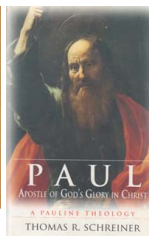
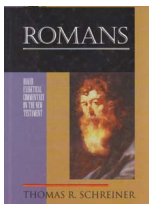
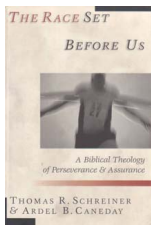


Book review of "Justification According to Dr. Thomas Schriener"



A Brief Background on Justification

Dr. Charles Ryrie provides a simple definition of justification - "To announce a favorable verdict, to declare righteous[1]." Elwell states, "The basic fact of biblical religion is that God pardons and accepts believing sinners[2]." In Christian Theology, Millard J. Erickson says "The individual's legal status must be changed from guilty to not guilty. This is a matter of one's being declared just or righteous in God's sight, of being viewed as fully meeting the divine requirements. The theological term here is justification. One is justified by being brought into a legal union with Christ.[3]" For one to obtain eternal life and to be saved from the penalty of sin, justification must take place. Paul tells us in Roman 4:25 - 5:1 how justification takes place and what it results in: "He [Christ] who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification. Therefore, having been justified out of faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The anthem of the Reformation echoed Paul with and against the Catholic Church with "sola fide." Faith alone in Christ alone for eternal life results in justification.

A response to the Reformation came from the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent (1546-1563). Appendix 20 lists 33 anathemas concerning justification. Canon 9 states, "**If anyone shall say that by faith alone the sinner is justified**, so as to understand that nothing else is required to cooperate in the attainment of the grace of justification, and that it is in no way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will; **let him be anathema. (emphasis mine)**" One is considered accursed if they hold to the Reformed belief of "sola fide." In Canon 20, the church's position on faith alone is stated: "If any one shall say that the man who is justified and how perfect soever, is not bound to observe the commandments of God and of the Church, but only to believe; **as if indeed the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life, without the condition of observing the commandments; let him be anathema. (emphasis mine)**" Works are an essential addition to faith for justification to occur. This position was reaffirmed by the Catholic Church in Vatican II (1962-1965): "This sacred council accepts loyally the venerable faith of our ancestors in the living communion which exists between us and our brothers who are who are in the glory of heaven or who are yet being purified after their death; and it proposes again the decrees of the Second Council of Nicea, of the Council of Florence, and of the Council of Trent." Pope John Paul II stated in the Los Angeles Times, March 8, 1983 that, "Man is justified by works and not by faith alone."

Protestants and Catholics had drawn a clear line and understanding as to the requirements for a person to obtain eternal life. There seemed to be little doubt as to the distinctions between those from a Reformed background and belief system and those who held to the doctrines of Catholicism. The key point being faith alone in Christ alone for eternal life.

But yet this line is being alarmingly blurred. Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner, a professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky is holding to a position of justification salvation that, upon examination, seems far from the teachings of Luther and Calvin. He has written numerous books which include a commentary on [Romans](#)[4] [ROMANS] in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, [Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ - A Pauline Theology](#)[5] [PAUL], [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) in The New American Commentary [PETER][6], and (with Dr. Ardel B. Caneday) [The Race Set Before Us](#)[7] [RACE]. This paper is provided to document the position of justification salvation of Dr. Schreiner through the use of his own statements as found in the aforementioned texts.

A Confused Protestant Makes a Good Catholic

Schreiner sees no distinction between eternal life and eternal rewards. He combines issues of justification, sanctification, and glorification into one issue - all deal with salvation from hell. For justification, the type of faith and the duration of it is an overriding factor beyond the object of faith, Jesus Christ. Because of beliefs like these, Schreiner advocates positions that are in agreement with Catholic doctrine. These positions include:

- Righteous behavior is utterly necessary to obtain eternal life.
- Good works are an essential part of salvation and is the means by which salvation is obtained.
- Eternal life is a prize to be won.
- Salvation is a future reality and women must practice godly behavior to receive it.
- Without discipline one cannot be godly, and without godliness one cannot gain the eternal life of the age to come.
- Conversion, repentance, faith, and baptism are alternate and overlapping ways of describing coming to Christ for salvation.
- Only those who continue to live a life of godliness will receive the reward of eternal life.

Any message that overreaches (1 Cor 4:6), falls short (Rev 22:18, 19), or changes (Gal 1:6-10) Scripture is truly "anathema" far beyond the disapproval of the Catholic Church. The Evangelical Church ought not to lie still without any response. It's important to know what future pastors are being taught in our seminaries. When the evangelistic message from Protestant pulpits is no different than the halls of the Vatican, the distinction, freeness, and simplicity of the New Testament and the Reformers is lost. An adoption of Schreiner's practical soteriology is to surrender to the similar tenets of every major world religion - we get to heaven through good works.

As a theologian, Schreiner imposes vague standards and unambiguous generalities in the hopes of avoiding legalism and with the goal of cultivating a calming assurance in his listeners. But failing to provide specifics - what good works are required, who needs to observe these good works, and what amount of time is involved to accomplish the deeds - doesn't help his readers. Instead of calm, anxiety naturally results when requirements are imposed, great penalties are attached, and detailed information is lacking. Those under Catholic and Islamic doctrine at least operate under concrete and exact standards to obtain a place in heaven.

Schreiner teaches that a Christian must persevere throughout and up to the very end of their life. It's unclear who's responsible for this perseverance (*God or believer*) but it really doesn't matter. No relief is found regardless because one still won't know if they persevered until the very end. If God is responsible and I didn't persevere unto the end then I really wasn't a Christian to begin with so I go to hell. If I'm responsible and I didn't persevere unto the end then it's my fault so I go to hell. Either way I go to hell so what's the difference in the lake of fire? A failure to realize that failure is possible only sets people up to fail.

I once sat down with three Muslim students on the campus of Arizona State University and shared the free gift of eternal life with them. An uneasy response was clear when I told them that works were not needed to get to heaven, only faith in Christ was. I asked them what they believed would happen to them when they died. They stated, "We'll stand before Allah and he'll weigh our good deeds against our bad deeds." I asked them how they knew if they had enough good deeds to make it. Their response: "That's the hell of it. You never know if you've done enough."

Schreiner's theology, when taken to its logical conclusion, offers no more comfort or clarity than what these three Muslim men had. Because of this, it's important to challenge unbiblical theology like Schreiner is advocating. It's more than winning a theological argument in the cool, clean halls of academia. Eternity is at stake. Like Paul, there needs to be courage and conviction to correct leaders/scholars who, like Peter with the Judiasers in Galatia, are in error. To fail to do so will impact the eternal destinies and quality of life of millions of people who are looking for abundant life, life indeed, and eternal life. Surely Paul's challenge prompted Peter to change his mind in the end (2 Pt 3:14). He eventually

found himself thinking as Paul did in reference to salvation. If Peter could do it, hopefully those who hold to Schreiner's view can do it too.

Reward or Gift or Both?

Dr. Schreiner believes that eternal life is a free gift. Dr. Schreiner believes that eternal life is an earned reward. These two contrasting and conflicting positions can be seen in his writings.

He clearly declares eternal life as free gift. "The one who does the work gets the honor and praise; and thus if salvation is not wholly of God, then we deserve a reward. But since righteousness is from God alone through Christ, the glory and honor of our salvation are his." (PAUL pg.248) "When we come to faith, we surrender any notion that our works are the basis upon which we can be right in God's sight. Similarly any good works we do subsequent to faith can never be the basis of our right standing before God. We believe that salvation is of the Lord. We will be saved on the last day because of God's sovereign work, for the one who elected and called us will also glorify us (Rom 8:29-30)" (RACE pg. 278) "We shall be saved on the day of the Lord from God's wrath by virtue of Christ's work on the cross." (RACE pg. 81) "If righteousness were based on works, however, then we would merit reward for accomplishing what God demanded." (PAUL pg.210)

In contrast to these statements, Schreiner provides contradictory ones that hold that eternal life is an earned reward. "Those who leave all for Jesus will receive eternal life in the age to come, and thus we can conclude that eternal life is a gift of the coming age (cf. Lk. 18:30)" (RACE pg. 66) "Those who do good works will receive eternal life (Rom 2:6-7)." (RACE pg. 66) "God will reward perseverance in good deeds with 'salvation.'" (RACE pg. 165) Again, Schreiner says, "Conversely, Paul insists that one must do good works to receive eschatological vindication (Gal 6:4-5; 2 Cor 5:10). The reward in these texts is eternal life itself, entrance into the kingdom of God." (PAUL pg.282)

Schreiner takes the position that eternal life is a gift that is rewarded to those who persevere. He states, "Life is a treasure that is acquired on the last day (1 Tim 6:19). Paul refers to the 'hope of eternal life' (Tit 1:2, 3:7), indicating that it is something believers do not yet possess. James assures his readers that a 'crown of life' is promised to those who endure testings (Jas 1:12), and John assures those who are faithful until death that they will receive a 'crown of life' (Rev 2:10). The preceding tests demonstrate that eternal life is a gift of the coming age." (RACE pg. 66) "We run hard and long to receive the prize at the conclusion of the race." (RACE pg. 46) Schreiner believes that eternal life is a prize and it is acquired (*synonyms - buy, purchase, earn*) on the last day through endurance. This is not the definition of a gift and this theology holds that no endurance results in no gift.

Further statements that show Schreiner's understanding that eternal life is a reward or a prize that is earned is seen. "Our future prize may be described as the kingdom, salvation, redemption, eternal life, resurrection, sonship, an adoption, an inheritance, sanctification, perfection and righteousness." (RACE pg. 79) "Those who overcome will receive a reward. But what is the reward for overcomers? We would argue that it is eternal life itself." (RACE pg. 83) Even though eternal life is not mentioned at all in the book of James, Schreiner writes, "But a canonical reading of James suggest that eternal life itself is the reward." (RACE pg. 84) A failure to make a distinction between eternal rewards and eternal life is seen: "The crown of life in Revelation 2:10 is not a reward above and beyond eternal life; it is eternal life itself." (RACE pg. 84) This failure to make this distinction is also seen in confusing statements such as: "The reward we receive by faith in Christ is based on grace alone; it is not grounded on our achievement." (RACE pg. 89) Eternal life is a gift but when it becomes a reward it is based on grace but yet given as a reward.

