

# Competing Models of Forgiveness

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## Abbreviations for Cauley's Books

3DUS	<i>3D Unconditional Security</i>
4DF	<i>4D Forgiveness</i>
ATTG	<i>A Tribute to Grace</i>
BEL	<i>Believe</i>
BRH	<i>Breaking the Rocking Horse</i>
CC	<i>Carnal Corinth</i>
DFS	<i>Destined for Salvation</i>
DOLF	<i>Degrees of Love and Forgiveness</i>
DSS	<i>Dual Sealing and Security</i>
FFG	<i>Fallen from Grace but Not from Perfection</i>
IMOC	<i>In Memory of Coy</i>
IGAC	<i>Is God a Communist?</i>
JILC	<i>John in Living Color</i>
MCMC	<i>Mere Christianity and Moral Christianity</i>
NBSW	<i>New Birth by the Sovereign Wind</i>
LTPW	<i>Like a Tree Planted by the Water</i>

MSIH	<i>Monogamous Sex in Heaven!</i>
MMP1	<i>Misthological Models Part 1</i>
MMP2	<i>Misthological Models Part 2</i>
MMP3	<i>Misthological Models Part 3</i>
MMP4	<i>Misthological Models Part 4</i>
MMP5	<i>Misthological Models Part 5</i>
MMP6	<i>Misthological Models Part 6</i>
POV	<i>Predestination and the Open View</i>
RAE	<i>Rewards are Eternal</i>
RBVGB	<i>Redeemed Bodies Versus Glorified Bodies</i>
ROG	<i>The Race of Grace</i>
ROGSG	<i>The Race of Grace Study Guide</i>
SAS	<i>Sealed and Secure</i>
TOD	<i>The Outer Darkness</i>
WWWS	<i>Woolly Wolves and Woolless Sheep</i>

## **Other Principal Abbreviations**

CFG	Classical Free Grace
FG	Free Grace
GMR	Grounds, Means, Results
HG	Hyper-grace
HFG	Hybrid Free Grace
LS	Lordship Salvation
LSF	Lordship Salvation frontloading
LSB	Lordship Salvation backloading
MFG	Misthological Free Grace
NFG	New Free Grace
OSAS	Once Saved Always Saved
PD	Principle of Duality

# Chapter 1. Opening Arguments

## Introduction

When Joe Conghan updated his site description for the *Free Grace* (FG) Facebook group, *Real Raw Grace for Grace-Needing Sinners*, he stated: “The Gospel is good news; in fact, it’s the best news ever! It’s the news that because Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross, past, present, and future, He guarantees anyone irrevocable eternal life by simply trusting in Him for it (John 3:16).” This statement raises a host of questions: What is the relationship between Jesus dying for all of our sins and irrevocably giving us eternal life? In other words, is *Once Saved Always Saved* (OSAS) dependent upon Jesus dying for all of our sins? If so, why? In theological terms, what is the relationship between *soteriology* (salvation) and *aphesisology* (forgiveness)?<sup>1</sup> Is there such a thing as soteriological aphasisology (i.e., soteriological forgiveness)? Is there a form or level of forgiveness required for salvation from eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire?

Conghan’s statement was challenged by Joseph Robi, who said that past, present, and future sins are not forgiven at the point of conversion, only past sins. Thus, per Robi’s model, soteriological forgiveness only covers preconversion sins. Postconversion sins only need familial forgiveness, not soteriological forgiveness. In trying to flesh out the premises of Robi’s model, I outlined five different forgiveness models. I noted, for instance, that a new FG perspective held by GES heavyweights like Wilkin and Yates denies the existence of soteriological forgiveness. In the issuing discussion, Antonio da Rosa stated that he was the one who convinced Wilkin to adopt the new aphasisological perspective. Da Rosa asked that we pursue this matter in greater depth in his Facebook Group: *Scripture Seekers: Refining Free Grace Theology*. I consented, noting that doing so would allow me to double-check some of my assumptions regarding the new model and provide an opportunity to hone my *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) regarding *aphesisology*.

Therefore, the present study will briefly outline various aphasisological models and then contrast my model with da Rosa’s model. Of course, we must consider the standard texts commonly cited in favor of soteriological aphasisiology. Even one text left standing would establish the superiority of models affirming soteriological forgiveness over the new model’s denial of this category. My biggest concern is not the conceptual and/or exegetical affirmation or denial of soteriological forgiveness. More is potentially at stake. My apprehensiveness is that the new model may jettison the doctrine of *justification by faith alone in Christ of alone* if the new aphasisological model is carried through to its logical conclusion. Hopefully, my uneasiness regarding the new model will be shown to be a false alarm. Still, early investigation and detection of this potential malignancy would be preferable. If the new model is soteriologically cancerous, it should be eradicated in its early stages. Perhaps this examination will only show the new model to be benign. Let the examination begin.

## Outline of Two Lordship Aphasisological Models

This discussion will only provide a cursory overview of two *Lordship Salvation* (LS) views of forgiveness. Doing so will give a rudimentary contrast between the *Free Grace* (Free Grace) views being surveyed.

### LS Frontloading One-Level Soteriological View (LSF-1SV)

One generic form of LS requires that you make various performance-related commitments at the point of conversion, such as repenting of your sins, confessing Christ, and submitting to the Lordship of Christ regarding your performance. This form of LS frontloads the gospel of so-called grace with performance requirements, making the gift of salvation a reward, even at the onset. The reality of your initial commitment is judged by your subsequent performance. The crown is used to picture the reward aspect of this so-called gift.

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<sup>1</sup> As explained in 4DF, *soteriology* is based on two biblical Greek words, *soteria* (salvation) and *logos* (teaching), and correspondingly refers to biblical teaching about salvation. Although the biblical concept of salvation includes many dimensions other than deliverance from eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire (popularly referred to as salvation from Hell), it is this aspect of salvation to which writers most frequently refer when they use the word *soteriology*. Consequently, the term and its derivatives will be used herein in its popular capacity. *Aphasisology* is my coined term derived from the Greek words *aphesis* (forgiveness) and *logos* (teaching) and refers to the doctrine of forgiveness.

Illustration 1. LSF Forgiveness



Despite LS claims, neither the forgiveness of preconversion sins nor the forgiveness of postconversion sins is a gift in this construct. In both cases, your forgiveness is conditioned, at least in part, on your performance. Neither preconversion nor postconversion forgiveness is freely nor exclusively covered by the blood of Christ. So, a red font is not used for either range of forgiveness. The soteriological gift is a misthological payment.<sup>2</sup> Both initial and final salvation are by grace and works. The forgiveness of both preconversion and postconversion sin is a soteriological, occurring on one level. Confession of sin for postconversion forgiveness cannot be clearly and consistently separated from soteriological forgiveness in this construct. Thus, this model can be labeled accordingly: *Lordship Salvation frontloading one-level soteriological view* (LSF-1SV)—or LSF for short.

### LS Backloading One-Level Soteriological View (LSB-1SV)

Another generic form of LS requires that you make various performance-related commitments at the initial point of conversion. Repentance from sins, confession of Christ, submission to the Lordship of Christ regarding your performance, and daily confession of sins are subsequent requirements to be saved from the Lake of Fire (i.e., soteriological salvation). This form of LS backloads the gospel of so-called grace with performance requirements, making the gift of salvation from soteriological damnation a reward dependent on your subsequent performance. Your initial faith in Christ is invalidated if not followed through with subsequent performance. The gift becomes a reward. Similarly, this LS model can be labeled: *Lordship Salvation backloading one-level soteriological view* (LSB-1SV)—or LSB for short.

Illustration 2. LSB Forgiveness



Forgiveness of your preconversion sins might be freely granted at the point of conversion and thus a gift, but the forgiveness of your subsequent sins is also necessary for soteriological salvation and is a reward based on your performance. For instance, Corner is an Arminian, that is, someone who denies OSAS. He contends that soteriological forgiveness does not apply to future sins. In his opinion, Col 2:13 cannot apply to future sins because 1Jn 1:9 shows that future sins still need forgiveness.<sup>3</sup> His argument poses a simplistic one-level soteriological view of forgiveness. Final salvation by grace apart from works is denied. Any of the five grace views presented below are superior to either form of these two Lordship views.

<sup>2</sup> **Misthology** is my coined term derived from the Greek words *misthos* (reward) and *logos* (teaching) and refers to the doctrine of temporal and eternal rewards but will be used primarily in reference to eternal rewards, i.e., eschatological rewards. Therefore, a misthological benefit refers to something that is a reward.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Corner, *The Myth of Eternal Security*, third edition (Washington, PA: Evangelical Outreach, 2005), 27-28.

# Outline of Five Grace Aphasisiological Models

## (1) Hyper-Grace One-Level Soteriological View (HG-1SV)

*Hyper-grace* (HG) views likewise stumble over 1Jn 1:9. One hyper-grace view I interacted with is that by Joseph Prince. For him, confessing sins is simply acknowledging that you are already forgiven. Forgiveness is exclusively soteriological. The forgiveness granted at the point of conversion includes our future sins, and fellowship with God is unconditionally assured. Believers just need to recognize that their sins are already forgiven and that they are in fellowship with their Father. I have provided a rebuttal in an online article.<sup>4</sup> Another hyper-grace variation I am currently refuting is that held by David Benjamin.<sup>5</sup> In his model, fellowship with God is conditioned on believing the soteriological gospel. One might say that forgiveness is automatic, occurring naturally, as a believer believes the soteric gospel.

*Illustration 3. HG Forgiveness*



Whether this forgiveness is viewed as soteric or the automatic result of the soteric gift of salvation granted at the point of conversion is immaterial for the present discussion. Hyper-grace forgiveness can be pictured as one-level soteriological forgiveness and abbreviated accordingly: *hyper-grace one-level soteriological view* (HG-1SV)—or HG for short. Past, present, and future sins (i.e., preconversion and postconversion sins) are covered by the blood of Christ at the point of conversion and thus part of the soteric package of salvation bestowed at that time. The red font depicts soteriological coverage by the blood that saves from the flames of the Lake of Fire. Rewards are generally marginalized in HG and thus not pictured as a significant factor in forgiveness.

While one might be charitable and allow that hyper-grace aphesisology falls within the parameters of Free Grace (FG) soteriology, HG aphesisology would be best distinguished from FG theology for two primary reasons. First, some HG advocates, such as Benjamin, are adamantly opposed to FG theology and charge FG theology with being soteriologically accursed. Second, HG theology opposes a full-orbed misthological gospel. Therefore, HG is accursed misthologically.

## (2) Classic FG Two-Level View (CFG-2V)

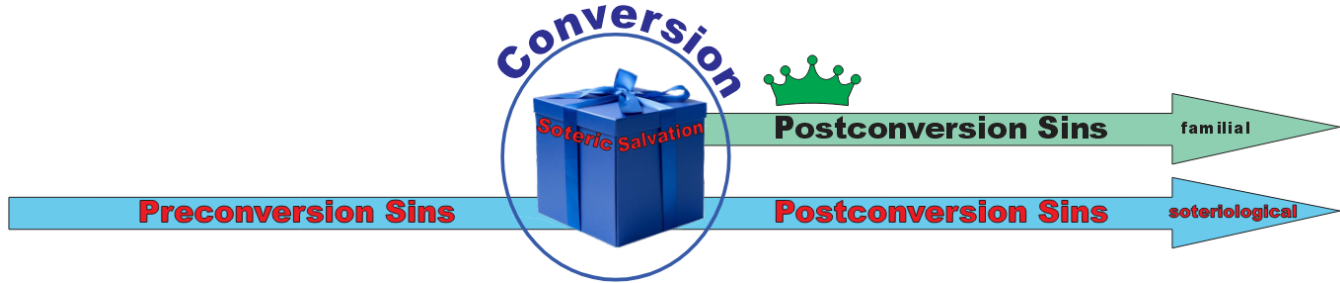
The remaining four forms of aphesisology fall within the scope of FG soteriology and FG misthology and are held by staunch FG advocates. Therefore, they easily fall within the parameters of FG theology. In classical FG aphesisology, forgiveness from God is regarded as occurring at two levels. In 2002, Wilkin affirmed the two-level position: “Christians sometimes forget that there are two aspects to the Lord’s forgiveness: positional and experiential (or fellowship). Both aspects are illustrated in the Matthew 18 parable.”<sup>6</sup> Positional forgiveness refers to soteriological forgiveness as being granted by virtue of our position in Christ. It can also be called relational forgiveness since it is granted simply because we are children of God. Past, present, and future sins (i.e., preconversion and postconversion sins) are covered by the blood of Christ at the point of conversion. They are part of the soteric package of salvation bestowed at that time and thus depicted in a red font. This first level of forgiveness is foundational.

<sup>4</sup> See Marty Cauley, “Prince of Milk” (7/7/2017). Available at <https://mishthology.org/pdf/articles/Prince-of-Milk.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> When released, see my book, *Misthological Models Part 7* (MMP7).

<sup>6</sup> Bob Wilkin, “An Enormous Debt Forgiven – Part 1” (1/1/2002). Available at <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/an-enormous-debt-forgiven-part-1/#2>

## Illustration 4. CFG Forgiveness



The second type of forgiveness is available after conversion and is pictured as the second level of forgiveness. It pertains to experiencing fellowship within the family of God. The green color for the arrow is used to convey a dynamic experience of eternal life in the form of abundant life. Familial fellowship is forgiveness granted to believers as redeemed members of God’s family as they confess their known sins to their Heavenly Father to maintain their family fellowship (1Jn 1:9). A black font is used because this type of forgiveness is not included in the soteric package. It does not pertain to salvation from eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire. Instead, this second level, familial forgiveness, is a reward in the here and now for walking in the light. It is pictured with the green crown, symbolizing abundant life now.

In his follow-up article a few months later, Wilkin acknowledges that fellowship forgiveness does not eliminate temporal consequences.<sup>7</sup> I point to his clarification in preparation for a more advanced model to be posted subsequently, which poses temporal forgiveness as a third possible aspect of the Lord’s forgiveness. For now, though, we can label this widely held, original view by Wilkin as the *classic FG two-level view* (CFG-2V)—or CFG for short.

The first FG book I ever read was *The Gift of God* by Richard Seymour. That book was a lifesaver back in my high school years. I will always have a soft spot in my heart for it. Though many of my FG views have matured in the four-plus subsequent decades, I still appreciate Seymour’s CFG argument that Col 1:13-14 and 2:13 coincide with Heb 10:14,17-18 to describe a once-for-all forgiveness that has dealt with all of a believer’s sin, even future ones, regarding the believer’s heavenly destiny, in contradistinction to the fellowship forgiveness of 1Jn 1:9 that pertains to fellowship.<sup>8</sup> Of course, years later, I would discover that this distinction is considered vital by many writers. For instance, Chafer (ST 3:238-239) states:

At this point a distinction is called for between this abiding judicial forgiveness and the oft-repeated forgiveness within the family of God. This seeming paradox that one is forgiven and yet must be forgiven, is explained on the ground of the truth that there are two holy and unrelated spheres of relationship between the believer and God. Regarding his *standing*, which like his Sonship is immutable since it is secured by his place in Christ, he is not subject to condemnation and will never be unjustified or separated from God. Regarding his *state*, which like the daily conduct of a son is mutable and his wholly within the family relationship, he must be forgiven and cleansed (1 John 1:9)...When sinning, he will not have broken the abiding fact of his union with God though he has injured his communion with Him.”<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis his.)

While I was discussing the misthological nature of our adoption as sons of God with Steve Elkins, I informed him that I would have to integrate adoption with my discussion regarding positional forgiveness. As it turns out, Elkins recently wrote a paper defending the classical position entitled “[Positional Forgiveness](#).”<sup>10</sup> It is an excellent paper from the CFG paradigm. He permitted me to post it on my website to share for this discussion.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Bob Wilkin, “An Enormous Debt Forgiven Part 2” (5/1/2002). Available at <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/an-enormous-debt-forgiven-part-2>.

<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Seymour, *The Gift of God*, revised edition (Lagrange, WY: Integrity Press, 2007), 175-177.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Steve Elkins, “Positional Forgiveness.” See [https://msthology.org/pdf/other/Positional\\_Forgiveness.pdf](https://msthology.org/pdf/other/Positional_Forgiveness.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> Personal correspondence, 3/16/2024.



### (3) New FG One-Level Familial View (NFG-1FV)

In 2021, Wilkin stated that he had adopted a new view of forgiveness. This new view does away with the first level of forgiveness and expands the second level:

In this fourth part, we will consider the question of whether there are two types of forgiveness, fellowship and positional, or just one, fellowship.

When a person believes in Jesus Christ for everlasting life, does he not receive forgiveness of all his sins—past, present, and future? I have taught that for years, distinguishing positional forgiveness from ongoing fellowship forgiveness.

**I no longer think there is such a thing as positional forgiveness or the forgiveness of our future sins.**

Forgiveness in Scripture is a relational concept.<sup>12</sup>

For Wilkin, forgiveness is relational as opposed to judicial. I will use *relational* forgiveness differently, as distinct from *familial* forgiveness. My level of finesse is useful in distinguishing my view from that of Wilkin. Just because you are a *child* of God and thus have a *relationship* with God as your Father does not prove that you are in family fellowship with your Father. Familial fellowship goes over and above merely having a relationship with God as a child of God. Your lack of familial fellowship with God does not jeopardize your relationship with God. Therefore, using relational versus familial forgiveness to distinguish relationship from fellowship is useful. Accordingly, I will distinguish relational forgiveness from familial forgiveness. In any case, Wilkin proceeds to admit in Part 4:

There are a handful of verses that link the new birth with the forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43; Rom 4:7; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 2:13; 3:13; 1 John 2:12). I plan to write a journal article dealing with all of those verses. At this time, it can be noted that **there is no verse that explicitly refers to the forgiveness of our future sins. Every one of those verses could well be saying that when we came to faith in Christ, all of our sins up to that point were forgiven. We start the Christian life in fellowship with God.**

Wilkin poses that these classic texts do not describe the soteriological forgiveness of all sins; rather, they pertain to fellowship forgiveness of preconversion sin. In 2023, Ken Yates affirmed his concurrence with the new view:

When we are asked to clarify the seeming contradiction, we say that one deals with positional forgiveness and the other deals with daily forgiveness. Perhaps that is right. But perhaps, on the other hand, we hear a voice in the back of our minds saying, “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

....A proper understanding would be that **the forgiveness of sins is not the same thing as having eternal life and being saved from the lake of fire. Forgiveness of sins deals with fellowship with**

<sup>12</sup> Bob Wilkin, “What Is the Role of the Shed Blood of Christ in Forgiveness? Part 4: Do the Scriptures Teach That God Has Already Forgiven Our Future Sins?” (12/23/2021). Available at <https://faithalone.org/blog/what-is-the-role-of-the-shed-blood-of-christ-in-forgiveness-part-4-do-the-scriptures-teach-that-god-has-already-forgiven-our-future-sins>. This is part 4 of a series. In part 1 of this series, Wilkin argues that Jesus actually, rather than potentially, took away the sins of the world. “What Is the Role of the Shed Blood of Christ in Forgiveness? Part 1 Did Jesus Actually or Potentially Take Away the Sin of the World?” (12/10/2021). Available at <https://faithalone.org/blog/what-is-the-role-of-the-shed-blood-of-christ-in-forgiveness-part-1-did-jesus-actually-or-potentially-take-away-the-sin-of-the-world/>. In part 2, he concludes that the sins of the world are removed but not forgiven, thus making the world savable. “What Is the Role of the Shed Blood of Christ in Forgiveness? Part 2: If Jesus Actually Removed the World’s Sin, Are All Forgiven?” (12/15/2021) Available at <https://faithalone.org/blog/what-is-the-role-of-the-shed-blood-of-christ-in-forgiveness-part-2-if-jesus-actually-removed-the-worlds-sin-are-all-forgiven>. In part 3, Wilkin confirms the need for fellowship forgiveness. “What Is the Role of the Shed Blood of Christ in Forgiveness? Part 3: If Believers Must Confess for Forgiveness, Are We Out of Fellowship a Lot?” (12/21/2021) Available at <https://faithalone.org/blog/what-is-the-role-of-the-shed-blood-of-christ-in-forgiveness-part-3-if-believers-must-confess-for-forgiveness-are-we-out-of-fellowship-a-lot>.

