finishing it, nor so short as to leave readers with an incomplete understanding of the Gospel or without the means to begin to apply its teachings to their lives and examine their hearts for evidence of the true work of the Holy Spirit in them.

Unfortunately, that copy of this *Sum* was encumbered by a copyright,⁸⁹ precluding wide, inexpensive, and casual distribution. Other versions had the same problem, contained excessive embedded commentary, or were of uncertain accuracy. As the editor was already making a “retirement career” of translating Puritan era literature into contemporary American English, he decided to produce his own version. He has not referred to anyone else’s work to avoid suspicion of copyright violation. (Many months passed between his last reading of the *Sum* and beginning the present project; his senior brain thus ensured the complete independence of his work.) Use of the *CopyLeft* copyright license also ensures wide freedom of copying and distribution of this present version.

Critical Text Production

The editor began by collecting eleven facsimiles (photographic reproductions) of *Sum*, printed from 1660 to 1697, but only those between 1660 to 1685 saw significant use. All reproductions were substantially marred, mostly due to careless photography that resulted in missing text at the outer, and especially inner margins. Thanks be to God, however, the text content was surprisingly uniform except for idiosyncrasies in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation; these rarely left the intended word in doubt. In fact, it was observable that printers often simply propagated obvious errors. The result was that due to differences in typesetting, while one copy missed text at a margin, the same text would be near the center of the page in a different copy. The editor then chose two better quality facsimiles, and typed up the text, including capitalization, punctuation, and occurrences of white space as found for each of the two. One of the facsimiles turned out to be truncated, so recourse was had to a third to complete the process. Recourse was had to other facsimiles to obtain the text when required due to unreadable or missing text. Effort was made to use different facsimiles for this purpose for each of the main texts.

The result was two computer readable text files. The editor then wrote a program that displayed and compared the two text files, and which stopped and marked in both files the first place in which a discrepancy occurred. After correction, the comparison was restarted and the next discrepancy located. By repeating this to the ends of the files, two identical text files resulted from which both errors in the facsimiles and the editor’s own typing errors were eliminated. Virtually all of the discrepancies had

⁸⁹ This does not imply that copyrights are somehow wrong. Intellectual property is property just as merchandise is the property of the store until fairly purchased. The choice of whether to sell or give away work or goods is the free choice of the owner as led by God for particular purposes (1 Corinthians 9:1–19).

immediately obvious corrections. In a few cases, other facsimiles were consulted. In no case did any discrepancies survive the simple use of common sense and leave the intended text in doubt.

Translation into Contemporary American English

The next step was to render the resultant critical text into Contemporary American English. Accurate translation of the meaning of the original text is a vital and important goal. Nonetheless, however accurate the translation may be, if it is not accessible to the reader all is lost. Thus, readability is a paramount and overriding consideration. For this purpose, the following changes have been silently made during translation:

- Spelling and punctuation are modernized.
- Obsolete words are replaced with contemporary synonyms.
- Words that may not be obsolete, but whose common or contemporary meaning is often unknown or differs from that of the text, are likewise replaced with contemporary synonyms or defined.
- Occasionally, words, especially those with a precise theological meaning, are explained in footnotes.
- Overly long and run-on sentences (by contemporary standards) are broken up into multiple sentences. The subject or verb may be repeated in such cases for clarity.
- Embedded lists are sometimes bulleted or ordered (numbered), particularly where the structure is complex, the list long, or the list items are complex phrases, clauses, or sentences.
- In some cases, the order of phrases is altered for clarification or ease of reading.
- Other small changes are often made that make the text easier to read, such as substituting the antecedent for a pronoun.
- Footnotes give explanations of terms or concepts so that the reader may more fully understand the text. Because the *Sum* is directed at those not yet Christians, as well as present believers, such footnotes are rather extensive in this case.
- There are places in which this *Sum* quotes or references Bible texts whose reading is substantially different from one or more major modern Bible translations. Thus modern readers of certain Bible versions may be at a loss to compare their modern Bible text to that of the *Sum*. In such cases, the editor has included footnotes to explain the matter.
- Also, there are a couple of places in this *Sum* that the editor believes to be in error; the editor has been conscience-bound to use footnotes to correct the error. Let the readers be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures for themselves.
- The contemporary text generally follows American usage per the *Chicago Manual of Style*.⁹⁰
- In the few places where a Greek or Hebrew word used, the pronunciation given is that in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.⁹¹
- Godly men and women of the time thoroughly and equally included women with men as human beings made in the image of God. They understood references to “men,” “mankind,” and so on,

90 *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 2017.

91 This work is published widely in both paper and electronic form. This book uses the version supplied by the *Crosswire Project* (<http://www2.crosswire.org/sword/modules/ModDisp.jsp?modType=Dictionaries>). For software with which to access it and to obtain the latest versions, start with <http://www.crosswire.org/applications>.

as completely including both sexes. Use of masculine pronouns to include both sexes was not at all considered sexist. This understanding and usage is also that of the Holy Scriptures. The editor has generally, where possible, reasonable, and feasible without violence to the text, used language that includes both sexes. However, in many cases, the editor has seen fit to retain the language, pronouns, and constructions of the original in order to avoid undue violence to the original. In particular, the use of *they* as if it were a singular pronoun is avoided; one is left wondering who are the “other” people referenced. The use of *he* or *him* to refer to one indefinite person of either sex has millennia of usage with no hint of sexism.

The editor welcomes constructive feedback and corrections at the email address given below.
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Colophon

“And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith” (Matthew 21:22 ESV).

“For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7 ESV).

The editor gives thanks and praise to the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit for many answers to prayer and for whatever good and usefulness may be found in this translation. Its defects are entirely his own.