In The Race Set Before Us a denial that God pays believers for good works with eternal rewards and not eternal life is presented. "God's reward for us is not earned wages" (RACE pg. 90) Schreiner says. He continues by explaining that "The relationship between the believer and God is not identical to the employee and the employer relationship, but only analogical or metaphorical. While the employer pays wages out of indebtedness to the employee, God gives a reward to the believer purely out of his grace, and the author of Hebrews certainly believes this (see, e.g. Heb 4:16, 12:15)." (RACE pg. 91) This understanding is not in keeping with how the term is used by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. A literal, historical, grammatical interpretation ought to keep us away from analogies and metaphors. A gift is not a reward nor is a reward a gift, either in English, Hebrew, or Greek. Schreiner writes, "Paul's exhortation [1 Tim 6:12] is unambiguous, though it is often misunderstood. He clearly states that eternal life is the prize to be won by running after it with athletic vigor and resolve." (RACE pg. 100, 101)

Schreiner's view on the necessity of works and the employer/employee relationship between God and man is strikingly similar to that espoused by Catholic apologist Robert A. Sungenis. Sungenis grew up in a Roman Catholic home, converted to the Protestant faith, attended Westminster Theological Seminary, and for ten years was a strong proponent of Protestantism and Reformed theology. He converted back to Roman Catholicism and is

now a leading apologist for Catholicism. Sungenis writes in his book, Not by Faith Alone, "The conclusion must be that works are necessary for salvation, and, in fact, are one of the principle determining factors in whether or not one obtains salvation. We say this with the proviso that Paul outrightly [sic] condemns works done with a view toward *obligating* God to pay the worker with salvation. Man can never put God in the position of being in debt to an imperfect and sinful creature. The only way God can accept our works is through his grace. Works done under the auspices of God's grace, that is, works done that do not demand payment from God but are rewarded only due to the kindness and mercy of God, are the work that Paul requires for salvation.[8]"

Schreiner continues by stating that "One gains the prize of eternal life only by running the race." (RACE pg. 89) This concept is not found in the gospel of John. Paul's terms for prize (βραβεῖον) and race (competitive game - στάδιον) are not found in this context in any of the gospels. Schreiner is aware of context issues because with the term 'belief' he states, "...its meaning in any context depends on its use. It is usage that determines meaning and usage is concerned with the function of words within a context." (RACE pg. 118) What is true for the term belief is true for the term reward.

Effort on the part of the Christian is key in obtaining eternal life. "Likewise, we must exercise the muscles of faith to strengthen godly character with the ultimate objective to win the prize of eternal life. We train for godliness to gain victory in the contest for eternal life." (RACE pg. 109)

Numerous times throughout Romans, Galatians and Ephesians Paul provides an understanding that faith is the means by which a person is saved from an eternal death penalty. Christ is the object and the gift of eternal life is given when the correct means is placed in the correct object. According to the biblical text, faith is the one and only means (Rom 1:16, 17, Eph 2:8, 9). Schreiner offers a variety of means beyond faith by which a person is justified. "Jesus' words indicate that perseverance to the end is the necessary condition. Perseverance is a (emphasis mine) means that God has appointed by which one will be saved." (RACE pg. 151) "So what is Jesus saying? [Mt 10:22] He is saying that perseverance to the end is God's (emphasis mine) means by which anyone will be saved." (RACE pg. 152) "It is because his warnings function as the (emphasis mine) means God uses to secure salvation that he promises them with the assurance that God will surely save his chosen ones." (RACE pg. 160) "Precisely because God has established this inviolable connection [obedience leading to righteousness (Rom 6:16)], the apostle's reminder is both a warning and an admonition that functions as one of God's (emphasis mine) means to bring about our salvation." (RACE pg. 170) "His death is the (emphasis mine) means by which believers have been delivered from the 'present evil age' (Gal 1:4) and inducted into the new age." (PAUL pg.190) But the Pastoral Epistles also emphasize that good works are an essential part of salvation. They are the evidence of genuine salvation and the (emphasis mine) means by which salvation is obtained on the last day." (PAUL pg.285) "What marks off Paul from some of his Jewish contemporaries is his emphasis that faith constitutes the (emphasis mine) means by which one obtains righteousness, and that Abraham was part of the people of God before he kept the law by receiving circumcision." (ROMANS pg. 216) Schreiner advocates perseverance, warning passages, Christ's death, and good works, along with faith to be the various means in obtaining eternal life.

In order to obtain eternal life, Schreiner says that belief in Christ is insufficient. A person must submit as a slave to Christ. He states that "...the outcome of being enslaved to God is eternal life, God's free gift in Christ Jesus our Lord." (RACE pg. 171)

Salvation & Wrath

Dr. Schreiner in his writings consistently equates wrath with eternal damnation and salvation as rescue from this wrath. There is reluctance in seeing that wrath can be temporal discipline. There is an unwillingness to see that salvation can mean a person is saved from the power of sin (*sanctification - Rom 6:19*), saved from the presence of sin (*glorification - Phil 3:20, 21*), healing from physical infirmities (Mk 5:28), or a rescue from the temporal consequences of sinful decisions (Jonah 2:9) or harm from wicked people (Psm 37:40).

Numerous times he mentions errors, biases, and the presuppositions encountered in biblical interpretation and theology. "However, we all come to the Bible with biases. All of us read the Bible with a point of view already in place, a point of view that needs to adjust to Scripture. Therefore, we tend to read biblical passages through our point of view so that, without intending to do so, we adjust words and phrases and clauses to fit our perceptions and biases. None of us ever completely escapes this." (RACE pg. pg 20, 21) In his critique of other theological views, he addresses errors that he believes others encounter in determining their theological and hermeneutical conclusions. He states, "...Christians adjust biblical warnings and conditional promises to conform to their theological commitments." (RACE pg. 154) "However, anxiety over these two concerns not only leads some to novel and excessive interpretations of this passage [Phil 3:10] but also distracts many from understanding the apostle's meaning." (RACE pg. 188) "This [understanding

of first-class conditions] demonstrates how easy it is to impose one's theological bias on the text." (RACE pg. 189) "The tendency among scholars is to overinterpret such texts [texts with first-class conditions], either to exclude doubt or to accent doubt, depending largely on one's theological commitments." (RACE pg. 192) "It is conceivable that scholars can be wrong, and they are in error frequently concerning the first-class condition." (RACE pg. 192) Schreiner is willing to point out the bias of other scholars. "...each seems to bias his case...", "...the very questions they raise imply their respective conclusions", "...protect their own theological commitments." (RACE pg. 195) Perhaps his willingness should extend to his own approach to the biblical text.

Schreiner makes an interesting hermeneutical comment, perhaps an indication of overinterpretation on his part. When speaking of warning passages he states, "Therefore, the first question we should ask concerning the five passages in Hebrews concerns the function of each passage. What purpose or objective does it serve? **What was the author's intention** (*emphasis mine*)?" (RACE 195) Our task in hermeneutics is not to seek the author's intentions but to determine what the author said. Zuck offers an interpretative reminder when he says, "We cannot get behind a person's writing to know his intentions. All we can do is look at what he actually wrote; it is in this way that we know his intended meaning.[\[9\]](#)"

In explaining wrath, Schreiner writes "God's wrath refers [in 1 Ths 5:9] to his wrath that he will inflict on the wicked on the day of judgment (cf Rom 5:9). Believers are not appointed to receive wrath on the day of judgment; instead, we shall obtain the gift of salvation promised to us." (RACE pg. 50) But yet God's wrath is not limited to being eternally separated from Him (hell-spiritual death). Rene Lopez has written an excellent paper demonstrating that "wrath" as found in the biblical text consistently deals with temporal discipline or judgment[\[10\]](#). Except for Jn 3:36 "wrath" can be understood in the NT as a consistent and contextual reference to temporal discipline and not eternal damnation. What Schreiner does with "wrath" he scolds grace theologians for their understanding and use of the term belief. He writes, "To read John's words [John 8:30] as though the Jews' belief was 'saving faith' reflects a naïve reading of the text at three levels. First, it unveils a simplistic understanding of word usage. This is what linguists call the prescriptive fallacy, namely, the notion that a word bears only one meaning and has the same meaning wherever it is used." (RACE pg. 118)

Schreiner writes, "Salvation means that we have been rescued from sin and death as well as from God's wrath. Believers are delivered from the realm of Satan and transferred to the kingdom of God's Son (Acts 26:18, Col 1:12-13)" (RACE pg. 48) "The Scriptures use the noun *salvation* and the verb *save* to denote our rescue from sin and God's wrath." (RACE pg. 48) "But Paul **always** (*emphasis mine*) uses the noun *soteria* to refer to spiritual or eschatological salvation, and this includes his use in Philippians 1:19 and 1:28." (RACE pg. 184)

But yet Schreiner recognizes that *salvation* or *saved* can also "...denote God's intervention to deliver his people in other situations, such as during the period of the judges..." (RACE pg. 48) - salvation from temporal wrath not hell or spiritual death. He recognizes that "...Israel will be saved from her enemies and enjoy the fullness of the covenantal blessing promised to Abraham and David." and that Jews understood salvation meaning that "...salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us (Lk 1:71 NIV) (RACE pg. 53) "In the Old Testament, redemption often refers to the liberation of Israel from Egypt." (RACE pg. 57) None of the contexts deals with hell but with physical or limited discipline or consequence. He seems to be aware of context because with the term 'belief' he states, "...its meaning in any context depends on its use. It is usage that determines meaning and usage is concerned with the function of words within a context." (RACE pg. 118) This is also true for rewards. Schreiner references Psalm 36:5-6: "Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O lord (NRSV)" Animals are saved, but from hell? Luke shares with us that Paul was saved - saved from drowning during a storm at sea (Acts 27:20, 31). Context tells us what a thing or person is saved from.

Schreiner writes that "Forgiveness of sins is our greatest need before God and the basis on which all other blessing become ours." (RACE pg. 75) He states "In that sense righteousness is fundamental to the Pauline gospel and addresses the greatest need of human beings, namely, forgiveness of sins." (PAUL pg.193) The gospel of John says that our greatest need is eternal life. It only mentions forgiveness twice in one verse (Jn 20:23). Life is mentioned at least 36 times in the gospel. In [Harmony with God](#)[\[11\]](#), Zane Hodges explains, forgiveness is personal harmony with God and should not be thought of as being acquitted from a legal infraction. Thus, forgiveness is not the same as justification. In support of this, 1 Jn 1:9 is directed at Christians who are already justified and have a relationship with their Father but who need forgiveness. The reason justified Christians (*relationship/justification*) need forgiveness is to experience harmony with God (*fellowship/sanctification*) and make Him their Friend again. Schreiner's understanding of "walking in darkness" (RACE pg. 77) in 1 John 1:6 as an indicator of being an unbeliever

seems forced considering that as 1 John 1:6,8,9,10 all refer to both John and his audience ("we") - believers. This understanding is a product of his narrow understanding of wrath and salvation.