**the Lord. When we believe in Him for eternal life, we also receive the forgiveness of sins. This means we can have that fellowship with Him. But this forgiveness does not cover future sins.**<sup>13</sup>

*Illustration 5. NFG Forgiveness*



According to the new model posed by Wilkin and expounded upon by Yates, (1) forgiveness is strictly in terms of fellowship; (2) there is no forgiveness of future sins; and (3) preconversion sins are forgiven at a familial level at the point of conversion. Since sins are not soteriologically forgiven, I do not depict them in a red font for this model. The forgiveness of sins is strictly familial. There is no soteriological forgiveness. Thus, the forgiveness of postconversion sins at the point of conversion is not part of the soteriologic package. The timing of this forgiveness coincides with the reception of eternal life, but this forgiveness is not a composite part of the soteriological package. This familial forgiveness of preconversion sins has nothing to do with salvation from eternal damnation in Hell. I will dub this new position the *new FG one-level familial view* (NFG-1FV)—or NFG for short.<sup>14</sup>

In the initial Facebook exchange, I noted my suspicion that Wilkin adopted this new FG perspective to be consistent with the Hodgian view of atonement, according to which unbelievers are sent to Hell because they lack eternal life, not because of their sins. Jesus' death objectively removed sins as an obstacle to the reception of eternal life as a gift, thereby making everyone in the world savable. Antonio da Rosa then informed me in the Facebook exchange that he originated the NFG view and invited me to explore it further in his Facebook group. So, NFG will be the focus of the present examination after we finish this survey.

#### (4) Hybrid FG Two-Level Consecutive View (HFG-2CV)

The model posed by Joseph Robi in the original Facebook exchange rests on two fundamental premises: **(1) forgiveness cannot occur at multiple levels; (2) forgiveness cannot deal with future sins.** Therefore, at the point of regeneration, we are only forgiven of all our sins until that point. This type of forgiveness is soteriological. Subsequently, believers only need familial forgiveness.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Yates, "The Forgiveness of Sins" (3/9/2023). Available at <https://faithalone.org/blog/the-forgiveness-of-sins>.

<sup>14</sup> For now, I have only placed the green crown on the right side of conversion to depict postconversion forgiveness as a temporal reward in this model. I suspect that this model will find it necessary, at least at times, to place the green crown on the right side of the soteriological package as well and make the forgiveness of preconversion sins a temporal reward necessary for familial forgiveness. If so, I would not find this detrimental to this model. Still, it is worth noting. I am not going into that degree of specificity with this initial survey because in certain cases I would be inclined to make the same acknowledgement in my model. But I am not doing so in these initial illustrations. This more complex factor is probably not a distinctive feature of either model.

<sup>15</sup> See discussion at *Real Raw Grace for Grace-Needing Sinners*. Available at: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/482020200349605/posts/844729264078695/?comment\\_id=846335150584773&reply\\_comment\\_id=847227767162178&notif\\_id=1709324022334374&notif\\_t=group\\_comment\\_mention](https://www.facebook.com/groups/482020200349605/posts/844729264078695/?comment_id=846335150584773&reply_comment_id=847227767162178&notif_id=1709324022334374&notif_t=group_comment_mention).

Illustration 6. HFG Forgiveness



This hybrid position combines old and new FG views (CFG + NFG). Therefore, I will label this sequential split-level model the *hybrid FG two-level consecutive view* (HFG-2CV)—or HFG for short. Like NFG, it denies that forgiveness applies to future sins, which would make the forgiveness of future sins a temporal reward for familial forgiveness. Yet, it concurs with CFG in affirming the soteriological forgiveness of preconversion sins. Robi adopted this position from Lesly Well, a Bible teacher from Ireland. On behalf of Robi’s model, I suggested he could argue that soteriological forgiveness of preconversional sins is soteriologically necessary to receive eternal life, but soteriological forgiveness is not necessary after that point because once eternal life is received, this life cannot be lost. OSAS rules out the need for soteriological forgiveness of postconversion sin per this model.

What remained unclear, though, was why soteriological preconversion forgiveness is necessary within this model. Apparently, soteriological preconversion forgiveness is viewed simply as part of the soteriological package. By logical OSAS inference, soteriological forgiveness for postconversion sin is ruled out, leaving soteriological forgiveness for preconversion sin as the only valid soteriological spectrum. Presumably, this model assumes that the standard texts used to support the notion of soteriology forgiveness suffice to establish its premise that forgiveness of preconversion sin is soteriological. Such an assumption will not be granted by NFG, however. And my model is not limited to this presumption for its rationale as to the necessity of soteriological forgiveness.

In defense of his model, Robi stated that according to 1Jn 2:1, we would not need an advocate if all our sins were already forgiven. He also added, “God would not have any right to punish a believer if all those sins were already washed.” This is a double jeopardy argument, according to which God cannot deal with us according to our sins if those sins have already been forgiven. It explains why postconversion forgiveness is familially necessary but fails to explain why preconversion forgiveness is soteriologically necessary. In counter to Robi’s model, my multiple-level model, to be discussed next, rejects the double jeopardy argument as logically valid and finds the double jeopardy argument exegetically invalid.

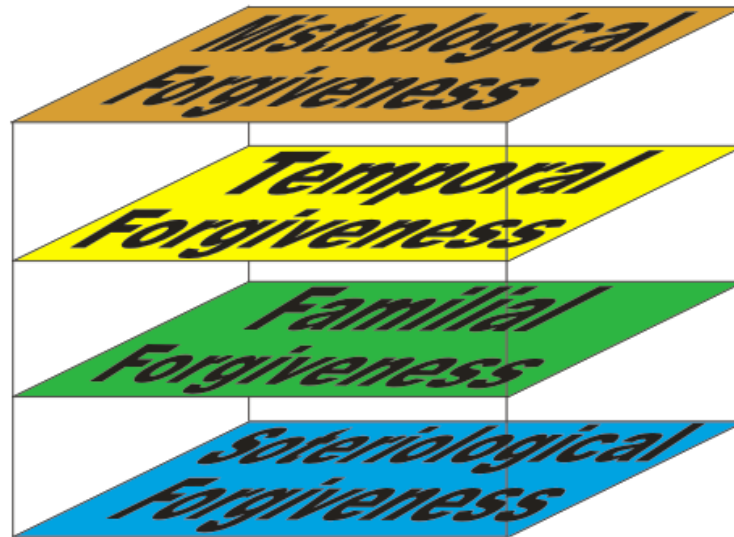
Robi also stated that he did not believe that unconfessed sins would be dealt with as sins at the Bema but that the negative results of those sins would be dealt with at the Bema. This supposed distinction is also common in FG and LS dispensationalism. My multiple-level view rejects Robi’s HFG distinction as artificial.

## (5) Misthological FG Four-Level View (MFG-4V)

My *misthological FG four-level view* (MFG-4V)—or MFG for short—is the last view in this survey. My multiple-level view is explained at length in my book, *4D Forgiveness* (4DF).<sup>16</sup> Dillow also holds this view, as expressed in his *Destiny*, ch. 59, “Negative Judgment of the Believer.” Though we differ in some particulars (see “Dillow’s Argument,” MMP1), we are in substantial agreement on the key points: (1) soteriological forgiveness is necessary; (2) double jeopardy is not an issue since forgiveness takes place at different levels; (3) believers can suffer penal, punitive, punishment by God for their sins at both the temporal and misthological levels; and (4) the atonement freed God to make the benefits of the atonement contingently applicable at various levels. In 4DF, I pictured these levels of potential forgiveness by God as four different planes.

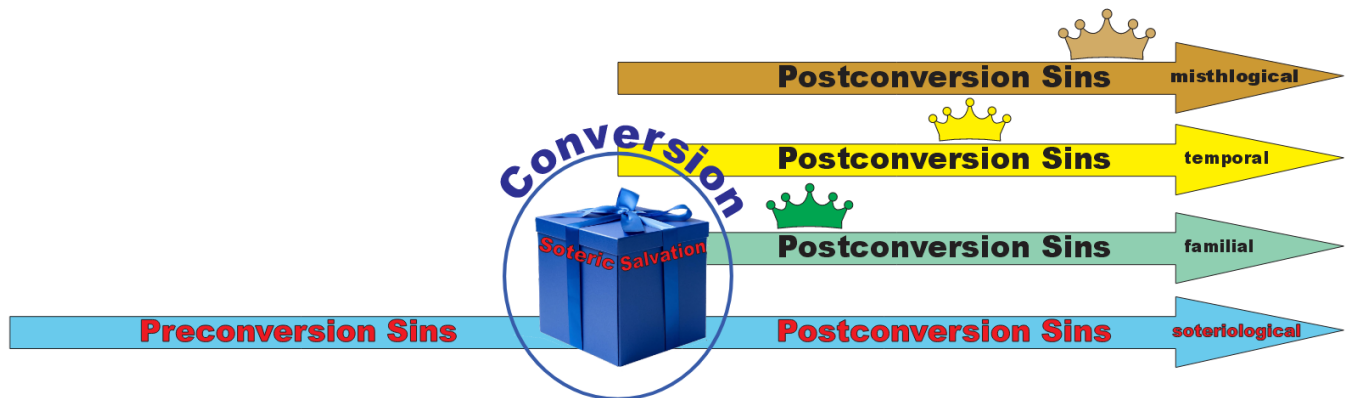
<sup>16</sup> Marty Cauley, *4D Forgiveness* (Sylva, NC: Misthological Press, 2015). Available at <https://www.amazon.com/4D-Forgiveness-Nature-Relation-Judicial/dp/1507695705>.

*Illustration 7. Four Planes of Vertical Forgiveness*



In the present discussion, I will picture these planes as four arrows using the same color scheme to facilitate greater visual precision regarding their sequence and possible inclusion in what type of forgiveness is granted at the point of conversion. As noted in 4DF, the forgiveness of preconversion sin is not necessarily limited to the soteriological arena at the point of conversion or automatically guaranteed at higher levels. Nevertheless, the forgiveness of preconversion sins at the soteriological level is normally the primary, if not exclusive, concern for most soteriologists and will suffice to commence this discussion with the MFG picture of forgiveness below.

*Illustration 8. MFG Forgiveness*

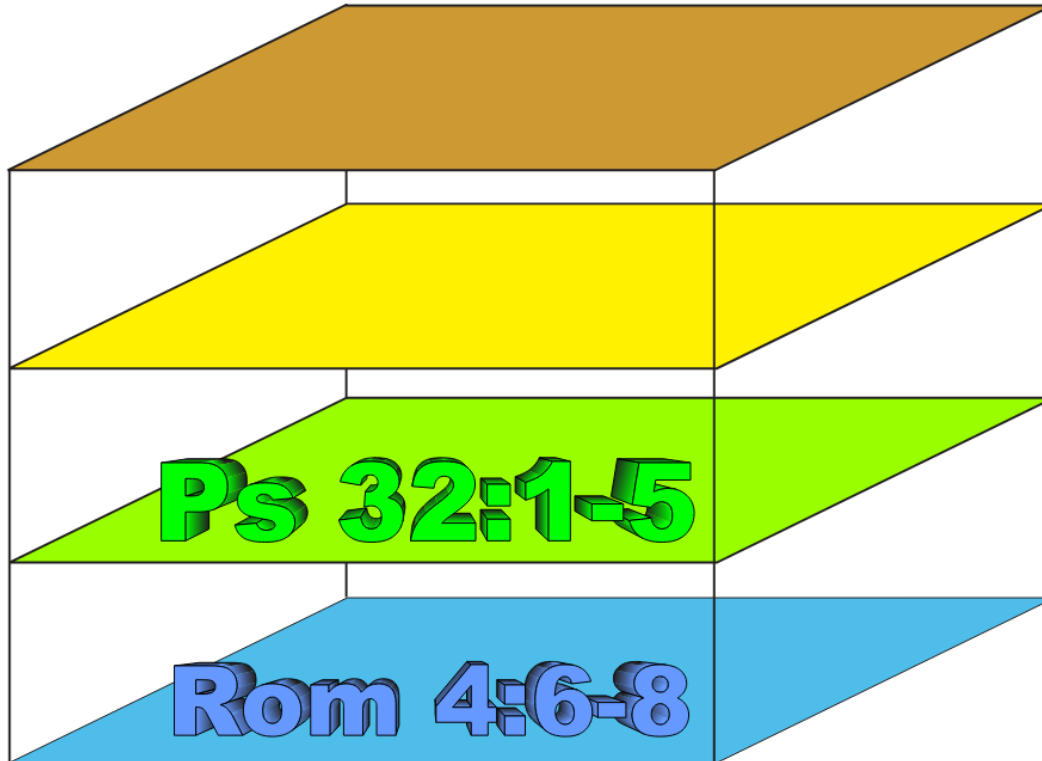


The successive crowns depict the potential rising levels of forgiveness:

- Green crown—familial forgiveness for fellowship is a reward.
- Yellow crown—temporal forgiveness for deliverance from temporal consequences is a reward.
- Gold crown—misthological forgiveness for deliverance from negative misthological consequences is a reward.

## Exclusivity Versus Inclusivity

Per the NFG comments of Wilkin and Yates above, I expect NFG advocates to contend that Acts 10:43 is not a soteriological text. Though I am very skeptical that NFG can remove the soteriological foundation from such a text, I am open to the possibility that NFG might be able to demonstrate that this text is not limited to soteriological forgiveness. I made what might be considered a similar assertion in 4DF with the following illustration, using shelves and planes to depict the different levels and types of vertical (i.e., religious) forgiveness.

**Illustration 9. Same Text on Two Shelves**

As I explained in 4DF, one should note that just because an OT passage is not used in a soteriological capacity in its original context, this does not necessarily prove that it cannot have soteriological applicability. Indeed, based on Acts 10:43, such duality might be anticipated as a probability. One would strain unnecessarily to limit the soteriological applicability of this soteric text to soteriological OT contexts: “Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” Does Luke intend to limit this soteriological affirmation to those OT texts describing soteriological forgiveness in their original context? Probably not. Rather, just as Moses lifting up a bronze serpent in the OT (so that God’s OT people could receive temporal forgiveness and physical life) serves as a typological witness to the fact that everyone in the NT who believes in Jesus receives soteriological forgiveness and eternal life, so OT promises of familial, temporal, and perhaps even misthological forgiveness, might be taken additionally as pictures, at least from the NT perspective, of what forgiveness from God looks like also in the soteriological dimension. In fact, a comparison of Ps 32:1-5 with Rom 4:5-8 indicates that a non-soteriological OT text can have soteriological applicability. In this Psalm, David describes the forgiveness and restoration to fellowship with God that he experienced after he confessed his sin regarding Bathsheba. Clearly, David was already an OT believer before he committed this sin. Yet he needed to confess this sin to be forgiven of this sin in terms of restored fellowship. This OT context is definitely not soteric. Nonetheless, in the NT, Paul uses this OT text as a soteriological proof text. Paul perceives the underlying principle as having soteriological applicability. The *Principle of Duality* (PD) is unmistakably at work.

The focus of the OT is something more than soteriological forgiveness. Indeed, my current research in MMP7 suggests that the OT forgiveness spoken of in Acts 10:43 commenced within a seedbed of soteriological forgiveness but immediately blossomed into misthological forgiveness even from primeval times. In short, Cain had soteriological forgiveness but not familial, temporal, or misthological forgiveness. Abel, in contrast, had all four levels of forgiveness as attested by the NT confirmation that he had obtained the misthological righteousness necessary for the Reward City (Heb 11:4ff). This perception is part of my rebuttal of Benjamin’s HG model of forgiveness in MMP7. Therefore, I am open to da Rosa and those adopting the NFG model as possibly contributing to the field of aphasisiology in this capacity. I sometimes collaborate with fellow misthologists, even when they seek to develop models that compete with my own. I tend to find the iron-sharpening-iron interaction to be useful to both models. In 4DF, I used the following chart to depict some aphasisiological texts as operating exclusively in one level or plane, with other texts operating inclusively within multiple levels or planes.