Faith That Works

In obtaining eternal life, faith is the means, Christ is the object, and eternal life is the free gift. An understanding of faith impacts a person's application of justification. Schreiner makes a clear statement that is consistent with a Reformed position. He writes: "'Everyone who believes is justified' (Acts 13:39), showing that righteousness becomes theirs when they believe. Righteousness is given to all now when they believe through God's grace." (RACE pg. 78) "To see means to believe; to believe in the Son of God is to look to him for life." (RACE pg. 123)

Schreiner continues this line of thought by stating, "He saves those who put their faith in Jesus, and he judges his Son at the Cross." (PAUL pg.210) But then he makes a contrasting statement. "Even though salvation is an eschatological gift predicated on belief, Paul never separates belief from ongoing obedience. Those who long for salvation must renounce the works of darkness and embrace the weapons of the light (Rom 13:11-14). Salvation will be granted only to the one who experiences 'the destruction of the flesh' (1 Cor 5:5). One who sins and is not granted repentance (2 Tim 2:25-26) will not be saved. With all urgency Paul exhorts his hearers to produce (kategazesthe) their own salvation (Phil 2:12), knowing that **righteous behavior** - though not the ground of salvation - **is utterly necessary to obtain salvation.** (*emphasis mine*)" (PAUL pg.226) This is clearly beyond the Reformed anthem, "sola fide."

Schreiner then defines what faith is and connects it to obedience. "To believe is to 'fight the good fight' to the very end, for there is no conquest and there is no righteous pronouncement at the end apart from persevering to the end." (RACE pg. 116) "Christian belief does not deduce from the athletic metaphor that the use of verbs such as *run, strive, press on, compete* or *lay hold of* denotes actions called 'works' that stand over against 'faith.' Rather, we will show that all these verbs in the athletic metaphor are symbolic representations of Christian faith." (RACE pg. 105) To get to this type of understanding he has to move away from the plain, literal, historical, grammatical interpretation principle. He writes, "Belief in Jesus Christ entails denying oneself both gratification of sinful appetites and any pleasure, though not evil in itself, that steals affection for Christ." (RACE pg. 135) This is a definition that moves far beyond trust or confidence.

Schreiner writes "'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath' (John 3:36 NRSV). To believe in Jesus Christ is to obey him. One who does not obey him also does not believe in him." (RACE pg. 131) To disobey, in the context, is to refuse to believe in the Son for eternal life not immoral or unbiblical conduct. The Gospel of John was written so that a person might trust in Christ, not conduct, to obtain eternal life (John 20:30, 31).

Schreiner continues to link faith and obedience. "This is because faith, by its very God-created design, springs into obedient behavior." (RACE pg. 95) "The dynamism of faith is also clear because obedience flows from it." (PAUL pg.211) "Obedience and faith are not equal partners because obedience flows from and is rooted in faith." (PAUL pg.211) Jesus spoke to his disciples about abiding, bearing fruit, and obedience in John 15. Twenty-one (21) times between verses 2 and 17 the subjunctive mood is used in reference to these issues. This mood with this topic indicates that obedience does not automatically flow from faith. Obedience, fruit, and abiding are possibilities for Christians based upon choice not certainties from God. "Faithfulness is the proof of faith." (RACE pg. 96) He takes a hard line with this statement and then backpedals. "Regrettably, it is true that we find ourselves too easily speaking or acting contrary to a belief we profess, confirming that fact that God's gift of faith is not yet perfected in us." (RACE pg. 96)

He states, "We have already seen in our discussion of Romans 6:17 that for Paul, belief in Jesus Christ is properly expressed as obedience to Christ, not in the sense of adhering to regulations but of coming fully under Christ as Lord, of wholehearted devotion to him. This is the obedience Paul calls for here." (RACE pg. 183, 184) But yet, obedience and wholehearted devotion to Christ are good works. Faith is trust, hope, confidence.

Again, he states, "To believe is to engage in strict self-discipline, to compete in the good competition of faith, to run, to land blows on oneself, to look to the Son of God for life, to eat of his flesh and to drink of his blood, to hear and follow his voice." (RACE pg. 140,141) "God promises to give salvation to all who believe and to them alone. Yet, at the same time, another observation emerges from the biblical text concerning Christian faith. **Christian belief must be obedient in order for us to receive eternal life.** (*emphasis mine*)" (RACE pg. 144) "Rather, his conditional promise [perseverance required for eternal life] explains and amplifies the gospel's call for belief by making the point that no one who will be saved in the end can ignore the requirement of persistent faith and devotion to Jesus Christ." (RACE pg. 153)

Schreiner believes that faith is a gift and an effort. "Just as eternal life is at once both a gift we already possess and a prize we have not yet won, similarly faith is a gift we receive and an action we exert." (RACE pg. 140) He also believes that regeneration precedes faith. "The only reason any of us believes in Jesus Christ is that God's Spirit implants life in us." (RACE pg. 136) "Because Jesus breathes life into us, we believe." (RACE pg. 138) Regeneration does not precede faith. The reason a person believes in Jesus Christ is because the Spirit convicts them (John 16:8-11). A person is born again after believing in Christ for eternal life, not before belief. (John 3:1-16, 3:36, Eph 1:13) Even though elect, a person must still believe. The numerous calls to believe indicate that belief is the responsibility of the person, not an obligation that God assists with.

Instead of a change of mind, Schreiner takes the classic Reformed position that, "Faith involves a radical turning to the one and only God, and the shift in loyalty signifies a new vision of the future." (PAUL pg.271) "Conversion is closely associated with repentance, since the former denotes turning to God and the latter turning away from sin." (RACE pg. 64) By taking a Reformed definition of repentance as turning from sin (*a good work*) it moves Schreiner closer to the Catholic understanding of justification. He says, "We conclude that the evidence presented to defend universalism is unpersuasive and that **repentance and faith are necessary to enjoy eschatological salvation.** (*emphasis mine*)" (PAUL pg.188) This, according to his definition of repentance, is "sola fide + turning from sin." "Faith and repentance are ultimately inseparable, and they are constituent parts of the saving process." (PAUL pg.247)

Schreiner also goes beyond the Greek present tense. He says, "John's text does not say that a singular act of faith receives eternal life; rather, it is 'the one who believes,' which means one who is characterized by believing....He is the one who gives life forever to those who fasten their gaze on him, which is to say, to those who believe in him and continue to believe." (RACE pg. 123) "Such an observation [believers will be glorified if they continue in faith] is true in the sense that no one will be glorified if he or she ceases to believe" (PAUL pg.277) [Numbers 21:8, 9, Jn 3:14-15] "The point we are making is not to deny that one look of faith saves. Rather, looking that does not persist does not save." (RACE pg. 123, 124) "Saving faith constantly looks to Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice as the way of life, recognizing our inability and weakness to do anything to please God (Rom 8:5-8)." (RACE pg. 94) It should be noted that these statements are inconsistent with the Greek present tense. In Syntax of New Testament Greek we read, "It is often said that the present tense expresses linear action. This is almost always true in the subjunctive, optative, and imperative moods and in the infinitive and the participle. It is usually true in the indicative mood, but some presents express punctiliar action and a few even express perfective actions. Only in the indicative mood does the present tense also indicate time of action, action which takes place in the present.[12]" Dillow reminds us that, "Often the present tense has a punctiliar meaning.[13]" He also says, "The argument [of continuous action] from the articular present participle is simply wrong. While it is true that the present tense can sometimes carry a durative force ('continue'), it is not intrinsic to the tense and must be established from the context. The articular present participle, however, rarely, if ever, has durative force; it is merely a substantive.[14]" Punctiliar meaning is found in passages such as Mt 5:22, 28, 9:2, 26:63, Mk 2:5, Lk 7:8, 12:44, Jn 5:34, 9:25, Acts 8:23, 9:34, 16:18, 26:1, 1 Ths 1:10. A continuing action of the present tense in these passages is inadequate and not called for. Schreiner's observations are also inconsistent with the historical account of Israel and the bronze serpent. One look of faith saved the life of any Hebrew that looked on it not a continuous, never-ending gaze.

The consistency of faith is crucial to Schreiner also. "It is faith that endures to the end, faith that is the dominant motif of a believer's life" (RACE pg. 275) But yet there is no instruction as to how to make faith dominant or how dominant it has to be. It is Christ, the object of our faith, not faith (*or the non-biblical concept of false or insincere faith*), that provides eternal life. Certainly devotion to Christ is a good work that is above and beyond faith. It is a work that Paul dismisses in Rom 4:4, 5, Eph 2:8, 9 and Titus 3:5.

Christ gave a picture of what believing is. In John 6:54 he provides a metaphorical image of belief in Him for eternal life as eating and drinking. These actions are not work but to engage in them is to passively appropriate food (in this case - Christ for eternal life). Schreiner would disagree. He states, "If we conceive of Christian faith as only a passive resting on God, we have an inadequate concept." (RACE pg. 95) "Saving faith is not passive." (PAUL pg.210) The picture Christ gives of faith in Him for eternal life of eating and drinking is passive appropriation. It isn't in any way linked to obedience or behavior. It should be noted that "Christian" faith is a non-biblical term used by Schreiner. Other non-biblical terms used by Schreiner to describe faith and belief are "spurious," "authentic," and "fickle." (RACE pg. 119, 120) Schreiner's understanding of faith gives the means of salvation more importance than the object. The amount, type, and duration of faith are non-biblical qualifiers in issues of justification. In the end, when faith is defined as a work (*as Schreiner does*), then faith must be as on-going as the works it represents.

Already-But-Not-Yet

An inconsistent application of context can cultivate contradictions. An inconsistent application of context, especially in regards to the various aspects of salvation, compels a person to blend together the theological distinctions of justification, sanctification, and glorification. As a result of this, Schreiner presents his view of salvation as already-but-not-yet. Eternal life is something we have now but is also something we'll get in the day of the Lord.

Even though Schreiner ascribes different titles to various views of biblical rewards and warning passages, the issue, as described by him, comes down to two views - 1.) The prize is salvation, eternal life and 2.) The prize is not salvation but eternal rewards. In describing the latter minority view as **the loss-of-rewards view** (RACE pg. 24) he states that tenets of this theological position believe that "...the gospel requires only faith for salvation; there is no role at all for obedience or good works in salvation." (RACE pg. 26)

He believes that "Advocates of the loss-of-rewards view, on the other hand, adopt a novel reading of [1 Cor 6:9-10]." (RACE pg. 28) This "novel reading", as held by Hodges, Ryrie, Radmacher, Wilkens, Oberholtzer, Chay (*to name a few*) is that inheriting the Kingdom of God is different than entering it. In regards to eternal life, Schreiner accurately describes this position as "The prize is not salvation but rewards." (RACE pg. 29) Schreiner informs the reader that "We first believed that those who hold the loss-of-reward view explained the relationship best, but later we came to agree with those who teach that warnings are tests of the genuineness of one's faith." (RACE pg. 38) This "novel reading" is consistent with what Schreiner advocates linguistically: "What is true in English is also true in the biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek." (RACE pg. 41) In English, inherit does not mean the same thing as enter.