Illustration 10. Four Types of Vertical Forgiveness (4DF)

Type	Description	Examples
Misthological	Punishment then	<b>Num 14:20-23</b> ; Ps 103:12; Micah 7:19; Zech 3:4 (cp. 3:5-7); <b>Mt 6:15</b> ; <b>18:34-35</b> ; Lk 6:37; <b>Jn 13:8</b> ; <b>1Cor 4:4</b> ; <b>6:9-10</b> ; <b>11:32b</b> ; 2Cor 5:10; Col 3:25; 1Tim 5:24; Heb 3:11; 4:3,5; 6:8c; 9:28; 10:26-31; 12:15-17; Jam 2:13; 5:9
Temporal	Punishment now	<b>Num 14:21-23</b> (cp. 20:11-12); 21:4-9; <b>2Sam 12:11-18</b> ; 2Chron 7:14; Is 38:17; 59:2; <b>Mt 18:27</b> ; Acts 8:22; <b>1Cor 11:29-32a</b> ; Heb 6: 8b; Jam 5:14-16; 1Jn 5:16
Familial	Fellowship	Lev 16:30; <b>Num 14:20</b> ; <b>2Sam 12:13</b> ; Ps 25:7,11; <b>32:1-5</b> ; 51:2,7; 85:2; Is 1:18; 59:2; <b>Mt 6:12,14-15</b> ; <b>18:27</b> ; <b>Jn 13:8,10</b> ; Acts 2:38; 22:16; <b>1Cor 4:4</b> ; <b>6:18-19</b> ; <b>11:32a</b> , Heb 7:25; 1Jn 1:7,9
Soteriological	Relationship	Is 43:25; 44:22; Jer 31:34; <b>Mt 18:27(?)</b> ; <b>Jn 13:10-11</b> ; Acts 10:43; <b>Rom 4:6-8</b> ; <b>1Cor 6:11</b> ; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 2:13-14; Tit 3:5; Heb 8:12; 10:10-18

As to Acts 10:43, I pictured it above as exclusively soteriological, given its NT context. However, this does not mean that I must read an exclusively soteriological understanding from it into every OT text regarding forgiveness. Nor does this mean that I am limited in deriving support for a soteriological understanding of forgiveness in Acts 10:43 from OT texts dealing exclusively with soteriological forgiveness. For instance, in the above chart, I cite Rom 4:6-8 as exclusively soteriological, dealing with relational forgiveness. Yet, I place Ps 32:1-5, the text from which Paul draws his soteriological inference, as dealing with familial forgiveness. I used the same font color to note the textual relationship. If NFG can mount a strong familial argument for Acts 10:43, then I would be inclined to counter the NFG argument for familial *exclusivity* by posing familial *inclusivity* instead, just as I have done on other occasions with other texts in harmony with my MFG model. As it is, I am presently content with the CFG conclusion that Acts 10:43 is an exclusively soteriological text. Yet, I am not inclined to limit myself to a one-to-one correspondence in deriving that conclusion. In other words, as in the case of Rom 4:6-8, I am not limited to a strictly soteriological-to-soteriological relationship between such texts. That issue is part of a larger hermeneutical discussion, namely, the use of the OT in the NT.<sup>17</sup>

### *An Argument for Soteriological Exclusivity in Acts 10:43*

#### *Peter*

Elkins believes that since the forgiveness of sins in Acts 10:43 is equated with the salvation promised in Acts 11:14, this forgiveness must be soteriological. This argument is strong since Peter explains his meaning. The sequence of events in Acts 10:43 is impressive in and of itself. Peter is given a vision to prepare his heart to present the gospel to the Gentiles. Messengers ask him to share his message with Cornelius, who is evidently a God-fearing proselyte (cp. Acts 13:43). Peter does so, and Cornelius and his household experience what appears to be soteriological conversion:

<sup>43</sup> “**Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.**” <sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.” (Acts 10:43-44)

<sup>17</sup> Standard books devoted to this topic include S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., *The Old Testament in the New*. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*. Gleason L. Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*.

Almost all interpreters believe that this experience pictures soteriological conversion and that Peter is talking about soteriological forgiveness. After all, Luke proceeds to describe Peter's defense of his actions just a few verses later:

<sup>13</sup> “And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, ‘Send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; <sup>14</sup> and **he shall speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.**” <sup>15</sup> “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. (Acts 11:13-15)

This equation of soteriological salvation with forgiveness of sins seems straightforward, thereby demonstrating the soteriological nature of this forgiveness. As if that is not enough to clinch the soteriological nature of this forgiveness and conversion, Luke records yet another subsequent summation and defense by Peter:

<sup>7</sup> And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth **the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.**” <sup>8</sup> “And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; <sup>9</sup> and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> “Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> “But **we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.**” (Acts 15:7-11)

### *Paul*

Luke confirms this impression by integrating Paul's testimony with Peter's. Likewise speaking primarily to a Jewish audience, Paul said that he was preaching the gospel (Acts 13:32) and then proceeded to give what is an apparent soteriological invitation:

<sup>38</sup> “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him **forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you, <sup>39</sup> and through Him **everyone who believes is freed** from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)

Paul contended that this forgiveness and freeness is for everyone who believes, thus even the Gentiles. When many of the Jews proved resistant to the gospel, Paul rebuked them:

<sup>46</sup> And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves **unworthy of eternal life**, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> “For thus the Lord has commanded us, ‘I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, that You should bring **salvation** to the end of the earth.’” <sup>48</sup> And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and **as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.** (Acts 13:46-48)

Salvation in terms of having eternal life by simply believing is the principal subject matter. Forgiveness, freeness, salvation, and eternal life seem intertwined and conditioned simply on believing. Believing in Jesus as the Christ for any of these benefits would seem to result in all these benefits. Luke records Paul giving a very concise soteriological presentation a few chapters later to the jailer, who was about to kill himself, thinking that Paul had escaped:

<sup>29</sup> And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, <sup>30</sup> and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?**” <sup>31</sup> And they said, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved,** you and your household.” (Acts 16:29-31)

Based on the fuller explanations, it would seem that the jailer got the whole soteriological package even if he was only aware of one part of it. Luke has portrayed forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation as gifts received by faith

alone at the point of conversion. For such reasons, I concur with Elkins that an exclusively soteriological view of forgiveness makes sense in such a context.

### *Luke*

Granted, one should not automatically make such soteriological equations if not justified by contextual considerations. Luke introduces his gospel with a link between salvation and forgiveness that could be considered exclusively soteric:

<sup>77</sup> To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins (Lk 1:77).

Yet, in my book, *Salvation*, not yet released, I marked this salvation as primarily soteriological but secondarily temporal and misthological. I am doubtful that Luke intends to limit this salvation or forgiveness to the soteriological realm. Rather, the soteriological aspect is foundational for the temporal and misthological potentialities. In this context, Luke proceeds to associate forgiveness with baptism and repentance (Lk 3:3) and discipleship (Lk 24:45-47). He commences Acts with these associations (Acts 2:38; 5:31). However, Luke then transitions to a focus on the soteriological dimension of forgiveness, with Acts 10:43 and following, as outlined above.

### *Possible NFG Counterarguments for Acts 10:43*

Although I have not yet engaged the NFG advocates, I anticipate that they could offer two counterarguments to contend that soteriological forgiveness is not entailed in Acts 10:43. First, from the context, they might argue that Cornelius was already a believer. Eaton (TBEB) writes from this perspective:

**What is needed for full salvation and Christian fellowship is open and explicit faith in this Lord Jesus Christ.** Cornelius and his friends have a pre-Christian gentile faith. They are ‘justified’ [to use Paul’s term], ‘accepted’ [to use Peter’s term in 10:35]. Yet their salvation can be upgraded! Any people who will trust this Lord Jesus Christ will experience the full and assured forgiveness of their sins. Through the name of Jesus, his person and his character, forgiveness will come to them in a richer way than they have ever known before.

**At this point these gentile pre-Christian believers were sealed with the Holy Spirit.** It happened as their faith in the word of God was enlarged. Peter’s preaching enlarged their knowledge and therefore enlarged the content of what they believed. Then their faith was sealed by a conscious experience of the Holy Spirit. A similar experience to that of the day of Pentecost fell upon them. The terms ‘fell upon’ (10:44; 11:15), ‘poured out’ (10:45), ‘gift’ (10:45; 11:17), ‘received’ (10:47) all refer to the same spiritual experience. In 10:47, these terms are related to the day of Pentecost. In 11:16 the phrase ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’ is used. It astonishes the Jewish Christians with Peter (10:45). (Emphasis his.)

If this is the recourse NFG chooses, then I will opt for soteriological inclusivity rather than insist on soteriological exclusivity. The outline I posed above remains intact for posing a soteriological emphasis. Luke underscores the soteriological nature of this forgiveness in the subsequent passages. As it is, contrary to Eaton, I am not inclined to think that Luke is saying that Cornelius and his family already had forgiveness within a soteriological relationship and are just now coming into a fuller experience of forgiveness at a superlative familial level.

Second, NFG might argue that forgiveness is not a soteriological concept in the OT or, at most, is a rare soteriological OT concept, so in Acts 10:43 Peter cannot be alluding to a widespread confirmation of soteriological forgiveness by appealing to all the OT prophets. In that case, NFG might try to make a case that Peter cannot be talking about soteriological forgiveness in Acts 10:43.

Indeed, Squires (ECB) is so bold as to claim: “Luke has him [Peter] make the exaggerated claim that ‘all the prophets testify about him’ (10:43; see 3:24). The prophets testify to ‘the forgiveness of sins,’ which is essential to the proclamation (2:38; 5:31) and which will carry over into Paul’s speeches (13:38).” Admittedly, the OT soteriological passages cited by commentators are rather sparse. Marshall (TNTC) states: “We cannot be certain what prophecies Peter may have had in mind, but possible texts include Isaiah 33:24; 53:4–6, 11; Jeremiah 31:34; Daniel 9:24.” Peterson (PNTC) would add Eze 36:25. Osborne (NTC) would add Is 39:29; Joel 2:32. Schnabel



(ZECNT) poses two possibilities: “This is either a general reference to the Old Testament. Or it is a reference to passages such as Isa 33:17–24 where the prophet Isaiah speaks of a future when Israel will see with her eyes God.” Rather than pose an exaggeration or mere generalization with occasional specification, I perceive Peter as providing a universal declaration with a narrowed specification.

Peter is not claiming that you will find a recorded soteriological reference to forgiveness on the lips of every OT prophet. Neither is he saying that every occasion of forgiveness is soteriological. Peter knows that OT and NT forgiveness occurs at multiple levels. Some forms of repentance certainly require repentance. However, Peter has purposefully left out that requirement in Acts 10:43, as noted by Pervo (HERM): “Although this assertion appears to repeat what has been said earlier (e.g., 2:38–39), it means that the prophetic texts apply also to gentiles. Unlike the earlier speeches (2:38; 3:19), however, Peter does not demand that his auditors repent.”

In conjunction with my outline above, I take Peter’s omission of repentance on this occasion as his purposeful narrowing of the scope of forgiveness for his present purposes to soteriological forgiveness. I am aware that NFG could rightly counter that repentance is not always necessary for familial forgiveness. For example, John requires repentance on the part of believers in Rev 2-3 but does not in 1Jn 1:7-10. Confession of sin by those believers walking in the light suffices to maintain their fellowship with God. They do not need to repent to obtain familial forgiveness and maintain their fellowship with God. Confession suffices to maintain the fellowship they are already experiencing. For believers who are not walking in the light, however, repentance to return to the light is an additional requirement to restore fellowship. Nevertheless, given the transition at this juncture in Acts from (1) forgiveness that requires confession, baptism, and repentance to (2) forgiveness that only needs faith and is linked to eternal life by faith alone, salvation by faith alone, and freeness by faith alone, I am strongly inclined to believe that Peter has limited his focus at this point to forgiveness by faith alone, and thus soteriological forgiveness.

Even so, in making a universal appeal to the OT prophets in support of soteriological forgiveness, Peter is not claiming that the OT prophets always narrowed their scope to the soteriological aspect of forgiveness. Rather, he is aware that their affirmations of forgiveness and other forms of soteriological benefits are built upon the same soteriological foundation—redemption through the blood of the Promised Redeemer. Although some passages depict temporal or misthological forgiveness, even these passages are built upon this soteriological foundation. Peter shares the same perspective expressed by Paul in Eph 1:7, concerning which Chafer (ST 5:215-216) elaborates:

Redemption has always been by blood alone. Blood is the divinely determined ransom which an outraged holiness must demand. That very blood-ransom was prefigured in all Old Testament sacrifices, as it is now available through the death of Christ; hence, redemption has been offered to man as a benefit throughout the history of the race....God’s holy demands, which are based on this holy character, are as unchangeable as this nature. Christ paid the required ransom. Divine justice is satisfied, and the way of salvation is now open for all. The responsibility imposed on the sinner is that of believing the record God has given concerning this redemption which is in His Son. This record points to the Redeemer as the only One who is able to save, and calls for nothing less or for nothing more than saving trust in Him. It is in Him that we have redemption. He is our redemption. By the shedding of His blood he has made possible a perfect ransom.

God shed the blood of an animal to provide a covering for Adam and Eve. Their son, Able, offered the blood of an animal when he made his sacrifice. Able was the first prophet (Lk 11:50-51). Thus, the sacrificial blood has pointed to the Promised Redeemer from the foundation of the world. All the OT prophets universally shared this typological understanding of the soteriological nature of the blood, so it underlay all the OT blood sacrifices. Occasionally, this soteriological understanding comes to the surface as a focal point in explicit declarations in the OT and NT. Peter’s affirmation in Acts 10:43 is one such occasion. For such reasons, at this juncture, I am content to agree with Elkins that the singularity of Peter’s focus in Acts 10:43 is soteriological forgiveness.

### *An Argument for Soteriological Exclusivity in Ps 32:1-2*

While Elkins and I briefly interchanged our respective perspectives via email, I acknowledged that I agree with him that Acts 10:43 and Rom 4:7 are soteriological. Nevertheless, I do not limit myself to one way to derive our mutually agreed-upon soteriological conclusion. Elkins rested his soteriological conclusion on the premise of a one-to-one, soteriological-to-soteriological correspondence between the underlying OT texts and their NT counterparts. That argument is plausible regarding Acts 10:43. As noted above, commentators use a handful of OT

texts as soteriological references to which Peter might be alluding. Elkins can limit the range of Peter's intended references to such passages. My approach, however, is more comprehensive and is not necessarily restricted to exclusively soteriological OT texts for an exclusively soteriological understanding of its usage in an NT counterpart. Instead of picturing Peter as cherry-picking the most soteric aphesisological texts supporting his conclusion, I infer that he is cherry-picking the soteriological premise of all such OT aphesisological texts. In any event, Elkins and I concur that Acts 10:43 is the soteriological cherry on top, so to speak, with OT aphesisological texts lying underneath, in contrast to NFG theology, which denies that any such soteriological cherries exist in either the OT or NT.

The distinction between Elkin's approach and my 4DF approach is potentially more pronounced regarding Paul's aphesisological use of the Davidic text in Rom 4:7. In [Positional Forgiveness](#), Elkins states:

As 'proof' that the Lord grants "righteousness apart from works," Paul actually cites Ps 32, "Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds *are forgiven*; And whose sins *are covered*; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin'" (Ro 4:7). That can mean nothing but the positional 'forgiveness' which *is* justification (declaration of and imputation of righteousness)—*because Paul says it is*. —Nor do we need to debate Ps 32 'in its context,' as Paul is interpreting it for us. (Emphasis his.)

In our correspondence, Elkins expounded:

Paul proves the 'witness' of "the Law and the Prophets" to his gospel of "righteousness apart from the law" (3:21), by citing Abraham in *the Law* (Gen 15:6) and David in *the Prophets* (Ps 32:1,2) in 4:3 and 7-8 respectively. Of course, this doctrine of 'justification' is *strictly soteriological*. Paul is interpreting Ps 32:1-2 *for* us. It's not a debate whether it's soteriological or not: it *has* to be.<sup>18</sup> (Emphasis his.)

I agree with Elkins that Rom 4:7-8 is strictly soteriological. To be sure, Paul is citing Ps 32:1-2 and is doing so in a soteriological capacity. However, I do not limit my argument in 4DF to a strictly soteriological interpretation of Ps 32:1-2. Instead, in 4DF, I pose Ps 32:1-2 might be taken as soteriologically compatible with the strictly soteriological conclusion Paul is deriving. Notwithstanding, in my book, *Mere Christianity and Moral Christianity* (MCMC), like Elkins, I pose an exclusively soteriological interpretation for Ps 32:1-2, as demonstrated from the following excerpt.<sup>19</sup>

#### ***David's Justification***

Nevertheless, the scriptural basis that Edwards uses to justify his linear view of justification (in which he seeks to make salvation from eternal damnation dependent on ongoing repentance) must be examined critically. His first argument comes from Rom 4:6-8 (cp. Ps 32:1-2):

David, in the beginning of Psalm 32 speaks of the forgiveness of sins which were doubtless committed long after he was first godly, as being consequent on those sins, and on his repentance and faith with respect to them, and yet this forgiveness is spoken of by the apostle in the 4th of Romans, as an instance of justification by faith. Probably the sin David there speaks of is the same that he committed in the matter of Uriah, and so the pardon the same with that release from death or eternal punishment, which the prophet Nathan speaks of, 2 Sam. 12:13, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Not only does the manifestation of this pardon follow the sin in the order of time, but the pardon itself, in the order of nature, follows David's repentance and faith with respect to this sin. For it is spoken of in Psalm 32 as depending on it.

<sup>18</sup> Personal correspondence, 3/18/2024.

<sup>19</sup> Marty Cauley, *Mere and Moral Christianity* (Sylva, NC: Mithological Press, 2011). Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Mere-Christianity-Moral-Affirmation-Unconditional/dp/1453860606>.

But inasmuch as a sinner, in his first justification, is forever justified and freed from all obligation to eternal punishment, it hence of necessity follows, that **future faith and repentance are beheld, in that justification, as virtually contained in that first faith and repentance.**<sup>20</sup>

### ***Outline of Edwards' Argument.***

Edwards thus appeals to the OT background of Paul's statement for the Edwardian importing of future faith and repentance into the initial faith which justified us. So that the fallacy of Edwards' argument may be made more readily apparent, it will be helpful to restate his argument in a syllogistic summary:

1. David was initially justified by faith before he experienced the justification described in Rom 4:6-8 (Ps 32:1-2).
2. David also was justified subsequently by faith when he repented and confessed his sin in Rom 4:6-8 (Ps 32:3-6).
3. Therefore, initial justification by faith includes the subsequent faith and works which flow from that initial faith.

### ***Critical Response***

Multiple critical errors are apparent in Edwards' recasting of the sequence and in his equivalence of the biblical events. First, the conditional contention expressed by both Arminians and Calvinists alike in claiming that David was in danger of a soteriological death that would have resulted in his eternal damnation in 2Sam 2:13 is contested by securitists. If temporal death is all that is implied in this passage, then Edwards' argument loses much, if not all, of its force. If temporal forgiveness is indicated, then David is conjoining soteriological and temporal forgiveness but not necessarily in a manner conducive to Edwards' argument, which stipulates that the subsequent temporal forgiveness is *contained in* the previous soteriological forgiveness. On the contrary, rather than assume that the initial justification virtually includes the subsequent forgiveness, one may assert quite reasonably an entirely different relationship: Initial justification makes subsequent forgiveness possible. Taking Ps 32:1-2 as referring to that initial justification would harmonize completely with the Pauline text and do no violence to the Davidic context by perceiving the initial justification as the foundation for the temporal forgiveness that follows in Ps 32:3-6.