Besides the loss-of-reward view, three other views besides his own are presented:

- **The loss-of-salvation view** (RACE pg. 21) "The prize is salvation, eternal life." (23) This view held by John Wesley, Scott McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (RACE pg. 22, 23)
- **The Test-of-genuineness view** (RACE pg. 29) "The prize is salvation, eternal life." (34) This view held by John McArthur, S. Lewis Johnson, and Wayne Grudem (RACE pg. 31, 32, 34)
- **The hypothetical-loss-of-salvation-view** (RACE pg. 35) "The prize is salvation, eternal life." (36) This view held by B.F. Wescott (RACE pg. 36)

The last (fifth) view addressed by Schreiner is his own: **the means-of-salvation-view** (RACE pg. 40) where, like the three previous views, "The prize is salvation, eternal life." (RACE pg. 40)

He clarifies his understanding of salvation. "Salvation, in other words, is not only a term to describe what God has already done by justifying and converting us but also a word that portrays what God has not yet done when he will bring us to 'the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls' (**1 Pt 1:9**)" (RACE pg. 44) "Once we grasp the eschatological tension between the future and the present, it is understandable that Paul also describes salvation as an ongoing process in the present." (PAUL pg.228) "Redemption is a present possession in Christ Jesus. Nonetheless, the not-yet dimension of Paul's theology is not surrendered. Paul also acknowledges that redemption is not yet completed. The redemption of the body and the final adoption as sons will not be realized until the day of the resurrection (Rom 8:23). The Spirit is the down payment of the eschatological inheritance, which will involved the redemption of God's possession (Eph 1:14). Believers are sealed for the day of redemption (Eph 4:30), which means that their obtaining eschatological redemption is certain, and yet it is not ours now. The 'day of redemption' (Eph 4:30) is not yet here. Thus, believers are already redeemed and freed in Christ Jesus, and at the same time this redemption is not yet consummated or completed." (PAUL pg.232) This understanding of salvation offers up a contradiction. Either a person has something or they don't. They can't have and not have something at the same time. The error of combining the three aspects of salvation (*justification, sanctification, and glorification*) into one forces this contradiction to come about.

It should be noted that in 1 Pt 1:19, Peter is writing to Christians about how obedience on their part will play a crucial role in transforming their "lives" (souls). As mentioned before, Schreiner's view shows that there seems to be no distinction between sanctification and justification. This is seen again when he writes "...the biblical lines of evidence indicate that our salvation in Christ Jesus is properly portrayed with evenhanded accent on both the already and the not-yet aspects." (RACE pg. 44) Of Heb. 9:26-28 he states, "This is so because the heavenly son of God offered himself as a sacrifice once to do away with sin, but he has not yet returned to bring salvation to us who are waiting for him." (RACE pg. 44) There seems to be no distinction between glorification and justification. Schreiner provides a good definition that recognizes the distinction of glorification by stating, "When Jesus returns we shall be perfected and sanctified; we shall be transformed into his likeness." (RACE pg. 80) Glorification is being saved from the presence of sin.

In regards to his view, Schreiner writes, "We believe that holding a proper tension between the already and not-yet aspects of God's gracious gift of salvation leads us to recognize that biblical warnings are prospective, designed to elicit faith that perseveres to the end in order to lay hold of the eternal prize of life." (RACE pg. 44) But yet Jesus said that those who believe in Him, *have (emphasis mine)* eternal life and *have (emphasis mine)* passed out of death into life (Jn 5:24). Once again, either a person has eternal life or they don't.

But yet an unwillingness to recognize that justification, sanctification, and glorification are different and distinct aspects in the Christian life and in God's plan generates confusing and contradictory statements. "Our salvation is both present and future." (RACE pg. 47) "Salvation is not merely a past reality; it is also our future destiny." (RACE pg. 47) "We are already saved, yet our salvation has not yet been completed or consummated." (RACE pg. 52) "Paul does not speak [Rom 13:11] here of salvation as something obtained at the moment we first believed but as a gift to given at the last day (Rom 13:12)." (PAUL pg.226) "To be faithful to the Scriptures, we must retain the biblical tension that the kingdom is both present and future." (RACE pg. 57) "Is redemption past or future? Yes! It is both." (RACE pg. 59) "We already possess eternal life by believing in Jesus as the Christ, yet we will not inherit eternal life nor acquire the inheritance of eternal life until the last day." (RACE pg. 67) At other points, Schreiner says, "In all three verses [Eph 2:5, Tit 3:5, 2 Tim 1:9] past tenses are used to denote our salvation. We conclude from this construction that believers are already saved." (RACE pg. 49)

Schreiner understands that "Life is a treasure that is acquired on the last day (1 Tim 6:19)." (RACE pg. 66) But yet Paul talks about "life indeed" not eternal life. He speaks of the quality of the free gift of eternal life. It is similar to Christ's words in Jn 10:10, "I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly."

He states, "Philippians 2:15 should probably be interpreted eschatologically, since believers become 'blameless,' 'pure' and 'children of God without fault' *on the last day. (emphasis mine)*" (RACE pg. 69) This eschatological reference is not found in the text. The text says, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" not "on the last day." It appears his commitment is overriding the context.

Schreiner continues by stating, "There is an already-but-not-yet dimension, however, to the language of the newness in the New Testament. The old person has died with Christ, and believers have put on the new self (Col 3:10) and have 'taken of your old self with its practice' (Col 3:9 NIV). Nonetheless, believers must also 'put off your old self' to 'put on the new self' (Eph 4:22, 24 NIV)." (RACE pg. 62) But it should be noted that Ephesians deals with a believer's "former manner of life" - their former lifestyle and practice while Colossians 3:12 deals with their positional ("those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved") standing before God. In Col 3: 12 they are commanded to "put on a heart of compassion" in their practice to one another. Blending justification issues with sanctification is the reason for his understanding of these two passages.

Schreiner's understanding of the role of perseverance appears to lead him to promote the already-but-not-yet view when he says, "'All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.' (Mt 10:22, NIV; cf. also Mt 24:13). Matthew does not say that the one who endures to the end has been saved or that this person shows evidence that he or she was saved. Matthew says that the one who stands fast and perseveres will be saved, that is will be saved on the future day of the Lord." (RACE pg. 49) But yet the context in these passages is not eternal separation from God (*hell*) but tribulation events - God's temporal wrath. Schreiner understands the wrath in Rom 5:9-10 as being eternal in nature and not temporal.

Certainly, assurance of salvation would be difficult to obtain and maintain when eternal life is not concretely possessed in the present.

Priority of Perseverance

A consistent belief maintained in all of Schreiner's writings is the issue of perseverance. It is paradoxical that his firm commitment to this Calvinistic belief brings him in line with Catholic theology. Because perseverance is a good work, and because perseverance is required to obtain eternal life, good works become essential in determining a person's eternal destiny.

Schreiner writes, "Paul's gospel would not be good news if redemption depended on the strength and ability of human beings. Hence, his gospel emphasizes that God saves his people in and through Jesus Christ. This gospel is also distorted, however, if human beings' response is eliminated. Human beings are called on to stay true to the gospel for the whole of their lives. Such perseverance is itself the result of God's grace, and yet human being must stay true until the end to be saved." (PAUL pg. 305) Schreiner is clear: people receive eternal life through Christ and through perseverance by good works for the whole of their lives. The implication of this is that Christ's death fell short of full payment for the sins of the world and His resurrection was insufficient proof that His payment was accepted

(Jn 19:30, Rom. 4:25).

Schreiner continues by saying, "...our central concern is to show how the Bible places side by side both God's promises of complete and final salvation for all his people and God's admonitions or warnings that call on his people to persevere to the end in order to be saved." (RACE pg. 21) He believes that it's possible for an "authentic Christian" to fall away and perish forever. The reason is that those who fall away were never Christians to begin with. He sees the warning passages and admonitions as having nothing to do with temporal discipline or a loss of eternal rewards. (RACE pg. 20)

"Persevering in godly behavior and sound teaching are necessary to obtain salvation, both for Timothy and those to whom he ministers." (RACE pg. 51) Yet in direct contrast to this Schreiner says, "There is never a time in our Christian lives that we can regard any of our achievements to be a basis for commendation before God. Christ alone is our hope of being found righteous before God. (RACE pg. 187) He adds, "The death and resurrection of Jesus are the heart of the gospel, they induct believers into the new age, and they are the basis for justification." (PAUL pg.190) But yet in the end, he means "...**salvation is a future reality**, as in 1 Timothy 4:16, **and women must practice godly behavior to receive it. (emphasis mine)**" (RACE pg. 51) Women must do good works to go to heaven.

Schreiner restates his position consistently. "Thus, eternal life, according to this conditional promise, belongs to anyone who exercises belief that endures against trials, belief that is characterized as thirst that is determined to be quenched." (RACE pg. 42) "...the reason for Paul's assurance was his perseverance in running the race." (RACE pg. 47) In contrast to Schreiner's understanding, 2 Tim 1:12 says that Paul's confidence lay with Christ and the eternal life that he already had in his possession. Paul's confidence was not in his own perseverance but in the person of Christ. When Paul was asked in Acts 16:31, "What must I do to be saved?" he didn't tell the jailer, "Persevere." Instead he told him to trust in Christ. Peter was confident too that it was Christ, not performance, that brought about eternal life (Acts 4:12).

In addressing 1 Tim. 6:11-12, Schreiner states, "Earlier we noted that this admonition is unambiguous in what it says. It affirms that **eternal life is the reward to be attained by those who run after it with athletic intensity and perseverance. (emphasis mine)**" (RACE pg. 112) According to Schreiner, effort plus endurance equal eternal life. "God promises to give salvation to all who believe and to them alone. Yet, at the same time, another observation emerges from the biblical text concerning Christian faith. Christian belief must be obedient in order for us to receive eternal life. If this conclusion is true, then it follows that we should expect the gospel to exhort and warn us in order that we might persevere in obedient faith. That is what we find throughout Scripture." (RACE 144) In appealing to Marshall, Schreiner notes, "Again, Marshall is correct to note, 'there will be no salvation for the person who gives up.'" (RACE pg. 149)

An interesting and insightful diatribe is provided by Schreiner. "But you ask, 'What if I fail to persevere to the end?' The answer from the context [Mt 10:22] is simply that you will not be saved, if you fail to persevere to the end. Again you may ask, 'So are you telling me that Jesus' words mean that it is possible for me to lose my salvation?' No, that is an unwarranted conclusion to draw either from the text or from our explanation of the text. Jesus' words say nothing about the possibility of losing one's salvation; that is not the function of his conditional promise. Rather, his words function to assure you that you will be saved, if you persevere. You must persevere if you want to be saved. You ask once more, 'So are you saying that if I do not persevere to the end, that will prove that I was never truly saved in the beginning?' Though the theological answer is 'Yes' it inverts Jesus' words. Here, Jesus does not give us a test of perseverance by which we may know whether or not we are saved. Notice his orientation. He is prospective, not retrospective. He uses the future tense, for he says 'will be saved.' It is true that the bible does teach that all who are justified will persevere and be glorified (Rom 8:30), but this is not what Jesus is saying in Matthew 10:22. Also, it is true that the Bible teaches that people who failed to persevere by remaining in the church proved by their departure that they never were truly Christians (1 Jn 2:19). However, that also is not what Jesus is saying in this text. Jesus' words fit a different category of passages; his words express a promise that includes a condition. The promise of salvation is for everyone who perseveres." (RACE pg. 152)

To make it clear the following quotes are provided. "[In Mark 13:13, 23] Jesus holds before us both his assuring promise to preserve the elect and his warning admonition that calls for vigilant perseverance in order to be saved." (RACE pg. 159) "The Scriptures assure us who believe that God secures all who are in Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29-39). But at the same time the Scriptures also admonish and warn us that we must persevere in obeying Jesus Christ or else die eternally (Rom 8:12-13)." (RACE pg. 212)

For Schreiner, perseverance is obedient faith. Obedient faith is a good work. A logical and reasonable conclusion then is that good works are necessary to obtain eternal life.

Good Works Expected Are Good Works Required

Whether it is a believer or God producing good works in a person's life, anything beyond "sola fide" is works righteousness and consistent with Catholic doctrine, as well as other world religions. Schriener shares his view on the role of obedience, fruit, and good works as they relate to justification salvation.

He states, "Those who do what is righteous, love one another, believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and overcome the world have been born of God (1 Jn 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18)." (RACE pg. 60) Several issues come to mind with this statement. John tells us that those who "believe in His name" are children of God (John 1:12). There is no mention of doing what is righteous, loving, or overcoming. There is an addition. It is "sola fide + righteousness + love + overcoming" for justification.

Holiness is a requirement for eternal life. Schriener says, "Nor is growing in holiness optional. The author of Hebrews says, 'make every effort to live in peace will all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord' (Heb 12:14 NIV). **Holiness is necessary to see God, that is, to experience eternal life.** (*emphasis mine*)" (RACE pg. 73) It is "sola fide + holiness" for justification. Schriener fails to specify how much holiness and what the definition of holiness is. He also doesn't provide a time frame in which this holiness must take place. Adding works opens up a Pandora's Box of legitimate questions and concerns.

Forgiving others is a requirement for eternal life. Schriener says, "Jesus himself makes it quite clear that we must forgive the sins of others to be forgiven by God (Mt 6:14-15). How tempting it is to explain these verses away! But Jesus is dead serious, and people who ignore these verses and do not forgive others will find themselves in hell. Of course, there is the danger of perfectionism and demanding a 'perfect' forgiveness of others to be saved, so that we fall into a works-righteousness and legalism. But there is also the danger of ignoring verses such as 1 John 1:9 and Matthew 6:14-15. We must integrate these two themes wisely, and in this book we shall try to help the reader do so." (RACE pg. 77) It is "sola fide + forgiveness" for justification. Schriener appears to take a hard line then backpedals. One has to forgive wisely though not perfectly to stay out of hell. He fails to explain what wise forgiveness is.

Faithfulness is a requirement for eternal life. Schriener says, "Those who are not faithful to death, those who deny knowing Jesus, will not obtain the crown of life. In other words, they will experience the second death, the lake of fire." (RACE pg. 83,83) "No true believer will ever apostatize because Christ's love will not let them go." (PAUL pg.278) "Paul does not encourage anyone to believe that eternal life will be theirs if they persist in disobedience." (PAUL pg.279) "Outright and persistent denial constitutes apostasy, and those who deny Christ will face eschatological judgment." (PAUL pg.292) It is "sola fide + faithfulness" for justification. Schriener does not define what makes denial outright in lieu of covert nor does he provide a timeframe that makes denial persistent. It seems that Schriener softens the blow of this requirement by writing, "Not all sin is a denial of Jesus, and God remains faithful to his people even if they stumble and fall. Nonetheless, one cannot contemplate denying Jesus casually as if one will be forgiven regardless." (PAUL pg.292) But yet the box belonging to Pandora is opened again. He fails to explain which sin(s) are considered denials of Christ and doesn't share how often can a Christian can stumble and fall. He doesn't specifically define what it means to stumble and fall? If a believer's denial is serious or accidental does that mean it's not casual? Does 1 John 1:9 teach that God will forgive us all our sin except casual denial? Fair questions and issues when works are added to "sola fide."

Correct responses during trials are required for eternal life. Schriener says, "In other words, enduring under trials is not optional for believers, nor is there a special unique reward for believers who persist when tested. All believers must stand fast when buffeted in order to obtain the crown of eternal life. We are not suggesting, of course, that believers do not fail or sin when experience trials, for James himself says we all stumble in many ways (Jas 3:2). Persevering under trials does not suggest some kind of perfectionisms; it means that we do not forsake Jesus Christ when tested." (RACE pg. 85) It is "sola fide + standing fast" for justification. He appears to take a hard line then backpedals. Forsaking Jesus will cost a person eternal life. But in a Christian's life some sin and failure is expected, perfectionism is not. But don't we forsake Jesus when we sin, when we fail, when we're not perfect? How much sin and failure is allowed during a test to not be considered forsaking Jesus? Valid questions in defining works beyond faith.

Fighting the good fight is required for eternal life. Schriener says, "Keeping the faith, fighting the good fight and finishing the race are not optional for believers; they are essential for obtaining the eternal reward the crown of righteousness by which we stand in the right before God." (RACE pg. 85) It is "sola fide + good fighting" for justification. Surely, faithfulness, fighting, and finishing are good works that go beyond faith. The term reward (μισθός) used by Paul in 1 Cor 3:15 and when used in the gospels is associated with good works (i.e. loving one's enemies, secret righteousness, giving, prayer, fasting,

receiving a prophet, helping children, wages for work in a vineyard, kindness to apostles, evangelism, payment for work, suffering persecution, doing good to enemies - i.e. Mt 5:46, 6:1,2,5,16,10:41, 42, Mark 9:41, Jn 4:36).

In contrast to these requirements, Schreiner appears to come back to his Reformed title and away from Catholic thought. He writes, "The reward [*eternal life according to Schreiner*] we receive by faith in Christ is based on grace alone; it is not grounded on our achievement." (RACE pg. 89) He says again, "Paul specifically says, 'We have been justified now by his blood' (Rom 5:9 NIV; cf. 5:1.) The word *now* indicates with certainty the righteousness is a present gift." (RACE pg. 78)

Once again Schreiner states, "The basis of believers' relationship with God is the gift of righteousness, the forgiveness granted to believers by faith. Believers stand in the right before God by virtue of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, where he absorbed God's wrath for our sin." (PAUL pg.217) But what does this really mean and how much weight does it carry? Schreiner tells us: "Eternal life is the reward that we trust God will give to us who faithfully endure to the end of the race." (RACE pg. 88) It should be noted that Paul used the term reward (μισθός - wage NASB) in Rom. 4:4 to explain that justification/positional righteousness is not earned but that one's eternal destiny is secured through the means of faith (4:5).

Godliness is required for eternal life. Schreiner writes, "'Godliness' is a means of great gain' (1 Tim 6:6), though not a gain of worldly wealth but a gain of eternal life. Therefore, one must pursue godliness, which is penultimate, in order to lay hold of eternal life, which is ultimate (1 Tim 5:12). **Without discipline one cannot be godly, and without godliness one cannot gain the eternal life of the age to come.** (*emphasis mine*)" (RACE pg. 108) "The sheep must listen to and follow the shepherd to obtain eternal life." (RACE pg. 255) But yet he seems to soften this position by stating, "We know that we are prone to wander, but we have the promise that Jesus will never lose us, that the work he began he will also complete on the day of our resurrection." (RACE pg. 250) How far can one wander? At what point does wandering become godlessness and thus a loss of eternal life?

In addressing the issue of godliness, Schreiner addresses Jude 24. He says, "'Without fault' here [Jude 24] does not mean sinless; the point is that these believers have stayed true to God until the end." (RACE pg. 259) The term "without fault" is translated as "blameless" in the NASB. The term ἄμωμος is used to describe Christ (Hebrews 9:14) and His blood (1 Pt 1:19), the Church when presented to Christ (Eph 5:27), and is used in conjunction with holiness and innocence (Eph 1:4, Col 1:22, Phil 2:15). It does mean sinless. Illegitimately softening a word to promote a position is not in keeping with good hermeneutics. Who can remain sinless until the end? No one. He adds to the problem when he states, "Those who succumb to sin as its slave will experience not eternal life but death (Rom 6:23)." (PAUL pg.221) He fails to share what actions and time frame are involved in making a person a slave of sin.

We read in The Race Set Before Us that "Only if we run this pathway that brings us through death to sin is there any hope that we will attain the resurrection of eternal life (Phil 3:10-11). One cannot win Christ at the end without faithfully running this course now." (RACE pg. 111) But yet the term for "better resurrection" is missed and is equated just as "resurrection." A type of resurrection that is viewed as an eternal reward is in mind here, not the fact of resurrection.

Schreiner takes the position that the good works that are required for eternal life are from God's gracious involvement and faithful commitment in the life of a Christian. He states, "Salvation is ultimately of the Lord, for it is his work. And yet the actions of human beings are significant and crucial as well. Timothy's faithfulness is necessary for him to be saved, and his faithfulness plays a role in the salvation of others. On the other hand, such faithfulness in the life of Timothy is ultimately and finally due to God's work in his life. Both of these strands must be held together and in the right order to grasp Paul's theology." (PAUL pg.284) He continues by saying "Paul does not dismiss the need for strenuous human effort in obtaining salvation, even though both the desire and the activity ultimately come from God himself." (PAUL pg.286) But this belief brings questions to the forefront. Why the need for commands? Why is a believer held responsible for disobeying? Doesn't this negate their choice? How do they know if the desire behind the strenuous human effort is from them or God? When works are added to justification problems arise. Schreiner makes the same point when he writes, "Ultimately, the preservation of the Corinthians depends on God." (PAUL pg.287) If God ultimately preserves, then a believer's behavior has no bearing. If their behavior has any impact at all then God is not the one ultimately preserving them. Peter commanded believers to supply at their own expense Christ-like character (2 Pt 1:5-8). Paul attributed the desire and responsibility for good works to believers (1 Cor 3:13, 14, 15, Gal 6:1, Phil 2:12, 1 Ths. 1:3).

In contrast to this, he writes, "E. Sanders rightly demolishes a caricature of Judaism as wholly consumed with works righteousness and petty legalism. But he fails to see that

legalism can operate at a more subtle level. People can confess God's grace, deeply believe in it, and yet believe that human works play a vital role in obtaining salvation. Paul vigorously opposed such a synergism, contending that entrance into the covenant was by faith alone." (ROMANS pg. 204) True confusion is apparent when on one hand entrance is based upon faith alone and yet actions of believers are significant and crucial.