According to Grossman, "David had committed sin for which there was no sacrifice provided by the law, and he learned of the mercy of God when he cast himself upon the Lord's mercy to obtain forgiveness, confessing his sin and admitting his own unworthiness."<sup>21</sup> To be sure, Edwards could respond to such a statement by claiming that David was not justified by works of the law but by faith-works (i.e., by works springing from faith). One only need look at an Arminian like Guy Duty or a Calvinist like John MacArthur to see that this is a popular means employed by conditionalists in making salvation conditioned on postconversional performance.

**Lopez penetrates further into the Davidic discussion when he implies that the plural form *makarioi* (blessed) indicates more than one type of blessing which encompasses the soteriological one-time-act of justification in Rom 4:6-8 (= Ps 32:1-2) and the subsequent familial forgiveness described in Ps 32:3-6.**<sup>22</sup> Therefore, although forgiveness is linear, the soteriological dimension of that forgiveness is punctiliar. **If this thesis is correct, the justification of Rom 4:6-8 (= Ps 32:1-2) is foundational and provides the fountain from which subsequent forgiveness flows. Soteriological justification makes familial forgiveness possible. The justification, which David had obtained earlier by faith apart from works, made possible a continued forgiveness not available under the law.** David already had discovered and experienced an initial justification by faith

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "Justification By Faith Alone." Available at: <https://www.apuritansmind.com/justification/justification-by-faith-alone-by-jonathan-edwards>. Accessed 3/18/2024.

<sup>21</sup> Philip W. Grossman "Jewish Anticipation of the Cross: Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 106:422 (April 1949): 245.

<sup>22</sup> René A. Lopez, *Romans Unlocked: Power to Deliver* (Springfield: 21st Century Press), 90.

apart from works years before, and this discovery allows him to experience a temporal justification by faith-works even when confronted by Nathan years later.

This subsequent justification by faith-works is not to be equated with justification by faith apart from works (despite the inclination of Duty and MacArthur to think otherwise). If the *not* ( $\ominus$ ) symbol is used to signify *apart from*, a refutation of the Duty-MacArthur equality would correspondingly be: *faith-works*  $\neq$  *faith* $\ominus$ *works*. In other words, justification by faith-works is not the same thing as justification by faith apart from works. As for a response to Edwards, this subsequent Davidic justification by faith-works should not be perceived as being *present virtually* in justification by faith apart from works. A negation of the subset symbol may be used to express dissatisfaction with Edwards. The proper biblical equation would thus be: *faith-works*  $\not\subset$  *faith* $\ominus$ *works*.<sup>23</sup> **Justification by faith-works is not virtually contained in justification by faith apart from works!** For that matter, when it comes to saving faith, this correct statement can be abbreviated as: *works*  $\not\subset$  *faith*. Edwards is wrong in trying to import postconversional works into saving faith. His soteriology could be summarized as: *works*  $\subset$  *faith*.<sup>24</sup>

**Constable progresses yet one step further in biblical insight to assert: “Paul not only proved that David believed in imputed rather than earned righteousness with this quotation, but he also showed that when a believer sins his sin does not cancel his justification.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the Davidic passage can be understood as supporting unconditional security per Constable or as implying conditional security per Edwards. The balance is decisively in Constable’s favor since Paul regards Ps 32:1-2 as a justification by faith *apart from* works (*faith* $\ominus$ *works*) rather than a justification by faith which *includes* works.** Therefore, *works*  $\subset$  *faith* and *faith-works* are both excluded soteriologically by Paul. All works are excluded—both legal and virtual—from saving faith.

Edwards inverts the flow of Paul’s thought when Edwards pictures sanctification as flowing virtually back into justification. A river does not flow back into its fountain head nor is a river contained virtually in its fountain head; rather, the river flows from its fountain head and contains the water from its fountain head. Edwards is thinking in reverse when he wrongly tries to incorporate our future works virtually into our past faith. Justification by *faith* $\ominus$ *works* (in Ps 32:1-2) made it possible for David to find justification by *faith-works* (in Ps 32:3-6). However, it is an error of the highest magnitude to equate the two or to embed the two by making postconversion confession and repentance part of *faith* $\ominus$ *works*.

Edwards’ appeals to virtual incorporation, virtuous faith, and linear justification are justifiable. Still, one must be careful when importing that one does not import works into a realm were the Bible places a curse on those who would make such an importation. Future sins may be described accurately as virtually nailed to the cross. Initial faith certainly is to be affirmed as being nonmeritorious, but perseverance in faith is properly regarded as virtuous (meritorious). And as long as soteriological justification is seen as the fountain head for misthological justification, and not vice versa, the biblical directive and direction are maintained.

My argument above from MCMC is very conducive to the vantage point taken by Elkins. David could be speaking soteriologically in Ps 32:1-2 and building upon that soteriological foundation with subsequent familial forgiveness in Ps 32:3-5. Paul, in turn, cites the part of the text dealing with soteriological forgiveness in Rom 4:7-8 (so Lopez, cp. Constable). Elkins could be dead on the money, per my MCMC argument. Acknowledging that

<sup>23</sup> Edwards believes *faith-works*  $\subset$  *faith* $\ominus$ *works*, that is, perseverance in faith and in its corresponding works are embedded in the faith by which we were saved apart from works. I am expressing my disagreement with the  $\subset$  symbol.

<sup>24</sup> For Edwards, *works*  $\subset$  *faith* means that works are a part of **soteric** faith. The Bible rejects such a notion, however. My contention is that *works*  $\not\subset$  *faith* is the biblically correct perspective. Works are not to be considered a part of, embedded in, beheld in, or virtually imported into **saving** faith.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas L. Constable, *Romans* (Dr. Constable’s Bible Study Notes, 2004 ed.), 45. Available at <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>. Accessed on September 14, 2004.

possibility, I will amend my 4DF diagram and related texts in the illustrations below to place Ps 32:1-2 on the soteriological shelf and Ps 32:3-5 on the familial shelf, in accordance with my MCMC discussion.

*Illustration 11. Same Passage Split Between Two Shelves (MCMC)*



*Illustration 12. Four Types of Vertical Forgiveness (MCMC)*

Type	Description	Examples
Misthological	Punishment then	<b>Num 14:20-23</b> ; Ps 103:12; Micah 7:19; Zech 3:4 (cp. 3:5-7); <b>Mt 6:15</b> ; <b>18:34-35</b> ; Lk 6:37; <b>Jn 13:8</b> ; <b>1Cor 4:4</b> ; <b>6:9-10</b> ; <b>11:32b</b> ; 2Cor 5:10; Col 3:25; 1Tim 5:24; Heb 3:11; 4:3,5; 6:8c; 9:28; 10:26-31; 12:15-17; Jam 2:13; 5:9
Temporal	Punishment now	<b>Num 14:21-23</b> (cp. 20:11-12); 21:4-9; <b>2Sam 12:11-18</b> ; 2Chron 7:14; Is 38:17; 59:2; <b>Mt 18:27</b> ; Acts 8:22; <b>1Cor 11:29-32a</b> ; Heb 6: 8b; Jam 5:14-16; 1Jn 5:16
Familial	Fellowship	Lev 16:30; <b>Num 14:20</b> ; <b>2Sam 12:13</b> ; Ps 25:7,11; <b>32:3-5</b> ; 51:2,7; 85:2; Is 1:18; 59:2; <b>Mt 6:12,14-15</b> ; <b>18:27</b> ; <b>Jn 13:8,10</b> ; Acts 2:38; 22:16; <b>1Cor 4:4</b> ; <b>6:18-19</b> ; <b>11:32a</b> ; Heb 7:25; 1Jn 1:7,9
Soteriological	Relationship	Is 43:25; 44:22; Jer 31:34; <b>Mt 18:27(?)</b> ; <b>Ps 32:1-2</b> ; <b>Jn 13:10-11</b> ; Acts 10:43; <b>Rom 4:6-8</b> ; <b>1Cor 6:11</b> ; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 2:13-14; Tit 3:5; Heb 8:12; 10:10-18

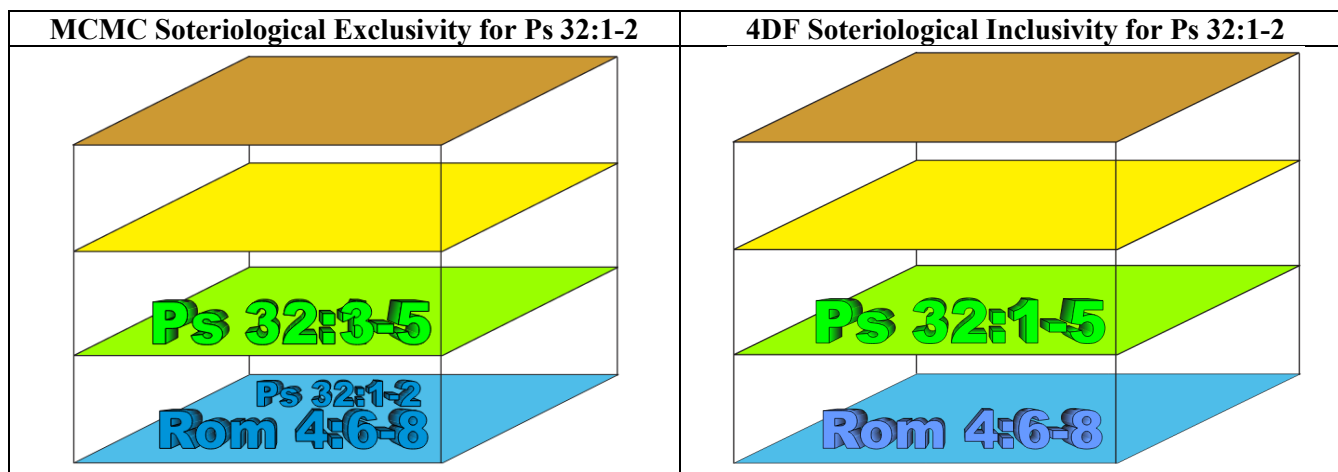
As one can see in the stratification of the above passages, this proposal for placing part of a passage on one level and part on another level is not limited to Ps 32:1-5. The same aphesisological phenomenon is observed in various other color-coded passages as well. So, this is not an instance of special pleading. Elkins' CFG argument is compatible with my MCMC-MFG argument for soteriological forgiveness. Indeed, after reading my initial draft of this chapter, Elkins informed me that this was essentially the view held by Zane Hodges:

I talked with Hodges many times about that passage! His view is that the *first part* is soteriological in its original intent/meaning, e.g., as you refer later to the *covering* and *atonement*, clearly in the background of David’s original words. Repeat: Hodges saw the first part, at least 1:1-2a *originally-intended*, as *soteriological*. However, he saw 2b (and possibly mixed with 2a[?... I never was sure exactly where he was making the ‘break’ in the flow from soteriology]) as referring to our *present walk*, e.g., walking guilelessly “in the light” kind of thing (Hence, the ‘Blessedness’ of both *justification AND continued fellowship*). Though we talked about it multiple times—forgive me that I don’t recall his ‘exact’ words—but he definitely said, “*There is a progression a progression in Ps 32:1-2* (in David’s original understanding)...”<sup>26</sup> (Emphasis and ellipsis his.)

### An Argument for Soteriological Inclusivity in Ps 32:1-5

On the other hand, I did not limit myself to that precise aphesisological differentiation in 4DF regarding Ps 32:1-5. Instead, I viewed the soteriological foundation as inclusive rather than necessarily exclusive. For the present discussion, it probably makes no difference. Both my MCMC and 4DF approach to Ps 32:1-2 affirms soteriological forgiveness. I have used both routes for my MFG model. I anticipate that this competition between my MCMC and 4DF discussions as to which model is best poses a compound problem for NFG. Either of my approaches is detrimental to the NFG model since NFG denies soteriological forgiveness.

Illustration 13. Four Types of Vertical Forgiveness (MCMC)



If Elkins and my MCMC model are correct in that Ps 32:1-2 refers **exclusively** to soteriological forgiveness, then NFG is disproven. If my 4DF model is preferred, then Ps 32:1-2 refers **inclusively** to soteriological forgiveness, and NFG is disproven. In either case, my *Principle of Duality* (PD) remains intact in that Ps 32:1-5, taken as a whole, refers to both soteriological and familial forgiveness. I explore various models to consider their strengths and weaknesses. At this juncture, NFG looks anemic and suffers from aphesisological mono. NFG’s monocular vantage point is inferior to MFG’s binocular vantage point. MFG can see two levels of forgiveness—from two different vantage points, no less!

## Soteriological Package as Part of Ordo Salutis

On the surface, NFG seems logically consistent with its fundamental presuppositions: *Soteric salvation is conditioned exclusively on believing in Jesus for eternal life as a free gift. Since all that is soteriologically necessary to receive and retain eternal life as a free gift is to believe in Jesus for eternal life, soteric forgiveness is unnecessary.*

Conversely, MFG poses that if you get one, you get the other, soteriologically speaking. The reception of eternal goes hand in hand with soteriological forgiveness. CFG poses this presumption as well. NFG has abandoned this premise. Robi assumed that soteriological forgiveness of preconversion sin is part of the package. Dillow does

<sup>26</sup> Personal correspondence, 3/22/2024. In this correspondence, Elkins also informed me that he finds my 4DF view very appealing. So, we concur on the appeal of both the CFG and MFG model for this verse.

better and exegetically argues that soteriological forgiveness of past, present, and future sins is part of the package.<sup>27</sup> Rather than be content with the contention that soteriological forgiveness is part of the package, I would like to examine its placement within the package. Why is soteriological forgiveness in the package? Where is it in the package? To do so, we must discuss *ordo salutis* (*order of salvation*). After all, the above two-premise NFG summation I gave is deceptively simple. It left out justification. Is soteriological justification optional in NFG? If not, can one consistently argue that soteriological forgiveness is optional?

Fill in the blank: \_\_\_\_\_ *by faith alone in Christ alone.*

What answers can one accurately enter into this blank and be consistent with the soteriological requirements of the gospel in NFG? Can one enter each of the following: *eternal life, justification, redemption, and forgiveness*? No. NFG denies forgiveness is a soteriological requirement or benefit. Consequently, NFG needs to address several questions: If you trust in Christ for *forgiveness* as your means of being assured of going to Heaven, have you believed a false gospel according to NFG? How about *justification*? Will *justification by faith alone in Christ alone* be the next domino to fall in NFG? If justification is retained, why? Where is it placed in the package? How about *redemption*? Can you still sing *Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim*?

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
**His child, and forever, I am.**

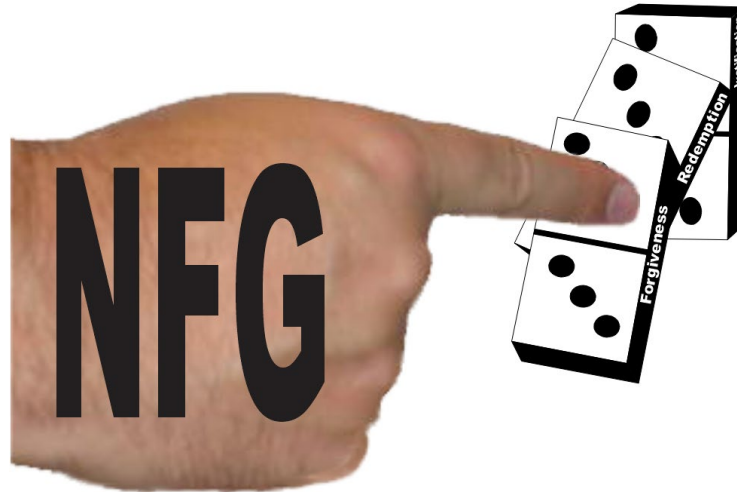
This song ties redemption to eternal security. Is it wrong to do so? Paul ties redemption to forgiveness. Does his doing so not tie forgiveness to eternal security? If not, why not? Redemption, in terms of relational forgiveness as God's child, is a strong argument for eternal security.<sup>28</sup> Will NFG accuse Fanny Crosby of propagating a false gospel via this song? Does the forgiveness conveyed through redemption make us a child of God forever or not? Were the OT people who trusted in the Promise Redeemer for redemption damned if they trusted in Him for redemption rather than for regeneration?

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<sup>27</sup> In ch. 59 of *Desitny*, see Dillow's discussion of Mk 16:16; Jn 3:18; 16:8-9; 2Thess 1:8-9; Rev 20:12-13. His citation of Jn 16:8-9 is a self-apparent strong collaborator. His citation of 1Thess 1:8-9 is a stronger collaborator than one may initially anticipate. In MMP7, I demonstrate that obedience to the gospel entails moral obedience in that context. Therefore, moral failure is part of the reason for the eternal separation: soteriologically for unbelievers, misthologically for unfaithful believers. One cannot reasonably insist that eternal separation is based exclusively on lack of faith in that context.

<sup>28</sup> Gromacki uses this song and related texts in his defense of eternal security. Robert Gromacki, *Is Salvation Forever* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 58-65. He uses the CFG distinction between judicial (positional) and daily forgiveness.

Illustration 14. MFG Dominos

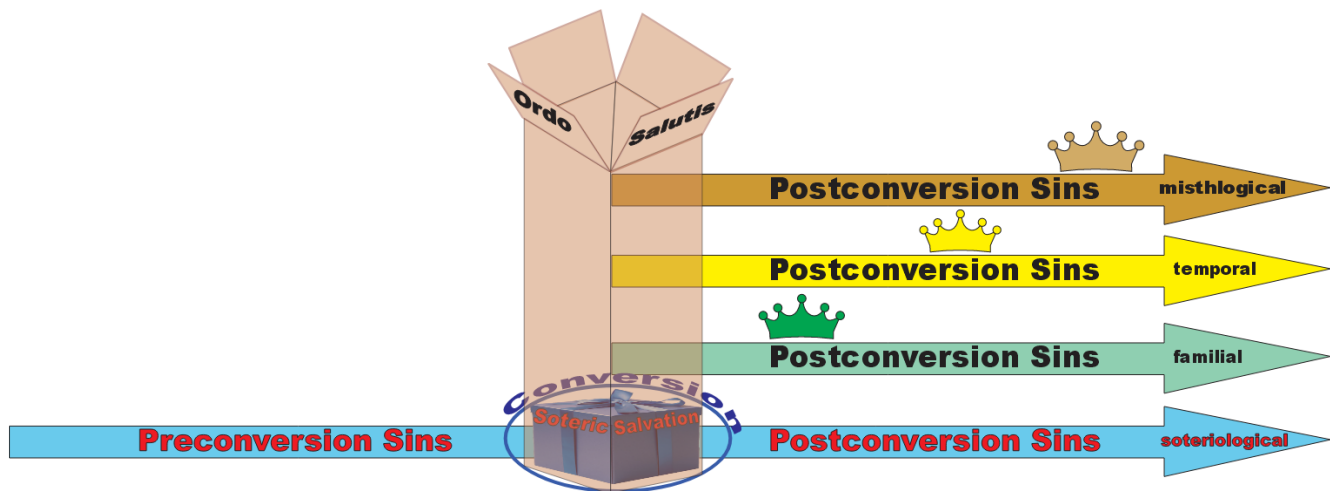


Will NFG’s denial of soteriological forgiveness cause a chain reaction leading to the denial of soteriological redemption? If so, will it further lead to the denial of soteriological justification? Would adopting NFG cause a domino effect, ultimately leading to a denial of justification by faith alone? After all, if the forgiveness granted by faith in Acts 10:43 is not soteriological, why think that justification by faith is soteriological?