After mentioning that human works are crucial and significant in their salvation, he contradicts himself by saying, "Righteousness with God depends on faith alone, and is received as a gift, not achieved as a work." (ROMANS pg. 203) With Schreiner's theology in place, a person only knows that Christ has upheld his promise based upon works lasting until the end of life. Vigilant perseverance sounds like a good work that contrasts the free gift (Eph 2:8, 9). If God and I are both responsible for my salvation, then God is not *ultimately* responsible but *partially* responsible. If God is ultimately responsible then there's nothing I do that can jeopardize my eternal destiny. Ultimate responsibility on God's part negates any responsibility on my part. If my role is crucial then God is not ultimately responsible. This is a contradiction. Ultimate is synonymous with crucial. Schreiner does not share how a person, Christian or pagan, can differentiate between faithfulness produced by God and by themselves.

Schreiner seems to take the "sola fide" path again but falls short when he writes, "The Paul of the Pastorals decisively rejects any notion that salvation is ultimately due to the work of human beings or that human beings merit salvation by good works (1 Tim 1:12-17, 2 Tim 1:9-11, Tit 2:11-14, 3:4-7). **But** (*emphasis mine*) the Pastoral Epistles also emphasize that **good works are an essential part of salvation** (*emphasis mine*). They are the evidence of genuine salvation **and the means by which salvation is obtained** (*emphasis mine*) on the last day." (PAUL pg.285) If the work of human beings is not ultimately the source of salvation, why are works the evidence of genuine salvation? Paul reminded the Galatians in chapter 3:2, 3 "This is the only thing I want to find out from you; did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" It appears that Schreiner and Peter have two things in common. They are both godly men who love the Lord and they are both "not straightforward about the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:14)."

A striking statement made by Schreiner is, "Believers need severe warnings lest they make the error of thinking that they will be saved regardless of their behavior." (PAUL pg.287)

He says again, "They [biblical warnings and admonitions] urgently call for obedient faith as they point out the only pathway to salvation" (RACE pg. 214) Schreiner doesn't explain why behavior is an issue if God is responsible for strenuous activity and good works? How many good works need to be seen to know that they are from God? What good works are from God? What time frame does God need to produce these good works? Schreiner uses the non-biblical adjective of "obedient" to describe faith. This is the result of him emphasizing the means of salvation over the object.

In conclusion, Schreiner makes it clear that he has moved beyond the Paul. He says, "In examining the book of Acts it is clear that conversion, repentance, faith, and baptism are alternate and overlapping ways of describing coming to Christ for salvation." This seems to go beyond the sole requirement of the text of the gospel of John and the Reformers. This implies that these good works are alternate ways of coming to Christ for salvation. In examining the book of Acts, it is clear that the sole condition to acquire eternal life is through belief in Christ. The term "belief" in reference to justification is found no less than 29 times in Luke's history of the church (Acts 2:44, 4:4, 4:32, 5:14, 8:12,13, 9:42, 10:43, 11:21, 13:12, 13:39, 13:41, 13:48, 14:1, 14:23, 15:5, 15:11, 16:31, 16:34,17:12, 17:34, 18:8, 18:27, 19:2, 19:4, 19:18, 22:19, 21:20, 21:25).

Specific Passages

Rom 1:5

"The words ei'j u(pakoh'n pi'zstewj (eis hypakoen pisteos, for the obedience of faith) convey the missionary thrust of Paul's call to the Gentiles. The goal of Paul's preaching was to bring Gentiles to faith in the lord Jesus Christ. The gospel that focuses on the Son (vv. 3-4) was designed to bring all nations to the obedience of faith. The precise significance of the genitive pi'zstewj is disputed. The two most likely options are that it is a subjective genitive or an appositional construction. In the former case, the sense would be the obedience that springs from or flows from faith. In the latter instance the phrase could be translated as 'the obedience that is faith.' Of course, Paul may have intended both ideas, and this is the most likely solutions (Garlington 1991: 1-2; Garlington 1994: 10-31; Stott 1994: 52). Acceptance of the gospel in faith can be described as an act of obedience. For example, Rom. 10:16 says, 'But not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah said, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' The parallelism of the two lines reveals that disobedience consists in failure to believe (cf. also 1:8 and 16:19, 11:23 and 11:30-31). It is unlikely, though, that 'the obedience of faith' should be confined to a single act of obedience that occurred when the gospel was first believed. Nor should faith and obedience be sundered as if Christians could have the former without the latter. When Paul reflects on his mission in Rom. 15:18,

he remarks on the 'obedience of the Gentiles' (u(pakoh'n e)qmw¹/₂n, hypakoen ethnon), showing that a changed life occurs for those who embrace the gospel. Paul also argues in Rom. 6 and 8 that the grace that is given in Christ invariably involves a transformation of one's everyday life (cf. also 12:1-13:14; Nano 1996: 226). The belief first exercised upon conversion is validated as one continues to believe and obey (11:20-22). Such belief can never be separated from obedience (cf. G. Davies 1990: 27-29; Gundry Volf 1990), and all obedience is rooted in and flows from faith." (ROMANS pg. 34, 35)

Schreiner correctly notes that the "obedience that is faith" is synonymous with belief in Christ. This is consistent with what is seen in John 3:36 - the person who does not obey (*believe in the context*) does not have life. But Schreiner states that a changed life occurs for those who embrace the gospel. He does not specify who must see this change, what changes must take place, and the time frame involved. He refers the reader to Romans 6 and 8 to emphasize that a transformation takes place in everyday life. But sandwiched between these passages of change is Romans 7 where Paul shares his struggle with sin - he does what he doesn't want to do and does not do what he ought to (vss 15, 16). It is likely that his struggle with sin occurred 21 years after his conversion and training in Damascus, Tarsus, Antioch, and Jerusalem (Acts 9:22, 30, 13:1, 2, Gal. 1:17). A "wretched man" is a picture of a defeated and immature believer whose faith is not matching with obedience. Paul's spiritual struggle is evidence that obedience does not automatically or naturally flow from faith. An additional passage Schreiner refers to in support of the inseparability of faith and obedience is Romans 12:1-13:14. Paul utilizes 69 imperatives (*commands*) in his Romans epistle. In the aforementioned section no less than 23 occur - almost 30% of the commands. If obedience flows from faith then why the need for the commands? Commands such as "do not be conformed...be transformed...do not be overcome by evil...do what is good...love your neighbor...make no provision for the flesh (Rom 12:2, 20, 13:3, 14)" as well as commands not to commit adultery, not to murder, not to steal, not to covet (Rom 13:9) don't support that Paul conveyed the idea that obedience flows from faith. Commands aren't necessary when obedience automatically flows.

In addressing Schreiner's statements "belief first exercised upon conversion is **validated** (*emphasis mine*) as one continues to believe and obey" (ROMANS pg. 35) as well as "faithfulness is the **proof** (*emphasis mine*) of faith" (RACE pg. 96) along with "saving faith must include obedience to be **genuine** (*emphasis mine*)" (ROMANS pg. 768), I would like to present an analogy. God commanded the first couple in Genesis 1:22, 28 to "be fruitful and multiply." In their union as a man and a woman, husband and wife, He expected them to have children. Children are the expected fruit of marriage. Yet, children are not required for a marriage to occur. To take the expectation of fruit (*children*) and use it to validate the reality of a marriage is an inappropriate test. The reason: many marriages occur without children and many children occur without marriages. **To look for children to prove that a marriage is genuine is a poor and unwarranted standard.** In the same way, God commands Christians to obey. Obedience is an expected fruit of new life in Christ. Yet, fruit, obedience, good works are not required for new birth to occur. To take the expectation of fruit (*obedience*) and use it to validate the reality of faith in Christ is an inappropriate test and evaluation standard. The reason: regeneration occurs in the lives of many people with few or no visible good works and many good works are visible in the lives of unregenerate people. **To look for obedience to prove that faith is genuine is a poor and unwarranted standard.**

Rom 4:4

Schreiner links Romans 4:4 to James. He states, "Rather, verses 4-5 restate the substance of verses 2-3, so that the polarity between faith and works will be grasped. Paul specifically and emphatically contrasts 'working' and 'believing' in verses 4-5. 'Working' (e)rgazome/n%, ergazomeno, v.4) is what one does to receive a wage, and the wage is owed (o)fei;lhma, opheilema, debt) to the person who does the work. 'Believing' (pisteuonti, pisteuonti) is fundamentally different from 'working.' 'Working' is the result of one's own capability, but 'believing' relies on another. The object of Abraham's faith was 'God' (v. 3) and he relied 'on the one who justifies the ungodly' (e)pii to\n dikaiou=nta to\n a)sebh=, epi ton dikaiounta ton asebe). Working involves doing, while the genius of belief is receiving. This polarity between believing and working casts light on the meaning of the verb logizetai (logizesthai, to reckon), which plays a major role in this chapter (vv. 3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,12,22,23,24). The conception is that something is reckoned to a person that is not inherent to him or her (see Ridderbos 1975:177; O. Roberston 198-; 265-66; Seybold, TDOT 5:241-44; Moo 1991: 265). God's righteousness is not native to human beings; it is an alien righteousness granted to us by God's grace." (ROMANS pg. 215)

"Interestingly, James 2:21-24 also brings together Gen. 22 and 15:6, concluding that righteousness is by works. We should beware of concluding too quickly that Paul would reject this Jewish perspective on the inseparability of faith and works (contra Han 1971: 101-2, 106-7; Stuhlmacher 1994: 72-73). In Rom. 2 Paul also contends that those who have received the Spirit will do good works, and that one must do such works to receive eternal life." (ROMANS pg. 215,216)

Paul does not say in Romans 2 that those who have received the Spirit will do good works. Paul does say that eternal life is a gift - Rom. 3:24, 5:15-17, 6:23. In chapter 2 Paul is speaking to Christians (1:7 - saints/our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 1:8 - your faith is being proclaimed, 1:13 - brethren). They are told that their conduct will result in a reward: "by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life (Rom 2:7)." If they are disobedient and "are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation (Rom 2:8)" will be the result." Eternal life is a free gift. Obedient believers are rewarded. Disobedient believers experience temporal discipline. Following a chiastic structure, wrath and indignation is equated with tribulation and distress (vs 9) while eternal life is synonymous with glory and honor and peace (vs 10). The believers' eternal destiny is not affected by their works (deeds - vs. 6) but temporal discipline and eternal rewards are. Christians who persevere in doing good with eternity in mind will experience the gift of eternal life with glory, honor, and peace. This consistency of eternal life as a free gift is maintained when Paul says in Romans 12:29 that "...circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter [of the Law]." Good works via the Law are not required to receive eternal life - "man is justified by faith apart from works of the law (3:28)." They are required for eternal rewards.