## Justification and Forgiveness Before Regeneration

In my online article, “Ordo Salutis,” I argued that justification and adoption occur concurrently as part of the same legal transformation and precede regeneration in a logical sequence.<sup>29</sup> I assumed that soteriological justification equated with soteriological forgiveness (cp. Col 3:13-14). Per that line of reasoning, one might pose that *ordo salutis* pertains exclusively to soteriological items; therefore, my *ordo salutis* provides a logical sequence that makes the reception of eternal life conditioned on positional justification and soteriological forgiveness. After all, I argued in TOD that imputational justification makes impartational regeneration possible. One might assume that the same is true of soteriological forgiveness. However, this is the point to be proven, and such an assumption would be premature in that I am not necessarily inclined to see adoption as a soteriological issue. Adoption could be strictly soteriological, dualistically soteriological-misthological, or strictly misthological. If the latter is the case, then the texts describing adoption tend to be examples of presumptive misthology. If that is the case, NFG could argue that just as adoption is part of the *ordo salutis* package yet not a soteriological benefit, so forgiveness is a part of the *ordo salutis* package yet not a soteriological benefit.

Illustration 15. Ordo Salutis > Soteriology



<sup>29</sup> Marty Cauley, “Ordo Salutis” (1/12/2008). Available at [https://misthology.org/pdf/articles/Ordo\\_Salutis.pdf](https://misthology.org/pdf/articles/Ordo_Salutis.pdf).



In other words, if I can put (or at least commence) misthological adoption in the *ordo* package per my MFG model and yet not regard this adoption as part of the soteriological gift, even though I believe it proceeds regeneration, then NFG could conceivably put familial forgiveness in the *ordo* package but not consider this forgiveness part of the soteriological gift even if it proceeds regeneration. In short, *ordo salutis* encompasses more than soteriological benefits. After all, MSG considers familial, temporal, and misthological forgiveness to be rewards (as denoted by the crowns). Such benefits might commence at the point of conversion, but they are not part of the soteriological package. The soteriological benefits conveyed at the point of conversion are part of *ordo salutis*, but *ordo salutis* is not limited to soteriological gifts. Conceptually, I can conceive how NFG can pose that forgiveness of preconversion sin is granted at the point of conversion as part of *ordo salutis* yet insist that this forgiveness is familial rather than soteriological. Consequently, to argue that forgiveness is soteriological will require that I do more than place it in the *ordo* sequence. I need to provide logical and exegetical rationales for considering it soteriological.

I hypothesize that soteriological justification and soteriological forgiveness are necessary precursors for regeneration. A change in one's soteriological legal status is required before regeneration can take place. As I stated in my *ordo* article:

The context of Rom 5:18 strongly suggests that *justification of life* does in fact mean the justification that **results** in life (i.e., *justification* → *life*). Paul has just mentioned *many transgressions resulting (eis) in justification* (Rom 5:16) and the possibility of this gift of righteousness resulting in a future experience of life (Rom 5:17), specifically righteousness might **result (eis)** in eternal life (Rom 5:21). The context is saturated with references to life as the intended result of justification. Consequently, the genitive in *justification of life* (Rom 5:18) should be regarded as a genitive of purpose....God gives us justification for the purpose of legally qualifying us for eternal life. Eternal life is the result of justification.

Soteriological justification makes eternal life possible at the soteriological, temporal, and misthological levels. I will further propose that soteriological justification is co-extensive with eternal life. In other words, soteriological justification must be infinite and irrevocable once granted. Soteriological justification is the foundation upon which the gift of eternal life is laid. One cannot lose the gift of eternal life without losing the gift of justification upon which it is founded. Our legal change in soteriological status precedes the ontological change in our spirit imparted by regeneration. This legal imputation of righteousness must proceed ontological impartation of righteousness. We must be declared righteousness in legal fact before we can be made righteous in spirit.

Similarly, becoming a child of God relationally would be foundational for experiencing fellowship with God familially. Accordingly, just as having a relationship with God as His child would be foundational for having fellowship with God as His child, the supposition would naturally be that having relational forgiveness from God would occur before familial forgiveness. Paul provides confirmation of this deduction.

**And when you were dead** in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made you alive** together with Him, **having forgiven us** all our transgressions, **having canceled out the certificate** of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Col 2:13-14)

In other words, when you were dead (and thus unregenerate), God made you alive (via regeneration) after He forgave you (in a forensic manner like justification). The judicial nature of this forgiveness is indicated by its juxtaposition with the penal nature of this debt (associated with soteriological death) versus soteriological life. (See Beale, BECNT.) This penal debt was removed via forensic forgiveness to justify the impartation of life. The order in Col 2:13-14 is *forensic forgiveness* → *regeneration*. “Because of the close biblical link between sin and death, the logical precondition for the resurrection life is that sins must be dealt with (Wright, TNTC). “While a strict temporal sequence of events should not be constructed, it does suggest that the forgiveness of sins is a condition that must occur in order that a believer can be made alive” (Foster, BNTC). Just as sin caused Adam and Eve to be barred from eating from the Tree of Life and living forever, sin must be dealt with before believers can be given the gift of eternal life and assured of living forever. Sins must be dealt with in a penal sense via forgiveness, not a familial sense, to address the penal penalty. Likewise, in Rom 8:10, “the spirit is alive because of righteousness.” We have spiritual life because we are righteous. Justification is the grounds for regeneration.

# Redemption and Forgiveness

## Eph 1:7

Soteriological justification is a gift made available through redemption: “Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom 3:24). Redemption, in turn, is strongly associated with forgiveness: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph 1:7). Since this justification is through redemption, we must deduce that redemption (or at least this facet of redemption) is soteriological.

- *Saving faith* that results in soteriological justification—by faith apart from works (Rom 3:28; 4:5; Gal 2:16)—is a *soteriological faith*.
- *Saving redemption* that results in soteriological justification—through such redemption (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7)—is *soteriological redemption*.

Since this *soteriological redemption* is equated with forgiveness (or at least this facet of forgiveness), such forgiveness is, in turn, *soteriological forgiveness*. In such passages, Paul seems to have narrowed his discussion to the soteriological scope of justification, redemption, forgiveness, and salvation.

## Col 1:14

Paul uses a shorter summation in Colossians: “In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:14). Paul “describes the ‘redemption’ as ‘the forgiveness of sins’” (Dunn, NIGTC). “Redemption” is **defined here as** “the forgiveness of sins (Harris, EGGNT). “Redemption’ means nothing other than ‘forgiveness of sins’” (Lohse, HERM). “[Redemption] ἀπολύτρωσις is immediately **defined by** the following words, which stand **in apposition**, as ἄφεσις τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, the forgiveness of sins” (Wilson, ICC). In short, *redemption = forgiveness*. Or, with the equivalent result, one might say, “The phrase ‘the forgiveness [ἄφεσιν, *aphesin*] of sins’ is **in apposition** to ‘redemption,’ and is **roughly synonymous** with it” (Beale, BECNT). Or, per Constable’s quote of Vaughan: “Redemption and forgiveness are not exactly parallel or identical concepts, but by putting the two terms in apposition [side by side] to each other, the apostle teaches that the central feature of redemption is the forgiveness of sins” (TCENB). In this case, *redemption ≈ forgiveness*.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The approximation rather than equation symbol may be useful as a possible distinction between redemption and forgiveness if it is determined that redemption is strictly soteriological in this Pauline context while forgiveness is inclusively soteriological. In other words, Paul might only be referring to a soteriological subset of forgiveness in some such passages and equating that subset with redemption, viewing redemption as simply soteriological.

One the other hand, redemption might be inclusive of other forms of forgiveness. For example, is Gal 4:15 saying that soteriological redemption is the foundation upon which misthological adoption is presumptively founded, or does Paul pose a misthological range to redemption in this context so that one might consider this a case of presumptive misthological redemption? Like *sealing* (Eph 1:13-14; 4:3), *redemption* might function in a dual soteriological-misthological capacity. For a discussion of dual sealing, dual inheritance, and dual redemption, see *Dual Sealing and Security* (DSAS). Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Dual-Sealing-Security-Soteriological-Misthological/dp/1080089594>.

When Ps 130:8 says that the Lord *will redeem Israel from all his iniquities*, is this a soteriological, temporal, or misthological redemption? When the Palmist pleads for God to redeem him and revive him, surely the Palmist is not asking for soteriological redemption (Ps 119:154). A temporal redemption and revival are likely (cp. Ps 119:134, see also Gen 48:16; Ps 25:22; 34:22?; 44:26; 49:15?; 55:18; 69:18; 78:42; 103:4?; 106:10), though a soteriological redemption may be in view in certain cases (Ps 49:7-9) and misthological redemption in others (Ps 26:11; 34:22; 103:4; cp. Job 19:25). For misthological Redeemer (Is 59:20) and misthological redemption (Rom 8:23; 1Cor 6:20; Tit 2:13-14; 1Pet 1:17-19; Rev 1:5-6; 5:9-10) as necessary for the full redemption necessary to eat of the Tree of Life, see *Rewards Are Eternal* (RAE). Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Rewards-are-Eternal-Limited-Millennial/dp/150305179X>. Soteriological redemption is only foundational and partial.

In any case, this practical equivalence between redemption and forgiveness is indicated by some translations. Some translations interject *even* as a gloss: “In whom we have redemption, *even* the forgiveness of sins” (cp. KJV, RWB, WEB). Some translations use *that is* as the gloss: “In whom we have redemption, *that is*, the forgiveness of sins” (cp. CJB, GNV).<sup>31</sup> Foster (BNTC) simply regards *forgiveness of sins* as Paul’s gloss for *redemption*: “The final clause in this verse glosses ‘redemption’ as being **the forgiveness of sins**” (emphasis his).

If this redemption is soteriological and basically equated with a similar type of forgiveness, as seems to be the case, then soteriological forgiveness is the result. Certainly, redemption is intended to have experiential and misthological results in other contexts (Gal 4:5; Tit 2:14; 1Pet 1:18). Yet, in a soteriological context, Paul equates the removal of our sin debt via forgiveness (Rom 4:7-8) with the imputation of righteousness as a credit to our account apart from works (Rom 4:1-6). The soteriological aspect of redemption, and thus forgiveness, is foundational for soteriological justification. The sin debt is removed from our account before righteousness is credited to our account since we are justified through redemption/forgiveness (Rom 3:24).

## Ordo Salutis Sequence

1. **Persuasion**—soteriological saving faith believes in Christ for unconditional security as a free gift in the form of trusting Christ for (a) *salvation* from eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire, (b) *redemption* as a soteriological means and thus soteriological forgiveness, (c) *justification* in a soteriological sense, or (d) *regeneration* and thus eternal life at the soteriological level.
2. **Redemption**—soteriological forgiveness as children at a relational level that acquits of negative offenses.<sup>32</sup>
3. Justification—soteriological declaration that imputes positive compliance (redemption → justification, Rom 3:24).
4. **Adoption**—presumptive misthological confirmation as sons that enables temporal spiritual authority.
5. **Regeneration**—soteriological impartation of eternal life that enables the temporal experience of abundant life and presumptively qualifies for the crown of life (righteousness → regeneration, Rom 5:17-18; 8:10; sonship/adoption → regeneration, Gal 4:6).<sup>33</sup>

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Misthological redemption is intended to be built upon soteriological redemption. RAD argues for the duality of soteriological-misthological redemption, as opposed to those who argue for an exclusively soteriological or exclusively misthological redemption.

<sup>31</sup> The gloss, *that is*, fits the syntactical assessment by commentators who say that the grammar is appositional/epexegetical. Lukaszewski, for example, states that the syntactical force is “appositive or appositional (i.e., epexegetical)” (SGNT). Harris (EGGNT), McKnight (NICNT), Williams (CGT), Nida (UBSH), and Calvin (CC) confirm this syntactical assessment. Sumney (NTL) poses forgiveness as an emphatic definition: “Colossians defines the redemption that believers now possess by placing ‘forgiveness of sins’ in apposition to it.” “This is important as the writer specifies the nuance of redemption he wants to emphasize: forgiveness of sins.”

<sup>32</sup> Regarding Col 1:14, Eaton (TBEB) states: “Why does he mention only one thing, forgiveness of sins? Because it is the first blessing that comes to us.” I agree since this is the logical deduction from the sequence of the citations I have provided. For such reasons, I also agree with Eaton’s comments on Col 2:13: “The wording—God made them alive, **having** freely forgiven their transgressions—implies that the newness of life followed the forgiveness. God has to accept us before he gives to us newness of life. Forgiveness comes before new birth” (emphasis his).

<sup>33</sup> In *Ordo*, I posed that justification and adoption take place at the same time. The passages I have cited place both as occurring before regeneration. These passages do not give logical sequence to justification and adoption relative to one another. The only logical sequence provided is that they occur before regeneration. However, at the time I wrote *Ordo*, I would have been more inclined to allow a soteriological-misthological duality regarding sonship. Thus, at that time, I could consider soteriological sonship/adoption and soteriological justification as facets of the same legal transformation.

Presently, though, I am more disposed to perceive sonship/adoption as being strictly misthological, yet presumptively misthological in some contexts. Thus, I am more inclined to think that the textual sequence may indicate a logical sequence in Gal 3:24-26 so that justification by faith proceeding sonship by faith suggests a logical sequence: justification → sonship/adoption. The context proceeds to suggest that redemption is for the purpose of adoption as sons (Gal 4:5). Plus, the context makes being a son of God logically sequential and superior to being a child of God (Gal 4:1-7). Therefore, I have listed adoption after justification in the list since justification would be

6. **Salvation**—soteriological deliverance from eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire (regeneration → salvation, Tit 3:5).

Anderson has a good discussion of the *ordo salutis* found in various theological camps but objects to developing an *ordo salutis* for the FG camp because he thinks that posing a logical priority without temporal priority is nonsensical.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, instead of dismissing *ordo salutis* as an imposition upon Scripture, I derive it from an exposition of Scripture.

- *Saved through faith* indicates a logical sequence: faith → salvation (Eph 2:8).
- *Justified through redemption* indicates a logical sequence: redemption → justification (Rom 3:24).
- *Justification of life* indicates a logical sequence: justification → eternal life (Rom 8:10).
- *Redemption for adoption* indicates a logical sequence: redemption → adoption (Gal 4:5).
- *Given Spirit because son* indicates a logical sequence: adoption as son status → regeneration (Gal 4:6).
- *Saved by regeneration* indicates a logical sequence: regeneration → salvation (Tit 3:5).

Sufficient textual clues are provided to allow us to pose a reasonable sequence. Saving faith is the persuasion that results in salvation. So, we can plug *persuasion* in as a synonym for *faith* in the first expression above and express this logical sequence as:

Persuasion → Redemption → Justification → Adoption → Regeneration → Salvation

When Paul says that we are *saved* by faith apart from works, he is limiting the scope of salvation to which he refers to its soteriological aspect. He is talking about soteriological salvation. Plus, he is using soteriological salvation as a synecdoche for the other components included in the package, possibly including presumptive misthological potentiality. Fidelity to the data is more important than trying to skew the data to win a debate. Therefore, I have purposefully included misthological adoption in this sequence of otherwise soteriological steps associated with soteriological conversion. My *ordo* does not insist that the forgiveness which occurs at the point of conversion be considered soteriological simply because it occurs within that *ordo*. My arguments in favor of soteriological forgiveness are more substantial than such simplistic assumptions.

## Positional Forgiveness in Col 1:13-14

Is positional forgiveness a myth, according to NFG? If so, and if NFG is logically consistent, would NFG not have to consider the propagation of positional forgiveness as an accursed gospel that leads to eternal damnation? Are NFG advocates following through on the logical implications of their position? As already noted, Elkins has written [Positional Forgiveness](#) as a defense of CFG's affirmation of the soteriological nature of positional forgiveness as a rebuttal to NFG. His paper should be read as a backdrop for the current discussion.

Kitchens ([Positional ≠ Daily](#)) also affirms the soteriological necessity of positional forgiveness. He commences his defense of positional forgiveness with Col 1:13-14 and proceeds to make several affirmations:

Positional forgiveness is for all saved people. If one believes in Jesus for everlasting life, they have this irrevocable forgiveness that never fades away. That means that the believer, never again has to ask God for the kind of forgiveness that will save them from Hell....

Positional forgiveness is a once for all forgiveness that we receive as a free gift....

Positional forgiveness is a mechanism for salvation. Without positional forgiveness, salvation would not be possible.<sup>35</sup>

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more closely associated with being a child of God while adoption is clearly associated with the subsequent and more mature sonship status.

<sup>34</sup> David R. Anderson, *Free Grace Soteriology*, revised edition (Grace Theological Press, 2012), 241-242, 310.

<sup>35</sup> Lucas Kitchens. "Positional Forgiveness ≠ Daily Forgiveness: A chapter from Salvation and Discipleship." Available at: <https://freegrace.in/chapter/sd20>.

I agree with much of what Elkins and Kitchens write in this regard since I, too, affirm positional forgiveness and acknowledge its soteriological capacity and even objective necessity.<sup>36</sup>

## Relational Forgiveness in 1Jn 2:12

After commencing his defense of positional forgiveness with Col 1:13-14, Kitchens adds several texts in support of positional forgiveness, such as 1Jn 2:12:

....If you are saved, but didn't know you have **positional forgiveness**, congratulations, now you know.  
Now, let's take a look at 1 John 2:12.

I write to you, little children,  
Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

In this letter to believers, he identifies at least some of his readers as, "little children." He goes on to then address, "fathers," and "young men." It seems that he wants his young readers, either physically young or spiritually young, to remember that they have an **unbreakable salvation relationship** with the father. He adds a reason for his writing. What's the reason that we are forgiven? It's for God's name sake. In other words, It's not because you earned this positional forgiveness, but instead, it was up to God to grant it. ([Positional ≠ Daily](#))

Accordingly, I refer to **positional forgiveness as relational forgiveness**. You have it simply by virtue of your redeemed *relationship* with the Father, even if you are out of *fellowship* with your Father. You have it because of your *position* in Christ, not the *condition* of your walk in Christ. You have it because of your *union* with Christ, not because of your *communion* with Christ. Nevertheless, I did not include 1Jn 2:12 in 4DF because this text is problematic for some FG writers. Dillow explains a competing FG view of the atonement held by Hodges that is not conducive to soteriological forgiveness:

There are some who agree that Christ's death was indeed universal and the sins of all men were paid for. Therefore, no unbeliever ever faces judgment again as far as his eternal destiny is concerned. Why then do unbelievers end up in the lake of fire? Those advocating this view say it is because two things are required to enter heaven: (1) an atonement erasing sin's penalty and (2) the impartation of eternal life. Since the atonement has already taken care of the first obstacle, the only thing keeping unbelievers out of heaven is that they do not have eternal life. They come to Christ believing in His promise to grant life, and they are justified. Why then do people go to eternity without God? Is that not a penalty? No! The answer according to Zane Hodges is, "Not having eternal life is the reason they are condemned to hell." A corollary to this way of thinking is that the content of saving faith does not include trusting Christ for forgiveness of sins or an admission of guilt because unbelievers are no longer guilty as far as eternal salvation. All they lack is life. Regarding the problem of believers facing judgment as a penalty for their sins, they say that Christ did not die for all our sins, only those related to our eternal damnation. Thus, God does execute the universal penalty of physical death in the present and also penalties on sinning Christians at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Because Christ did not pay for sins related to how they live, believers must pay the penalty themselves when they face final accountability for how they lived. Although some scholars I respect hold this view, and since the

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<sup>36</sup> In contrast to Dillow, who appears to require both objective and subjective necessity, I only affirm the objective necessity of soteriological forgiveness. In my view, a believer in Christ for eternal life is objectively granted soteriological forgiveness even though such a believer may not be aware of this fact and may not have subjectively believed in Christ for soteriological forgiveness. Even though salvation would be impossible without soteriological forgiveness, one need not be aware of this fact or acknowledge this fact to believe effectively in Christ for eternal life.

meaning of this viewpoint is unclear to me, and since there is little in writing to explore it thoroughly, we will not discuss further.<sup>37</sup>

Dillow, on the other hand, makes believing in Christ for soteriological forgiveness a soteriological requirement, so you must trust in Christ for soteriological forgiveness to meet the gospel's requirement for salvation from the Lake of Fire. I take a mediating position, perceiving soteriological forgiveness as an integrated result rather than a standalone requirement. To be sure, soteriological forgiveness is a soteriological requirement, but it is granted to one who believes in Christ for eternal security in the form of justification, redemption, regeneration, or salvation. If you believe in Christ for one of these at the soteriological level, you get all four of these at that level. All four are necessary soteriologically, yet all four are granted instantaneously when you believe in Christ for eternal security as a free gift. So, rather than saying that *saving faith does not include trusting Christ for forgiveness of sins* (Hodges) or that *saving faith must include trusting Christ for forgiveness of sins* (Dillow), I would pose *saving faith may include trusting Christ for forgiveness of sins* (Cauley). As to 1Jn 2:12, I take a mediating position between the positional and familial advocates regarding this text. I will provide the following extract from my book, *Degrees of Love and Forgiveness* (DOLF), to explain why.<sup>38</sup>

## Little Children Versus Children

Anderson argues for a soteriological/positional understanding of the forgiveness in 1Jn 2:12 because of its perfect tense, which is translated as *have been*: “I write to you, little children, because your sins *have been* forgiven.”<sup>39</sup> I used the same argument in *The Outer Darkness* (TOD):

All sins of all believers are forgiven in regards to their being a child of God. Their forgiveness in terms of this relationship is complete and already accomplished. This forgiveness is not conditioned upon confession of sin. These *little newborn children* (*teknion*, cp. *teknon* in Jn 1:12) stand in a perfectly forgiven state. The perfect tense of *forgiven* in 1Jn 2:12 is used concerning these *little children*. In the next verse (1Jn 2:13), the perfect tense of *know* is used in relation to their more mature knowledge as *children* (*paidion*) who are old enough to experience its cognate *discipline* (*paideia*; cp. Heb 12:7). Unfortunately, the KJV and NKJ fail to note the transition from *little children* to *children*. John uses this transition to mark a progression from infancy to early stages of Christian maturity in their moving from an infantile to a juvenile knowledge of God.

The use of the perfect tense for forgiveness in v. 12 also has significance regarding the scope of forgiveness. Some NT texts describe a forgiveness that is associated with reconciliation (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). The scope of this soteriological/positional forgiveness is even stated to cover all sins in Col 2:13. To be sure, many conditional securitists object that such texts only indicate the forgiveness of all past sins. Such a restriction would make no sense in the present text, however. John is not indicating that only their past sins have been forgiven and that only those past sins remain in a forgiven state. What about their present sins which he just mentioned in the previous chapter? Are they not also being forgiven? Most certainly. John does not exclude these sins, yet he excludes the present action of forgiving in 2:12. John does not imply, “I write to you, little children, because your sins are *being* forgiven.” Instead, he includes the present sins (that are being forgiven via 1:9) in the present state of already having been forgiven (in 2:12). The sins being forgiven presently from ch. 1 are subsumed in the perfect forgiveness of 2:12. The sins that we are confessing in order to

<sup>37</sup> Joseph C. Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of The Servant Kings*, 20<sup>th</sup> edition (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, 2014), 924n3090.

<sup>38</sup> Marty Cauley, *Degrees of Love and Forgiveness* (Sylva, NC: Misthological Press, 2019). Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Degrees-Love-Forgiveness-Integration-Polemology/dp/1093992530/>.

<sup>39</sup> David R. Anderson, *Maximum Joy: First John—Relationship or Fellowship?* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society), 94-97.

be forgiven familiarly are already forgiven relationally in terms of state. All these sins already have been forgiven in terms of their state as little children.

[Thus, I argued for the CFG position in TOD. However, subsequently, in DOLF I posed that MFG might be a better option in this context, with the following statements.] On the other hand, Hodges seems to link this soteriological forgiveness in 1Jn 2:12 with experiential forgiveness. Soteriologically, he says that the forgiveness they have experienced in 1Jn 2:12 “marks them as little children of their heavenly Father (cf. verse 13). This forgiveness has been granted for His name’s sake...Saving faith is belief in His name.” Experientially, however, he proceeds to say, “But as 1:9 indicates, the forgiveness of sins is an ongoing need in the believer’s life...They *have* had the experience of forgiveness” (emphasis his).<sup>40</sup> In GNTC, he surmises regarding 2:12, “They have experienced true forgiveness (cf. 1:5-2:2).” In this summation, he seems to equate the forgiveness they have experienced in 2:12 with that of 1:15-2:2. Dillow simply equates the two passages and thus takes both passages as dealing merely with fellowship forgiveness.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between, as Hodges seems to suggest in *Walking in the Light of God’s Love*. I would suggest that to the degree we walk in the light we have fellowship with God, and this degree of walking fellowship may not be quite as binary as it first appears in 1John.

## Little Children Can Have Fellowship

The reason for suspecting degrees of fellowship, even for little children who may be struggling to walk in the light, is because of what John proceeds to say:

I am writing to you, *little children (teknon)*, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake (1Jn 2:12).

I have written to you, *children (paidion)*, because you know the Father (1Jn 2:13).

And now, *little children (teknon)*, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming (1Jn 2:28).

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called *children (teknon)* of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are *children (teknon)* of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is (1Jn 3:1-2).

Even as *children (paidion)* they know the Father; they have some level of immature fellowship with Him. At this *paidion* age, they are naturally subject to His *paideia* discipline. But in the context of 1Jn 1:5-2:2, John acknowledges that even as younger *little children (teknon)* they can have fellowship with God, even though this fellowship is conditioned on confession while walking in the light: “My *little children (teknon)*, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1Jn 2:1). Yet little children are known not to walk very well. They do a lot of stumbling as they toddle. Their walk is not consistent. For this reason, John’s addressing them as *little children* in his exhortation to abide in Him (1Jn 2:28), that is in the light (cf. 1Jn 1:5), is completely understandable and indicates that he envisions the possibility that they may not be walking in the light as consistently as they should. Consequently, their fellowship with the Father as little children would not be as consistent as one might expect in a simply binary text. Instead of forgiveness and fellowship being strictly one or the other (soteriological or experiential, light or darkness, all or nothing), the imagery of *little children* walking in the light—while having an inconsistent, immature degree of fellowship with God in a context showing higher gradients of mature fellowship for more mature believers under the imagery of *older children, young*

<sup>40</sup> Hodges, *The Epistles of John*, 95

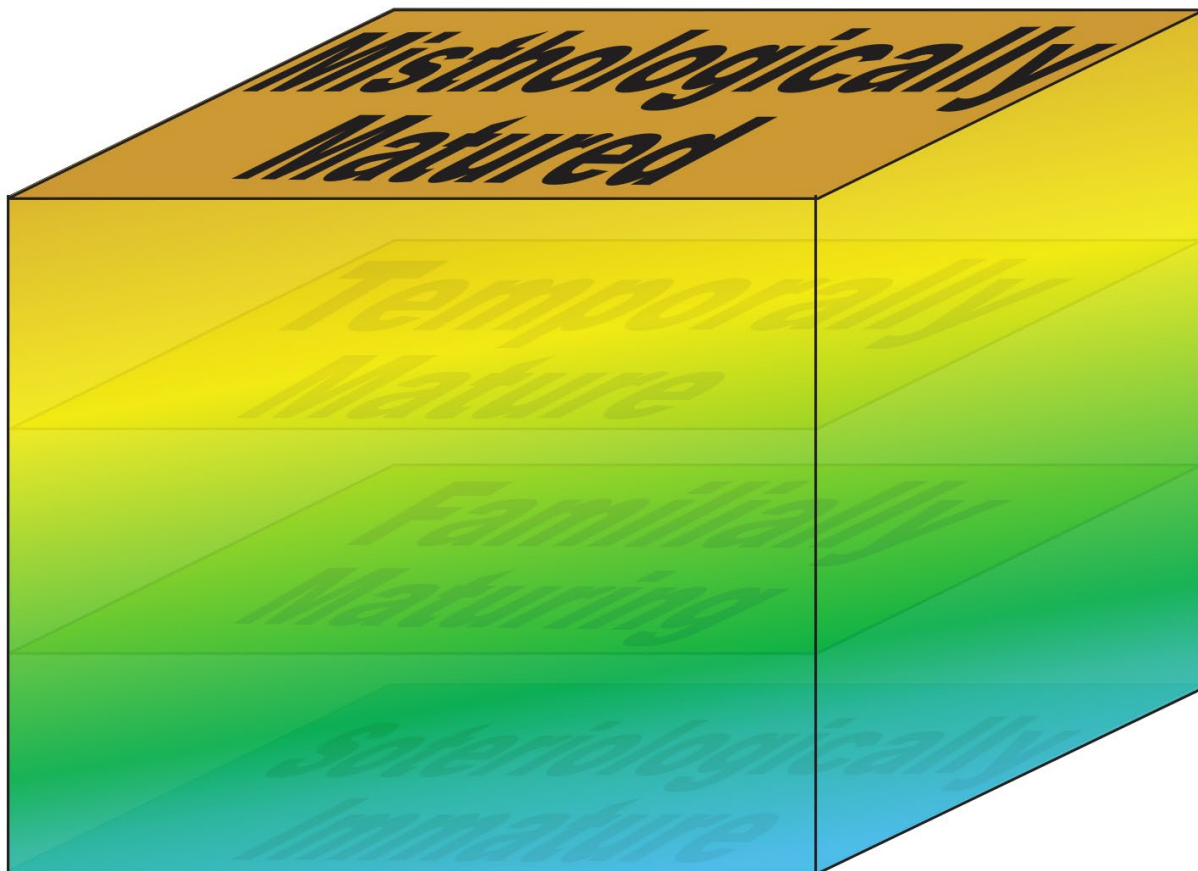
<sup>41</sup> Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of the Servant Kings*, 20<sup>th</sup> edition (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, 2014), 1014.

*men*, and *fathers*—suggests that fledgling, toddling believers can have a very basic and inconsistent fellowship with their Father, even while they are stumbling in their walk with the Lord and using 1Jn 1:9 as a push-button text. The expanded context suggests that 1Jn 1:9 can be used in this push-button capacity by little children but that push-button usage will fail to save them from shame at the Bema.

After all, John proceeds to affirm that God loves all His children and that all His children will see Him and be like Him—even those who shrink away in shame from before Him (or are shamefully put away by Him into the playpen).<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, even after the Bema one would expect some rudimentary degree of intimacy being accorded to those little children who walk in the darkness. Since they can have some limited degree of fellowship with the Father after the Bema, we would do well to expect that His little children who are trying to crawl and toddle to Him in the light with a push-button immaturity are being granted what degree of fellowship is possible to them in that capacity. John apparently wants us to perceive the common-sense implications of his analogy.

As parents, we know that we cannot always have fellowship with our children when they are little. When they are crying, whining, pouting, or rebelling in their self-absorbed immaturity, fellowship with them is impossible. Then again, many times even when they are in that immature state, we can have fellowship with them—at a level permissible to their limited degree of development and obedience. As they grow out of that immaturity and become responsible young adults, an increasingly mature degree of unbroken fellowship with them is possible. John seems to envision a similar potential maturation and communion with his illustration. If we abide in Him in childlike dependency, we can increasingly experience maturing intimacy with Him and stand in mature victory before Him.

***Illustration 16. Four Planes of Vertical Forgiveness and Fellowship***



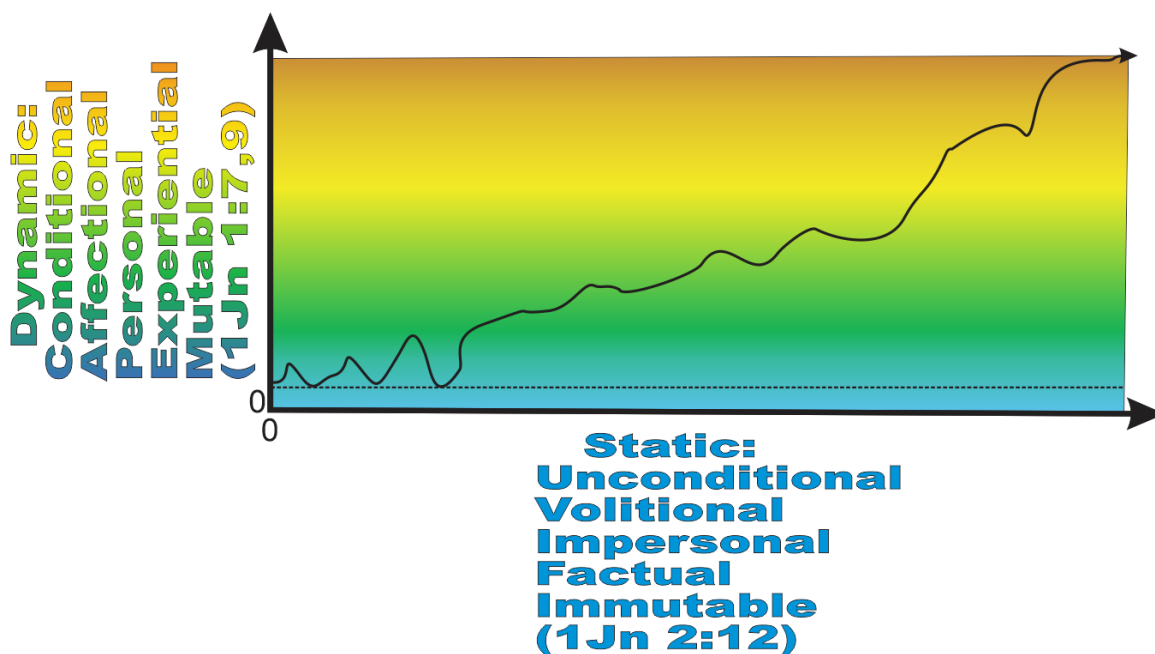
<sup>42</sup> As explained in RBVGB, I no longer see 1Jn 3:2 as applying to all believers soteriologically seeing God and being like God. Rather, this verse is more likely describing seeing God the Father misthologically in New Jerusalem. Still, the overall point being made in DOLF is valid: Even believers within the Celestial Outer Darkness will have some degree of fellowship with the Lord Jesus.



## Immature Fellowship

If this understanding of John's analogy and context is correct, which seems reasonable, then a text like 1Jn 2:12 can be seen from two different vantage points, which is a common literary device in 1John and especially in this context (cp. 1Jn 2:7-8). From a pastoral perspective, it allows us to assure immature believers that they can have some degree of fellowship with God even during their struggling to walk in the light. John does not expect us to misconstrue him as saying that immature believers must reach the victorious experience which he describes by the analogy of young men before believers can have fellowship with God. For he assures us that even as little children we have advocacy with Daddy. A gradient vantage point is therefore prudent, at least as a secondary vantage point. While the segregated view is primary, which sharply distinguishes the distinct maturity levels of believers into compartmentalized categories, a secondary vantage point is permissible and advisable that acknowledges that the transition from one category to another is not so sharp so as to disallow any meaningful transition from one to the other or application of one to the other. Those immature believers struggling to mature can be assured of some degree of fellowship with God even though their ability to walk in the light, as demanded by 1Jn 1:7, is seriously impaired and their implementation of 1Jn 1:9 is much too push-button for the taste of more mature believers. Even those believers who are still crawling and toddling in their walk with the Lord can have some degree of fellowship with their Daddy when they are not doing childish things that make fellowship impossible, such as: whining and wallowing in self-pity, pouting and rebelling in self-assertion, or refusing assistance in self-reliance.

*Illustration 17. Static versus Dynamic Forgiveness and Love*



Another way we might try picturing this fuzzy static-dynamic maturity and fellowship is to combine the gradient graph with an X-Y-axis graph to give some rough idea of what one's progression might potentially look like. One shortcoming with the gradient graphs is that the distinction between a gift and reward is blurred. The static section represents free aspects while the dynamic material represents costly aspects. To assist conceptually with keeping the free aspects distinct from the costly aspects, a dashed threshold with a zero beside it on the vertical axis has been added to clarify that a gift cannot be a reward or vice versa. Therefore, at the point in time when one is born again and becomes a little child by saving faith, the horizontal clock starts ticking and the fluctuating line starts moving, going up and down on the graph. The vertical axis, however, has a range of zero—from the horizontal axis to the threshold—to remind us that the static underlying blue relationship is unaffected. The binary distinction between a gift and reward must be maintained. However, in terms of the terminology and analogy that John employs, we must leave room for some exegetical gradation.