Rom 4:4-5

"Verses 4-5 as well reveal a polemic against meritorious achievement. The person who works for a wage considers payment not a gift but a debt (v. 4). It must be noted that this commonsense observation from everyday life is introduced in a context that relates to justification before God. Thus Paul implies that if righteousness is based on one's works, then it is not a gift but owed to that person as something obtained (at least partially) by self-effort. It follows that the person who does the works should receive praise, honor, and glory. Boasting would be appropriate since the payment - which is justification in this context - is earned by works but is available to the one who believes that God justifies the ungodly. Since human beings are often deluded by their goodness, thinking that it is sufficient to warrant justification, Paul reminds us that no one's goodness merits God's approval." (ROMANS pg. 217)

In contrast, Schreiner says, "I agree with Cranford that Paul did not rigidly separate faith and obedience to the extent that the latter was of no concern to him. But it does not follow from this that there would be no criticism of 'works' in his letters. It is certainly sensible to say that Paul praised works that flowed from faith but criticized works that were animated by human pride." (ROMANS pg. 218)

Paul did not praise works that flow from faith nor did he address that type of work conducted (*i.e. works animated by human pride*). He talked of the reason work is conducted. Any work for justification and righteousness is unacceptable. Works from faith or pride don't produce eternal life. Even though obedience was a concern to Paul (*thus the 69 commands found in Romans*), Paul made it clear that obedience/works play no part in one's righteousness or justification salvation (Eph 2:8, 9).

Rom 15:18

"The spotlight is not on Paul's private life but on his ministry. It is what Christ accomplished 'that resulted in the obedience of the Gentiles' (ei'j u(pakoh'n e)qmw½n, eis hypakoen ethnon). The obedience of the Gentiles is nothing less than the conversion of the Gentiles. It is equivalent to "the obedience of faith (1:5, 16:26), which is the goal of the Pauline mission among the Gentiles. Here Paul simply describes it as 'obedience' since saving faith must include obedience to be genuine." (ROMANS pg. 767,768)

Saving faith is a distinction not used by Paul or any author of the New Testament. If faith must include obedience to be genuine or authentic or valid, then works become an essential part of the justification process - whether these works are produced by the believer or by God. This contrasts what Paul clearly states in Romans 3:24 "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," Romans 3:28 "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law," and Romans 5:1 "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The "Gospel" is good news that carries with it more than just the issue of justification. According to Paul in Rom 1:16, the same gospel of verse 15:16 "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who **believes** (*emphasis mine*)" not obeys, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Gentiles). In Romans 10 Paul mentions Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) again (vs 12) and how the proper response to the gospel is belief not works: "However, they did not all heed (obey) the glad tidings (gospel); for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who had **believed** (*emphasis mine*) our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom 10:16, 17). Obedience in this important evangelism passage is equated with believing the gospel not good works. Conversion for Jew and Gentile occurs through faith in Christ, not by means of "spiritual things" or "material things" (Rom 15:27). Also, Schreiner once again fails to provide how much obedience, whom the obedience must be seen by, and the time frame the obedience must take place in.

Rom 16:26

"The words 'for the obedience of faith to all nations' ei'j u(pakoh'n pi;stewj ei'j pa'nta ta eAqnh, eis hypakoen pisteos eis panta ta ethne) recall the words of the introduction (1:5). This phrase designates God's purpose or goal (ei'j) in making known the gospel (so Cranfield 1979: 812). Gentiles participate in the Abrahamic blessing through the obedience that flows from faith. Paul never conceived of salvation taking root among the nations without a change of behavior. The gospel that takes hold of human beings changes them so that they become servants of righteousness. Such new behavior, however, has its roots in faith, in trusting God for the strength and power to live a new life. The gospel does not summon people to exercise their own moral virtue. It calls them to put their trust in God, who raised Jesus from the dead. By trusting him they will be filled with the power to live fruitful lives." (ROMANS pg. 815)

Paul speaks of the Gentiles being grafted into the olive tree after Israel was broken off because of unbelief (Rom 11:20). Israel will be grafted in again if they "do not continue in their unbelief (vs 23)" not if they obey or change their behavior. Believers are reminded in verse 6 "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace." New behavior is not mentioned as a requirement by Paul. After Paul states in Ephesians 2:8,9 "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" he reminds Gentiles believers with the subjunctive mood that they "**should**" (*emphasis mine* - not "will") walk in [good works]. Because of grace, good works and a change of behavior are possibilities not certainties. Paul continues by reminding believers that they were once strangers to the "covenant of promise" (vs 12) but have been brought near "by the blood of Christ (vs 13)" not good works, obedience, or new behavior.

1 Cor 3:10-17

"*Saved by fire in 1 Corinthians 3*. In some circles almost every text adduced as requiring the need for perseverance for salvation is related to rewards. Probably the text most often cited to defend this notion of rewards is 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 since the person whose work is burned up is saved, even though his work is useless ('If the work of someone shall be burned up, he shall suffer loss. But he himself shall be saved, but as through fire, 1 Cor 3:15). Some conclude from this that good works are optional for eternal life, that people can live Christian lives that show no evidence of salvation and that some Christians are like those described in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 - 'fleshly.'" This interpretation fails to read 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 in context and offers a flawed understanding of 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. First Corinthians 3:10-17 is not a description of the life of every Christian believer. Paul conceives of the church in these verses as a building - God's temple (1 Cor 3:16-17), for the church is the dwelling place of God himself. The foundation of the building (i.e., the church) is nothing other than Jesus Christ himself (1 Cor 3:10-11). When Paul speaks of how one builds on the foundation, he has in mind ministers like Apollos, who build on the foundation or who water what has already been planted (1 Cor 3:5-9). **He is not thinking of all Christians but of the quality of materials that ministers use to build on the foundation** (*emphasis mine* - see 1 Pt 5:4 passage on page 23). Ministers who build with gold, silver and precious stones will find that their work endures on the fiery day of judgment; but ministers who build with wood, hay and stubble will find that their work is consumed and destroyed on the last day." (PAUL pg.pg.288)

This interpretation completely ignores the context before, in, and after the passage in question. In 3:1 Paul is clearly addressing "**brethren**" not just ministers. He states that "I could not speak to **you**" (3:1), "I gave **you** milk" (3:2), "for **you** are still fleshly" (3:2), "For when **one** says..." (3:4), "whom **you** believed" (3:5), "**you** are God's field" (3:10), "let **each man** be careful how **he** builds" (3:10), "**no man** can lay a foundation" (3:11), "if **any man** builds" (3:12), "**each man's** work will become evident" (3:13), "If **any man's** work...remains, **he** shall receive a reward" (3:14), "If **any man's** work is burned up, **he** (*or it*) shall suffer loss" (3:15), "Do **you** not know **you** are a temple of God" (3:16), "If **any man** destroys the temple of God, **God** will destroy **him**." (3:17), "If **any man** among **you** thinks **he** is wise" (3:18), "let **no one** boast in men" (3:21), "all things belong to **you**" (3:22), "and **you** belong to Christ" (3:23). At the start of chapter three he scolds the Corinthians for immature in conduct, not inefficient in ministry. If only they were engaged in ministry! In addition to this, the context in 3:10 starts with "**you** are God's field" and ends in 3:16 "**you** are a temple of God." The term "eAkastoj" (each *man*) is clearly determined by the context before and after it. In 1 Cor. 3:10, 4:5, 7:2, 7:7, 7:17, 7:20, 7:24, 11:21, 12:7:12:11, 14:26 the clear reference with this term is believers, not just ministers. The Corinthian believers would be held accountable for the ministry invested into them by Paul and Apollos. This passage, as well as the two letters to the Corinthians, is to believers not to ministers. Likewise, Paul echoes the warning of accountability at the Bema for eternal rewards (*not eternal life*) in 2 Cor. 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that **each one** may be recompensed for **his** deeds in the body, according to what **he** had done, whether good or bad."

1 Cor 9:23-27

"All that [Paul] does to win others is guided by his objective to be sure that he also receives the blessings of eternal life promise in the gospel." (RACE pg. 112) Schreiner says that it is possible for the term "disqualified" could "also be translated as 'reprobate.'" If it was possible for Paul to become a reprobate, why did he say that he was convinced that Christ could keep that which he (*Paul*) gave to Him until that day (2 Tim 1:12)? He states that "The prize or wreath is resurrection to eternal life; the running and boxing is obedient faith (cf Acts 20:24, 2 Tim 4:7-8)." (RACE pg. 114) Paul doesn't mention resurrection until chapter 15. The context doesn't support that the prize to be won is the resurrection. In contrast to this, Schreiner writes, "...the New Testament portrays salvation and eternal life by using the metaphor of the athlete's wreath or crown...and can only be attained by faith." (RACE pg. 114)

1 Peter 5:4

"Peter says that elders who serve well 'will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away' (1 Pet 5:4 NIV). **Some interpret this to be a special and unique reward for those who have served in ministry. It is more probable, though; that the crown of glory is the glorification believers will receive when they enter upon their eternal inheritance (emphasis mine).** Shepherds who persist in the ministry because of constraint, to satisfy their greed or to dominate those under their charge (1 Pet 5:2-3) will not receive the crown of glory. That is, they will not be glorified at all. They will experience the deprivation of being separated from God. Again, this is not to say that pastors never fall prey to coercion, greed or tyranny. If these sins characterize a pastor's life, however, we have an indication that such a person does not truly belong to God." (RACE 85-86)

In 1 Cor 3:10-17 (pgs 21-22), Schreiner ignores the clear context that all believers are the subject of discussion and focuses on just ministers. In this passage he seems to bypass the narrow subject of elders, shepherds, and overseers and attribute the crown to all believers. But yet near the end of his explanation he indicates that only pastors can earn eternal life by serving well. Schreiner's explanation is unclear.

Like he did in other passages, he takes a hard line about strict conduct and its impact on eternal life and then back pedals with a soft, undefined generality. Schreiner does not inform the reader how often the sins of coercion, greed or tyranny must be engaged in to "characterize a pastor's life." He does not write what constitutes an indication of "falling prey" to sin or whom this falling must be observed by. Schreiner's standards for working for the free gift of eternal life in this passage are vague.

2 Peter 2:1

Schreiner addresses the false teachers "who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who **bought (emphasis mine)** them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves."