John uses the term *children* in both capacities—to refer both to our relational new birth and to our experiential fellowship. Conceptually, also, we must admit that although a child is not a young adult, one does not graduate from childhood to adulthood in an instant. The process takes time.<sup>43</sup>

In summary, some of Hodge's comments regarding 1Jn 2:12 seem soteriological; some seem experiential and thus familial. In contrast, Elkins considers 1Jn 2:12 an explicit positional forgiveness verse that disproves NFG. In TOD, I would have been inclined to agree. However, in my later writings, I tend to think that 1Jn 2:12 might be dualistic. I still reject NFG but from this dualistic paradigm. Whereas before I was inclined to a strictly soteriological interpretation, I am now more disposed to a dualistic viewpoint that adopts the soteriological premise as foundational but the experiential aspect as plausible at a secondary level. My MFG model does not require that I advocate one vantage point to the exclusion of the other in such a passage. Thus, I regard MFG as superior to both CFG and NFG in that MFG adopts and adapts the strengths of both these other positions. I do not have to argue that 1Jn 2:12 is exclusively positional or exclusively experiential. MFG is free to regard the verse inclusively as both or to regard it as exclusively one or the other.

MFG does not advocate multilevel forgiveness in every context. But it is free to pursue that option when the context warrants that possibility. Therefore, in contradistinction to Elkins' CFG contention that 1Jn 2:12 is an example of positional forgiveness that disproves NFG, I am content, in harmony with my MFG interpretation of 1Jn 2:12, to say this verse renders NFG suspect. MFG has greater plausibility than NFG in this text. If NFG can only handle one level of forgiveness, then NFG will break under the strain of other texts. This text adds to the strain of the NFG argument. Even Hodges seems to interpret 1Jn 2:2 as having soteriological and familial implications.

## Hodges and Wilkin's Original Model

### Eph 1:7 (Original Hodgian View)

As I have explored various forgiveness models, NFG advocates have as well. Sometimes older models may be superior to newer models. For example, some may deem my older MCMC view of Ps 32:1-5 inferior to my newer 4DF model and prefer the former. When I described my 4DF view to Elkins, he insisted upon the CFG view. I was still in the early phases of composing this material and had not yet had a chance to review all of my previous discussions. Subsequently, upon reviewing MCMC, I saw that I had advocated the CFG model at that time. So, I added it to Elkin's argument in support of the CFG explanation for the present discussion and placed it on equal footing with my 4DF model.

Others may deem my original TOD interpretation of 1Jn 2:12 superior to my subsequent DOLF model. I will sometimes pose my new model as superior to my old model; sometimes, I pose it as a worthy alternate; sometimes, I will pose a new model and add it to my old model to make a dualistic composite. Scientific inquiry requires the postulation and testing of various models. Newer models are not always superior. They need to be

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<sup>43</sup> As depicted in the graph in *Illustration 17*, love can be: static and/or dynamic; unconditional and/or conditional; volitional and/or affectional; personal and/or impersonal; factual and/or experiential; immutable and/or mutable. Some of these items are mutually exclusive. For example, God's love cannot be both immutable and mutable in the same way at the same time. However, if God's love is understood as simultaneously operating at different levels or different planes, then we can easily see how His love may be both immutable and mutable at the same time—because it is not immutable and mutable in the same way. This is not merely theoretical or theological. This is how love works in real life. I may love one person impersonally and another person personally. Or I may love the same person personally on one occasion or impersonally on another occasion. Or I may love the same person both personally and impersonally on the same occasion in different ways. For instance, one action I perform for my wife, Dianne, might be because of my affection for her (like buying her a dozen roses on Valentine's Day); the other action I perform for her may be because of or despite my affection or lack of affection for her at that moment or pertaining to that particular activity (some items on a honey-do list might fall into this category at times). In fact, sometimes my volitional love for her will be at odds with my affectional love for her, such as when I do or say something for her best interest that I know she will not like. Regardless of all such variations of my love for Dianne, my love for her as Dianne is immutable. I will always love her in terms of our relationship, even though the affectional fellowship is subject to mutable up-and-down moments.

submitted for analysis to consider their strengths and weaknesses compared to older models and competing models. In Wilkin's case, I propose that Hodge's original model is superior to the newer model regarding positional forgiveness posed by Wilkin. The newer model seems to have unintended negative side effects. In his classic, *The Gospel Under Siege*, Hodges affirmed the CFG view of positional forgiveness:

Forgiveness "in Christ" Finally, we must say that whenever an individual is baptized by the Holy Spirit and placed "in Christ," he receives at that moment a kind of "positional" forgiveness. This is described in Eph 1:7:

*In Him* we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (emphasis added).

Naturally, like all else that pertains to our *position* in Christ, this forgiveness is perfect and permanent. But this in no way contradicts the fact that we also experience forgiveness continually at the level of our day-to-day experience.

An unconverted sinner brings years of unforgiven sin to the moment of his conversion. Experientially, he obtains the forgiveness of all those past sins and begins to have fellowship with God. But whenever he commits further sins, he must acknowledge them and seek God's forgiveness (Luke 11:4; 1 John 1:9).

Nevertheless, as a man in Christ he has a position that is not altered by his daily experience of failure. In fact, he is seated "in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6). This superlative relationship to God is never changed by any earthly interruption in his communion with the Father.

The failure to distinguish our permanent experience of forgiveness in Christ from our daily experience of cleansing has led to doctrinal confusion. It has actually led some to deny that a believer should ask for forgiveness for his sins, even though Christians are plainly told to do so. After all, the Lord's prayer was given to *disciples*, not to unconverted sinners, and its petitions are to be made *daily* (Luke 11:1-4).

The thought that a believer need never ask God's forgiveness for his sins is an aberration rightly rejected by the Church as a whole. But because a believer possesses eternal life, and is also in Christ, his sins jeopardize only his fellowship with God day by day. They do not jeopardize his final salvation from hell. At the level of everyday experience, repentance for our sins is as fitting for us as it was for the converts on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38). Only in our case, confession alone (apart from baptism) secures the forgiveness we need (1 John 1:9).<sup>44</sup> (All emphasis his.)

If this teaching about positional forgiveness is now deemed errant, should Hodges' book be pulled from the GES bookstore? In teaching positional, that is, soteriological forgiveness, was Hodges teaching a false gospel? Was Wilkin teaching a false gospel until he adopted NFG? If Hodges' newer views on the atonement are deemed to require that positional forgiveness be denied, perhaps it would be best to rethink his newer views on the atonement. On the other hand, if his newer views on the atonement are compatible with his original views on positional forgiveness, then it would be appropriate for NFG advocates to prove this to be the case.

## **Bathed versus Washed (Original Wilkin View)**

In 2020, Wilkin was still advocating the CFG affirmation of positional forgiveness, such as when he illustrated it via the footwashing in the Upper Room:

Unbelievers are unforgiven. When an unbeliever comes to faith in Christ, then all his past sins are forgiven in a fellowship sense (Acts 10:43). That is, the new believer starts the Christian life in fellowship with God. In addition, all his past, present, and future sins are all forgiven in a positional sense (Col 1:14; 2:13). Notice what is missing there. The future sins of new believers are not yet

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<sup>44</sup> Hodges, Zane. *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension*, Kindle edition (Denton, TX, Grace Evangelical Society, 2017), 119-120.

forgiven in a fellowship sense. 1 John 1:9 is talking about fellowship forgiveness and fellowship cleansing.

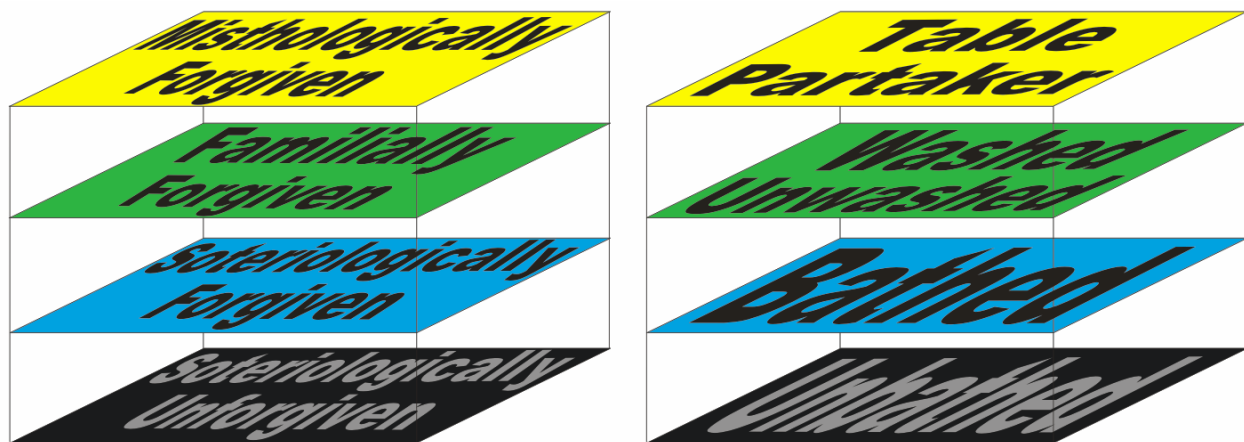
An illustration of both types of forgiveness is found in the incident where the Lord Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. After the Lord had washed the feet of the other disciples, He turned to wash Peter’s feet. Peter said, “You shall never wash my feet,” then Jesus said, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8). The word *part* (*meros*) refers not to being born again, but to being in fellowship with Jesus. The Lord then went on to make that clear: “Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you’” (John 13:10). Judas was not clean because he was an unbeliever. But Peter and the rest of the disciples were clean in a positional sense.<sup>45</sup> (Emphasis his.)

I took the same approach in 4DF, as noted in the following excerpt. In the passage below, note the color-coded distinctions between being (1) *bathed and unbathed* and the subsequent differentiation between being (2) *washed and unwashed* among those who already are bathed.

**Illustration 18. Color coding for Jn 13:6-12**

<sup>6</sup> And so He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, do You wash [nipto] my feet?”  
<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter.”  
<sup>8</sup> Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash [nipto] my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash [nipto] you, you have no part [meros] with Me.”  
<sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”  
<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed [louo] needs only to wash [nipto] his feet, but is completely clean [holos katharos]; and you [plural] are clean [katharos], but not all of you.”  
<sup>11</sup> For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean [katharos].”  
<sup>12</sup> And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?” (Jn 13:6-12)

**Illustration 19. Forgiven or Unforgiven at Four Levels**



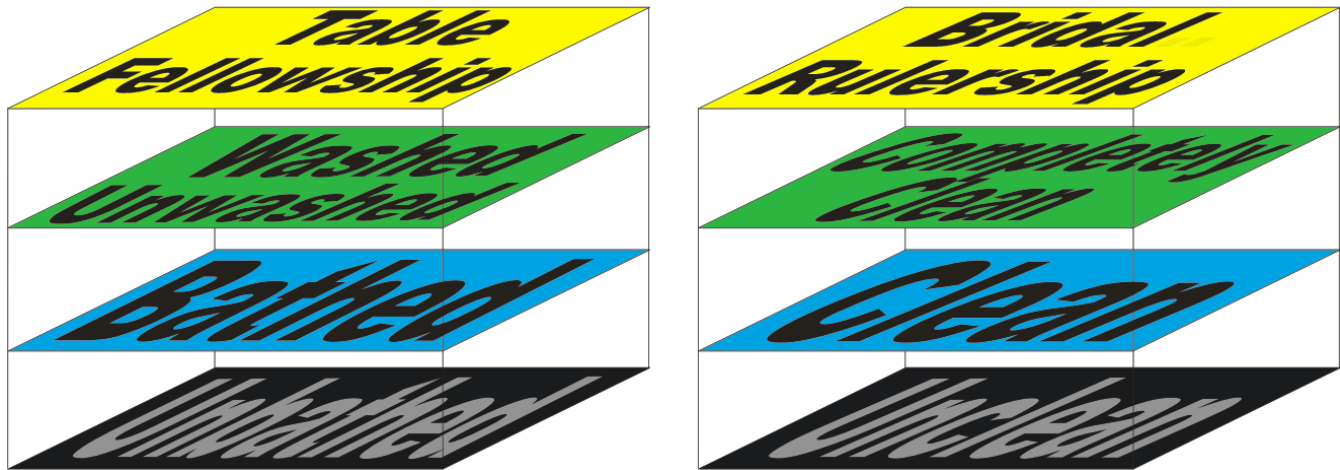
The words for *bathe* (*louo*) and *wash* (*nipto*), as well as their corresponding levels of forgiveness, are critical in Jn 13:6-12. Judas would miss out on the kingdom altogether because of his unbelief, signified by his unbathed state.<sup>46</sup> He was soteriologically unforgiven. Peter, in contrast, was bathed and thus soteriologically forgiven.

<sup>45</sup> Bob Wilkin, “Beware of Confessing the Same Sin (1 John 1:9)” (7/28/202). Available at: <https://faithalone.org/blog/beware-of-confessing-the-same-sin-1-john-19>.

<sup>46</sup> See *Rewards are Eternal* for further discussion of Judas, demonstrating that he was not a believer. Nevertheless, Judas was allowed to attend the Supper and was forced to leave during the Supper. Why? Correlatively, although Judas was an unbeliever, he is used as a typological illustration of what will happen to unfaithful believers at the Lord’s Supper. They will be cast into the darkness outside the feast. John does not let it escape our attention that “it was night” when Jesus forced Judas to leave the Supper (Jn 13:30), picturing the outer darkness (Mt 22:11-14).

However, Peter's familial forgiveness was conditioned on his submitting to the foot washing, representing, among other things, Peter's need to walk with the Lord in the light and confess his need for forgiveness (1Jn 1:7,9). Otherwise, if Peter remained unwashed in the familial realm, he would have no *part (meros)* with Jesus at the Lord's Supper and miss out on all the misthological implications signified by that participation.

**Illustration 20. Clean or Unclean at Four Levels**



The previous illustration correlated the levels of forgiveness with bath and washing. Similarly, the present illustration correlates bath and washing with the levels of cleanliness. Peter was already *clean* because his bath was at the soteriological level, denoted in blue. But Peter was not *completely clean* at the familial level, denoted in green, because he had not yet had his feet washed. Without the foot washing, Peter would miss out on having a *part (meros)* in the future rulership of the millennial kingdom, dining at the messianic table, and residing in a heavenly mansion. This contingency was signified by the necessity of the footwashing so that Peter might participate in the Lord's Supper. Table fellowship is associated with bridal rulership. Being made personally worthy by the Lord's washing his feet was necessary for participation in the Lord's Supper.

If NFG wants to be considered a viable model, then it must posit at least an equally plausible explanation for this passage and the other passages covered thus far that are typically used to support and illustrate positional forgiveness. To be sure, this introduction has not covered all the passages used in this capacity. One can consult my soteriological list from 4DF highlighted in blue above for additional passages and Elkins' [Positional Forgiveness](#). Still, this introduction should suffice to focus the dialogue on the most fundamental aspects of soteriological aphesisology.

## Conclusion

This introduction commenced with an outline of two LS (Lordship Salvation) views on forgiveness, followed by an HG (Hyper-Grace) view and four FG (Free Grace) views: CFG (Classic FG), NFG (New FG), HFG (Hybrid FG), and MFG (Misthological FG). Principle attention was given to CFG, NFG, and MFG. Both CFG and MFG affirm positional forgiveness.

NFG has moved away from affirming positional forgiveness and now denies it, largely under the influence of Antonio da Rosa. He asked me to debate him on the issue. I have created this online article to help facilitate the debate. I can dynamically update this article as necessary to summarize our interaction and that of other participants.

To help facilitate this discussion, I have provided CFG and MFG interpretations for some of the principal passages used to affirm positional forgiveness. Since NFG is a new model, I have made conjectures as to how I anticipate NFG might address certain passages and issues. I have made extrapolations and raised questions based on my current understanding of NFG. Da Rosa will be able to correct my trajectory by clarifying the NFG position and making corrections where I have tried to fill in the blanks in anticipating NFG implications. My principal concern is that NFG might logically entail a rejection of soteriological redemption and soteriological justification. How extensive is the domino effect in the NFG model for other classical arguments intertwined with soteriological forgiveness? Does NFG's denial of positional forgiveness ultimately lead to a denial of positional redemption and positional justification? Will logically consistent NFG advocates deny justification by faith alone?

## Chapter 2. Initial NFG Rejoinders

Since this discussion is difficult to follow on Facebook, I will experiment with using this online paper as a means by which to express the more pertinent parts of our debate. I am also adapting it to a book format by providing chapters and sections, to which I can provide hyperlinks complete with page numbers that can be dynamically updated as the discussion expands.

Also, since the Facebook forum is informal, I will do minor editing on the quoted material to clean up the grammar and make the presentations a little more readable with formatting, bullets, etc., for the sake of making it more presentable for this paper. The paper is posted online. So the participants can check the accuracy of the summations. To aid in following the flow of the dialogue and keeping up with *who* said *what* in response to *whom*, dialogue indicators will be used, implementing the speakers' last names, including myself: Marty **Cauley** (author), Antonio da **Rosa**, and Shawn **Lazar**. This list can be expanded if other participants wish to contribute to the advancement of the debate.

### Discussion of Logic

#### *Inductive Versus Deductive Clarification*

In response to chapter one, Lazar noted that he liked my statement. Since Lazar made the first response and it was met by objection by Rose, this will provide the *ad hoc* point to begin this debate. Headers will be used to help follow the discussion and to provide hyperlink capabilities for subsequent internal reference. For example, Lazar provided the page number of my citation, which is very helpful. However, due to the dynamic nature of this format, page numbers are subject to change. Therefore, I have parenthetically inserted a hyperlink header and hyperlink page number that will be viable in the PDF format being used to post this paper online. These hyperlinks will aid readers in quickly accessing the referenced material. The back browser arrow can be used to return to the original location.

#### *Lazar Affirmed Cauley's Statement*

Cauley: "Salvation in terms of having eternal life by simply believing is the principal subject matter. Forgiveness, freeness, salvation, and eternal life seem intertwined and conditioned simply on believing. Believing in Jesus as the Christ for any of these benefits would seem to result in all these benefits." (See *Paul*, 11). Lazar noted that he liked this statement.