He writes: "The easiest solution, in some ways, would be to take this verse straightforwardly. Some who submit to Christ's lordship subsequently deny him and are therefore damned forever. This is now the view of most commentators, and it has the virtue of providing a lucid and uncomplicated understanding of the text. At one level the proposed interpretation is correct. Some members of the Christian community had departed from the Christian faith. The issue is whether those who are genuinely Christians can commit apostasy. Peter taught elsewhere that those who are called by God's grace are effectually called by his own glory and excellence (2 Pet 1:3), and 1 Pet 1:5 clearly says that those who belong to God will be preserved by his power through faith so that they will possess eschatological salvation. When we add to this many other texts that teach that those whom God has called will never perish (e.g. Rom 8:28-39, 1 Cor 1:8-9, Phil 1:6, 1 Thess 5:23-24), it suggests that we should consider another interpretation. I would suggest that Peter used **phenomenological language (emphasis mine)**. In other words, he described the false teachers as believers because they made a profession of faith and gave every appearance initially of being genuine believers. Peter did not refer to those who had been outside the community of faith but to those who were part of the church and perhaps even leaders among God's people. Their denial of Jesus Christ reveals that they did not truly belong to God, even though they professed faith. Peter said that they were bought by Jesus Christ in the sense that they gave every indication initially of genuine faith. In every church there are members who appear to be believers and who should be accepted as believers according to the judgment of charity. As time elapses and difficulties arise, it becomes apparent that they are wolves in the flock (Acts 20:29-30), that though they called on Jesus as Lord their disobedience shows that he never knew them (Matt 7:21-23), that they are like the seed sown on rocky or thorny ground that initially bears fruit but dries up and dies when hard times come (Matt 13:20-22). (PETER pgs. 331, 332)

Paul told his Christian audience (*1 Cor 1:2, 3 - saints, God our Father*) in 1 Cor 6:20 and 7:23 that they had been "**bought** with a price (*emphasis mine*).\" Using the same term, in Rev 5:9 John records the words of the twenty-four elders. They praise Christ as the one who "**didst purchase (emphasis mine)** for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and

tongue and people and nation." Again in Rev 14:3 and 4 the 144,000 are described by John as ones **"purchased** (*emphasis mine*) from the earth" and **"purchased** (*emphasis mine*) from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb." The above examples are how the term "bought" is used in reference to justification salvation. There is no doubt in these biblical texts that the term is equivalent with those who have trusted in Christ for eternal life.

This same word "bought" is used in 2 Peter 2:1. With this term in mind, Schreiner's question is: Can a Christian really be a false teacher, introduce secret destructive heresies, and bring swift destruction upon themselves? Schreiner's answer: "phenomenological language." Since failure in the Christian life is not possible for Schreiner, these false teachers weren't really bought by the Master. This means that Peter was not straightforward with his audience but in fact was misleading in the terms he used. He described the false teachers as Christians when they really weren't. Thus, Peter gave the sense while the false teachers appeared "initially of genuine faith" they in fact were not believers. The reason for this type of answer is that when perseverance and good works are requirements in obtaining eternal life, stretched explanations which call the veracity of the biblical authors into question are thrust upon the reader.

Another issue that forces Schreiner to this conclusion is his unwillingness to acknowledge that temporal discipline is a reality in the Christian life. In 2 Pt 2:1 "damned forever" should not be imposed on the term "destruction" (ἀπόλεια). Physical death is a reality for disobedient believers (Acts 5:1-6, 1 Cor 11:29-34, 1 Jn 5:16). In 2 Peter 2:12 the same false teachers are the focus. The terms "killed" (φθορά) and "destroyed" (φθείρω) carry the same meaning - to come to ruin, and the context here does not demand eternal separation from God.

Schreiner's explanation of this passage raises other difficulties. No person, Christian or pagan, is perfect. If disobedience shows that a person never knew Christ [saved], what disobedience is a certain indicator of a lack of eternal life? Schreiner fails to provide the reader how much time and what fruit should be produce when hard times come. He also fails to define what a "hard time" is. This would lead anyone in or out of the church to always struggle with the certainty of their eternal destiny.

Ultimately, only two people know who has eternal life - the person who believes in Christ for it and the Creator who freely gave it. But perhaps there is a better and more biblical way to determine who's a Christian instead of relying on the "judgment of charity." When asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's response was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." When Martha was told by Christ that He was the resurrection and the life, Jesus questioned Martha with, "Do you believe this?" Instead of observations of external conduct, perhaps questions to internal beliefs are more in line with the biblical example. The answer to the simple question, "Have you exercised faith alone in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life?" is a reasonable indicator of a person's eternal destiny.

2 Peter 2:20-22

Reference verse 21 Schreiner states that "We saw in the first verse of the letter that righteousness denoted God's saving power, but for Peter this saving power leads to a transformed life." (PETER pg. 362) When good works and perseverance are essential in obtaining salvation, the necessity of a changed and transformed life becomes the indicator of regeneration and the focus of assurance beyond the person of Christ. This necessity subsequently does not allow room for failure in the Christian life - most certainly gross failure.

As a result, the commitment to this belief is seen in a continued explanation of those Peter described as "dogs returning to their vomit" and "pigs returning to wallow in the mire." Schreiner states, "What do these verses say about apostasy? Can a genuine believer forsake his or her salvation? We can certainly see why most commentators draw such a conclusion after reading these verses in 2 Peter, for they are not merely a warning about apostasy but reflect on those who have abandoned the church, who were previously members of it. They remind us that walking the aisle, making a profession of faith, making a decision for Christ, or Christian baptism do not ensure a future destiny in heaven. Perseverance is the mark of genuineness, as Peter taught throughout the letter. **Only those who continue to live a life of godliness will receive the reward of eternal life** (1:5-11) (*emphasis mine*). Those who teach that genuine Christians can and do apostatize are taking these verses seriously, and sometimes believers who deny such a possibility brush them off without serious reflection. Nevertheless, I think it is a mistake to conclude that genuine believers can apostatize. The God who calls believers will see to it that they will reach their destination, participation in the divine nature (see the comment on 2 Pet 1:3)...Some might try to explain the tension by saying that Peter was not actually saying that these people were headed for eternal destruction, and he spoke only of the loss of rewards. This view flies in the face of the entire argument in chap. 2, and really the whole letter. We have seen in the many individual verses that eschatological judgment is promised to those who fall away...The best solution is to say that the language used in 2 Peter is **phenomenological** (*emphasis*

mine). In other words, Peter used the language of 'Christians' to describe those who fell away because they gave every appearance of being Christians. They confessed Christ as Lord and Savior, were baptized, and joined the church. But the false teachers and some of those they seduced, though still present physically in the church, were no longer considered to be genuine believers by Peter. Nonetheless, he used 'Christian' language to describe them, precisely because of their participation in the church, because they gave some evidence initially of genuine faith. Those who had apostatized revealed that they were never truly part of the people of God, for remaining true to the faith is one sign that one truly belongs to God." (PETER 363 - 365)

Schreiner does not provide a definition of what conduct is the equivalent of forsaking one's salvation. Is a believer safe from apostasy as long as they don't walk away from the church and keep their membership active? It's also interesting to note that Schreiner's list of visible acts (i.e. "walking the aisle, making a profession of faith, making a decision for Christ, or Christian baptism") are not terms used by Paul in Acts 16:31 or Christ in the Gospel of John. This list is an indication that to Schreiner, faith alone in Christ alone is insufficient in obtaining eternal life. Some type of outward act is additionally required but you can't necessarily trust what you see.

Once again, the failure to acknowledge temporal discipline for disobedience thrust eternal separation from God as the only other consequence. Eternal rewards (*and their loss*) are completely disregarded and thus the loss of salvation is the default position.

If the "best solution" in addressing sin and failure is the belief that Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in writing the "more sure prophetic Word," was comfortable in falsely describing pagans as "Christians," there's a serious problem. If Peter can't be trusted in his "language of Christians," then why can Paul, and ultimately, why can Jesus? Surely this lack of confidence would then extend to Schreiner. Christ was aware of the conduct of believers in His Church. One of his concerns is seen in Rev. 2:20: "But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads **My bondservants astray** (*emphasis mine*), so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols." Jesus acknowledges the fact of failure and defeat in the lives of His bondservants - unless He really didn't mean that they were really His or really bondservants or really being lead astray.

The phrase describing false teachers and those influenced by them as ones who "gave some evidence initially of genuine faith" is unsettling and unbiblical. This is a grossly unexplained and subjective statement. How much evidence moves faith from false to genuine? What evidence and what time frame are involved in this movement? In the end, with Schreiner's soteriology in place, no one can know their eternal destiny until the end. Schreiner's requirement of perseverance, whether an act of God or man, makes assurance impossible. Couple this with the requirement of obedience and a transformed life for salvation and signs of that salvation, and one's eternal destiny becomes an unknown commodity.

Conclusion

One of my favorite books to read to my children has a mother singing a song to her son throughout his life. She sings, "I'll love you forever. I'll like you for always. As long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

Repeatedly, the writers of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament comfortably and correctly describe the relationship of justified men and women with their Creator as a child and parent. God is our Father and we are sons and daughters. In spite of repeated terms, examples, and parables like these, Schreiner misses the biblical point of the freeness of eternal life and the security of family members. No one would ever think they earned, worked, or influenced their physical birth. It was a free gift. No one would ever think that the biological relationship with their parents would depend upon their conduct. It is unchanging. The freeness and permanence of the physical is an accurate portrayal of the freeness and permanence of the spiritual. Being "born from above (Jn 3:7)" is based upon belief in the Son (Jn 3:16) and results in the Creator as our Father (Jn 1:12) and eternal life as a gift (Rev 22:17). Like real kids in our own homes, failure is a possibility. But yet in spite of the reality of poor choices and disobedience, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" is the song our Father sings to us (Heb 13:5) throughout our lives. Our relationship with the Father is secure and entirely dependant on Him. This relationship is initiated through simple faith in Christ - sola fide.

Only a cruel parent would demand obedience as the basis of the parental relationship. And it is a cruel theology that does the same with justification. Schreiner has made performance the basis of the relationship. This is the result his soteriology failing to make important and reasonable distinctions in salvation (*justification, sanctification, and glorification*). To equate a relationship with a race as he does is unbiblical, unclear, inconsistent, and unreformed.

A review of Schreiner's book [The Race Set Before Us](#) as posted on Amazon.com is worthy of attention. It read as follows:

A Catholic Perspective, May 2, 2004

Reviewer: **A reader**

I read this book as a Calvinist nearly a month before my conversion to the Catholic Church, ironically. The authors make a superb biblical analysis on the process of salvation, and it not being just a one time event. This opened me up to Catholic soteriology. The reason I gave these guys 4 stars is because I disagree with doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, (among other things) but I do think they argued for most things superbly. A job well done to the authors. I would recommend "Not By Faith Alone", by Robert Sungenis...he makes the same conclusions as these guys on the process of salvation, but takes biblical warnings not as conditional, but actual, as in, they could actually happen to a soul.

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0830815554/sr=8-1/qid=1147661729/ref=pd_bbs_1/103-6730410-7544641/?%5Fencoding=UTF8

What alarming words when a well-know professor at a Southern Baptist seminary is given credit for a person not converting to Christ but to Catholicism. The writing he submits to the public promotes a natural (*though not biblical*) step for those who read and are persuaded by him. Peter, one of the original twelve, had to be confronted by Paul (Gal 2:11-21). The reason being he was allowing works and effort as found in the Law to slip into and dominate his soteriology. I believe the same has happened with Dr. Schreiner. The Catholic Church is honest about what it believes is required to obtain eternal life. Perhaps those Reformed theologians in Protestant evangelical schools whose theology is consistent with the Catholic Church should have the courage to clothe themselves with the same honesty. We ought not to say "sola fide" when we don't really mean it.

End Notes

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