#### *Da Rosa's car illustration and non sequitur response to Lazar and Cauley*

**That is an unproven assumption and based on non sequitur logic.** You could equally say baptism of the Holy Spirit, or Spirit indwelling, or Spirit sealing, or any number of the other 30+ benefits. And use of the logic: "well they 'seem intertwined'"... THEREFORE... = Unproven assumption.

This isn't biblical exegesis. This is theology by theologizing. **It is non sequitur logic to suppose that because something comes in the salvation package that it = eternal salvation.** The Bible knows of no such equation.

You know when I get a car it comes with a stereo. But not the reverse. Jesus says life is the issue. You are either in category A or category B.

- A = death. As such you will come into condemnation.
- B = life. As such you will not come into condemnation.

Life is the issue (John 5:24. Not forgiveness. Those who weren't found in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). No one goes to heaven because they are forgiven. No one goes to hell because they are not forgiven. I tire of theologizing and non sequitur logic. No scripture says that forgiveness:

- Grants a man entrance into the kingdom.
- Grants a man eternal security.
- Grants a man eternal salvation.

Not one verse teaches an unforgiven man goes to hell BECAUSE he is unforgiven; or a forgiven man, by virtue of his forgiveness, is allowed into the kingdom. Not one.

All that quote you pulled, Shawn, from Marty does is show the non-expositional nature of the *forgiveness = salvation* crowd and the language of desperation.

"Seems intertwined."

So therefore: *Forgiveness = eternal salvation*.

**Must I give you both remedial classes in logic? It's called *Non Sequitur*. The conclusion doesn't follow the premise.**

***Lazar's inductive response to da Rosa's priori claim:***

No one is saying that the definition of *forgiveness = eternal salvation*. They obviously mean different things. But having that equation is not necessary, and showing that they are different benefits is irrelevant, because "eternal salvation" is not the "essential" object of faith that everything has to be redefined to mean (which, I think, is your approach).

Saying, "forgiveness does not mean the same thing as eternal life" only matters if you've already concluded that believing in Jesus for the one benefit of "eternal life" is the only saving message. Which is what Marty denies (if I understand him right). I deny it.

**Marty is not making an a priori claim, but a common-sense observation from the text.**

The apostles preach forgiveness, justification, salvation, eternal life, etc., and they present those as sufficient evangelistic messages because, as Marty says, "Believing in Jesus as the Christ for any of these benefits would seem to result in all these benefits." Believing in Jesus for forgiveness results in eternal life, too, and justification, and salvation, and... etc.

**They are "intertwined," not in terms of their definition,** but in terms of their interchangeability for evangelistic purposes and in terms of their unity in the salvation "package" given at the point of faith. You believe in Jesus for one, you get them all.

**I agree. That is the natural, inductive conclusion** from looking at the NT evangelistic preaching. Jesus and the apostles show no obsessiveness about reducing the evangelistic message to one and only one concept that everything else has to be (falsely) redefined to mean.

Marty can correct me if I've misstated his position.

***Cauley had simultaneously responded to da Rosa's non sequitur accusation:***

I did not jump from 'intertwined' to a simple deductive equality. **I hedged my analysis by stating the inductive impression conveyed by the data as seeming intertwined. I believe that to be an accurate impression.**

***Consequently, Cauley responded to Lazar's inductive comment:***

Well said. It looks like you and I posted at the same time. And we both independently said that **I was speaking inductively** in that statement. For instance, I like Olson's book, *Beyond Calvinism*. He appeals to inductive theology. I believe inductive inferences have their place. Where possible, sure, I'd love to move to a deductive conclusion. If I had been trying to make a deductive equality, I would have said, "*Forgiveness = eternal salvation*," as Antonio has erroneously charged. Yet I did not. Instead, I went into great detail to distinguish forgiveness from salvation in my *ordo*, for example. For that matter, I even hesitated to make the simple equation: *forgiveness = redemption*. I showed that this is a possible interpretation for Col 1:14, but another mathematical symbol might be necessary. (See *Col 1:14*, 22).

## Abductive Implementation

Given the above discussion, it would be prudent to provide a brief overview of my use of logic in exegesis. I have addressed this subject in numerous capacities in my books. A quick summation of the most pertinent points should suffice for the discourse above. I began my book, *TOD*, with a discussion of *deductive* versus *inductive* logic and expressed my preference for *abductive* logic. Therefore, it is fitting that the present online treatment likewise provides a cursory treatment of this fundamental subject.

In TOD, I expressed an appreciation for Olson’s **inductive** approach.<sup>47</sup> An initial inductive examination of the details is frequently a good place to begin. Context is king. Examine the context. Draw inferences from contextual details to form a more generalized hypothesis. Then, use deduction to test your hypothesis by filling in the gaps in your hypothesis where the data does not provide a concrete answer. Then, follow through to examine the logical implications of your theory.

On the other hand, I also demonstrated in TOD that sometimes preference must be given to **deductive** logic. Inerrancy, for example, is derived from giving primacy to deductive logic. Some statements in the Bible are so clear regarding their trustworthiness that the perspicuity of Scripture requires that these positive affirmations be given primacy. The same principle applies to some soteriological statements in the Bible.

Geisler and Brooks give a helpful textbook explanation for *induction* versus *deduction* with a mention of *abduction*:

There are different ways we use the word *argument*. In its popular usage, we often mean an emotional disagreement...However that is not its technical meaning in logic. By *argument* we mean simply *the providing the means for the basis of a conclusion*. Emotions are not (and should never be) involved at all in this sense of *argument*. In logic we don't avoid arguments, we encourage them. In fact you cannot do good logical thinking without them. The kind of argument that we want to build, ultimately, is called a syllogism [used in deductive reasoning]. It is made-up of three sentences called propositions....

Deductive logic starts with the cause and reasons to the effect, while inductive logic starts with the effects and attempts to find the cause. That is why deductive reasoning is called *a priori* (prior to looking at the facts and inductive reasoning is called *a posteriori* (after seeing the evidence). Syllogisms are more philosophical, and inductive arguments are more scientific. The biggest difference, though, is that **deductive arguments yield necessary conclusions...but inductive reasoning yields only probable conclusions**. The conclusions might have a high degree of probability, but they are still not as certain as deductive conclusions.<sup>48</sup> (Italics his)

An **abductive** approach must determine when perspicuity is sufficient to justify giving primacy to deductive logic versus when deduction is not viable, and thus primacy is to default to inductive priority. This is one reason hermeneutics is often considered an art just as much as a science. Thus, the description by Geisler and Brooks regarding abduction is useful as a rudimentary place to begin: “A hypothesis is a way of stating what we think is going on, so that we can test to see if we are right. The type of thinking done in this step is neither inductive nor deductive, but abductive (like an insight). It is a speculation that leaps beyond what the available evidence can tell us.”<sup>49</sup> (*Reason*, 52.) In my abductive approach, I will use both induction and deduction.

In chapter one of the present discussion, with strong support from commentators, I could argue for a simple deductive equality: **redemption = forgiveness**. (See *Col 1:14*, 22). Doing so would be very conducive to winning this debate. If redemption is granted soteriological value in this verse and equality is acknowledged between the terms of the equation, then the following deductive argument applies.

**Illustration 21. Possible Deductive Argument for Col 1:14**

Logic (Transitive Property)	Col 1:14 (Transitive Property)
1. A = B	1. Forgiveness = Redemption
2. B = C	2. Redemption = Soteriological Gift
3. A = C	3. Forgiveness = Soteriological Gift

<sup>47</sup> C. Gordon Olson, *Beyond Calvinism and Arminianism: An Inductive Mediate Theology of Salvation* (Cedar Knolls, NJ: Global Gospel Ministries, 2002).1-33.

<sup>48</sup> Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 23.

<sup>49</sup> In my book *Logic Tables and Diagrams* (not yet released), I provide biblical examples of various categories, and in my section, “Deduction, Induction, Abduction, and Adduction,” I add addition yet another level.



Point proven. Forgiveness is soteriological and thus positional. Let’s stop the debate and move on to other things. However, I pulled my punches, so to speak, noting the possible necessity of an alternative expression, such as *redemption ≈ forgiveness*. Scientific and exegetic integrity and mistholic results are far more important than winning a debate. For reasons stated there (see footnote 30), induction causes me, at this point, to hedge my statements with adduction. Whether Col 1:14 yields deductive equality or only inductive probability should be given more abductive scrutiny as the debate progresses. I am still awaiting clarification from da Rosa as to whether he believes redemption is a soteriological gift.

For now, I will proceed with what I hope will move the discussion forward regarding logic. Da Rosa repeatedly challenged me to give one verse that would prove that forgiveness is soteriological. If the above deductive reasoning is accepted, then I have proven the point in one verse. Do I expect da Rosa to concede the point? Of course not. For that matter, I would be disappointed if he did. I believe that more is potentially going on in that verse than simple soteriological deduction. I expect induction and abduction will have roles to play in bringing out its full range of meaning. Once they are brought into play, then I anticipate the probable necessity of integrating inductive observations with abductive logic to derive highly probable results.

Even so, since da Rosa’s initial *non-sequitur* objection was expressed regarding my assessment of forgiveness in Acts 10:43, dealing with that text first will be the more reasonable *ad hoc* place to begin. This text is also a good place to start because doing so will enable me to unpack my underlying logic for the statements I made. When da Rosa challenged me to prove my point with one verse, I responded that requiring such a limitation is not logical. Basically, that demands that I prove my position with deductive logic. However, even deductive logic uses syllogisms, and syllogisms are built upon two propositions. Thus, using two verses to prove one’s point would still yield deductive certainty.

## Inductive Probability

Then again, why limit oneself to deductive logic and deductive levels of certainty? Why be so dismissive of inductive logic? Inductive probability is frequently necessary in deriving and defending biblical interpretations. Geisler and Brooks (*Reason*, 134-135) give a helpful range regarding inductive probability:

- 99% ± —Virtually certain: overwhelming evidence in its favor. Things like the law of gravity fit here.
- 90% ± —Highly probable: very good evidence in its favor. It is highly probable that no two snowflakes will look alike.
- 70% ± —Probable: sufficient evidence in its favor. Most medicines have to pass this test to be approved.
- 50% ± —Possible: either no evidence or equipolence of evidence pro and con. The chance that your team will win the coin toss is 50%.
- 30% ± —Improbable: insufficient evidence in its favor. At this point, no one believes it except the few for whom it worked.
- 10% ± —Highly improbable: very little evidence in its favor. Like the theory that Jesus spent his early years studying with a Hindu guru.
- 1% ± —Virtually impossible: almost no evidence in its favor. The existence of unicorns is at this level.

To make a case for my position, I do not have to prove that Acts 10:43 is soteriological with 100% deductive certainty. I would be delighted with 99% inductive probability. I could be content with 90% inductive probability. I see no reason to think I will achieve less than 70% probability. With a binocular MFG abductive approach, I might have a 99% probability with one vantage point and 90% with the other.

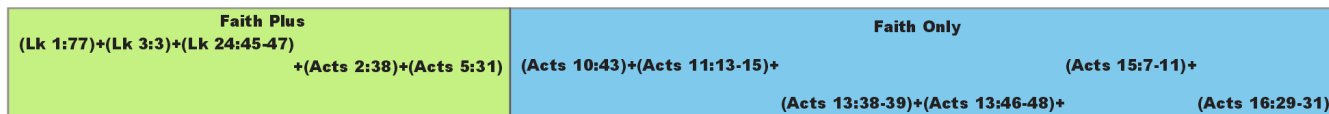
*Illustration 22. Forgiveness and Associated Terms in Luke-Acts*

By Faith Plus	By Faith Alone
<sup>77</sup> To give to His people the <b>knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins</b> (Lk 1:77).	<sup>43</sup> <b>“Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives FORGIVENESS OF SINS.”</b> <sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.” (Acts 10:43-44—Peter)
<sup>3</sup> And he came into all the district around the Jordan,	<sup>13</sup> “And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, ‘Send to Joppa, and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought

<p>preaching a <b>baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins</b>. (Lk 3:3)</p>	<p>here; <sup>14</sup> and <b>he shall speak words to you by which you will be <b>SAVED</b>, you and all your household.</b>" <sup>15</sup> "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. (Acts 11:13-15—Peter)</p>
<p><sup>45</sup> Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; <sup>47</sup> and that <b>repentance for forgiveness of sins</b> should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Lk 24:45-47)</p>	<p><sup>7</sup> And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth <b>the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.</b>" <sup>8</sup> "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; <sup>9</sup> and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> "But <b>we believe that we are <b>SAVED</b> through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.</b>" (Acts 15:7-11—Peter)</p>
<p><sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, "<b>Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins</b>; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38—Peter)</p>	<p><sup>38</sup> "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him <b>FORGIVENESS OF SINS</b> is proclaimed to you, <sup>39</sup> and through Him <b>everyone who believes is <b>FREED/JUSTIFIED</b></b> from all things, from which you could not be <b>FREED/JUSTIFIED</b> through the Law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39—Paul)</p>
<p><sup>31</sup> "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant <b>repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins</b>. (Acts 5:31—Peter)</p>	<p><sup>46</sup> And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves <b>unworthy of <b>ETERNAL LIFE</b></b>, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> "For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles, that You should bring <b>SALVATION</b> to the end of the earth.'" <sup>48</sup> And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and <b>as many as had been appointed to <b>ETERNAL LIFE</b> believed.</b> (Acts 13:46-48—Paul)</p>
	<p><sup>29</sup> And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, <sup>30</sup> and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, <b>what must I do to be <b>SAVED</b>?</b>" <sup>31</sup> And they said, "<b>Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be <b>SAVED</b></b>, you and your household." (Acts 16:29-31—Paul)</p>

An inductive bird’s eye view of the data confirms my statements about a transition occurring in the Luke-Acts material from faith-plus forgiveness to faith-only forgiveness. Look at the chart. Confirm this observation for yourself. I am just making observations regarding the data, in accord with an inductive methodology. As Lazar properly noted, I am not *priori* claim in doing so. I am making a *posteriori* observation, in which I observe that forgiveness is no longer conditioned on faith and repentance or on faith and baptism when we reach Acts 10:43. Instead, forgiveness is now conditioned on faith alone. I further observe that Peter recaps what happened and seems to link (if not virtually equate) this *forgiveness by faith alone* with *salvation by faith alone*. This transition from a faith-plus perspective to a faith-alone perspective appears to be a watershed transition in the Luke-Acts narrative as a whole and the Petrine proclamation in particular. This impression is confirmed by Luke’s addition of Paul’s testimony. Eternal life by faith alone is linked (if not virtually equated) with salvation by faith alone in that some of the Petrine material proceeds the Pauline material so that the material visually overlaps when you chart it or is textually intertwined when you read it in terms of its chronological sequence. Since I am drafting this book online via debating with da Rosa and posting this rough draft as we proceed, participants on both sides can see the results for themselves. So, I challenge you. Look at the data for yourself. I told you what I saw. What do you see? If you see it differently, then why?

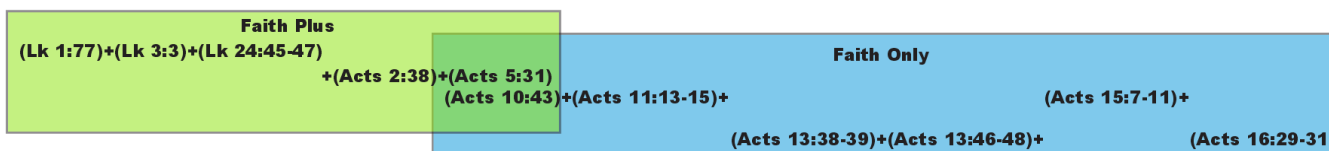
**Illustration 23. Forgiveness and Associated Terms in Luke-Acts in Two Panels**



The two-plane illustration above summarizes this chart with a more condensed representation. The faith-plus data is color-coded in the green panel on the left. The transition to Petrine material is noted in the green panel by placing the data on two lines. The faith-alone data is color-coded in blue to denote what appears to be its soteriological nature. To be sure, this quick summation can be accused of *begging the question* (i.e., assuming the point to be proven), namely the soteriological nature of forgiveness. However, at this juncture, the assumption is only made following inductive observation. Since the grouping observes that *forgiveness by faith* is strongly associated with *salvation by faith*, which in turn is strongly associated with *justification by faith* and *eternal life by faith*, which in turn are typically presumed to be soteriological terms, the soteriological nature of forgiveness is being conjectured as highly probably for my initial inductive hypothesis.

Incidentally, the Greek word used by Paul for *justified* in Acts 13:39 is *dikaioo*. Even though some translations render it as *freed* (hence referring to *freedom/freeness*), many translations render it as *justified*. It is the same Greek word that Paul uses for soteriological justification by faith apart from works in Rom 3:28 and elsewhere. Have I now proven that the forgiveness in Acts 10:43 is soteriological? No, certainly not with deductive certainty. Even if this initial inductive analysis is virtually (i.e., 99% ±) certain, it is only a hypothesis favorable to CSF that must be tested. This is why I noted underlying and contextual factors in chapter one that cautioned me to examine the text from another vantage point. Doing so moves from the above initial surface level examination to an x-ray, so to speak, and considers a possible depth to the picture.

**Illustration 24. Forgiveness and Associated Terms in Luke-Acts in Two Overlapping Panels**



If Peter is referring to the familial nature of forgiveness in the OT and/or if Cornelius is already a believer in the OT sense of the word, as Eaton proposes, then NFG could argue that the forgiveness in Acts 10:43 is familial and that such considerations override the inductive soteriological first impressions. Of course, CFG can rightly object that such an NFG counter would clash with numerous facts conveyed by the initial deductive perception, such as: (1) Peter does not mention repentance or forgiveness in Acts 10:43; (2) Peter associates this forgiveness with salvation by grace through faith in his recaps; (3) Luke links this forgiveness by faith with justification by faith and regeneration via the impartation of eternal life by faith in Paul’s confirming testimony; and (4) OT sacrifices soteriologically pointed to the Promised Redeemer. If I had to choose between the CFG and NFG models at this point, I would easily favor the CFG argument. However, MFG is quite adept at reconciling the opposing arguments of two different factions if both sides have compelling arguments. In that case, MFG might suggest a duality is at play. Perhaps Peter was speaking at two different levels.

**Illustration 25. Forgiveness and Associated Terms in Luke-Acts in Two Overlapping Planes**



Rather than thinking of the potential overlap between the two data sets in Acts 10:43 as being a familial panel overriding or overruling a soteriological interpretation of forgiveness in this verse, why not allow Peter to have a little depth? Rather than assume a familial-versus-soteriological binary overlap, why not allow Peter aptitude

to cherry-pick the soteriological aspect of the OT prophecies to focus on this singular facet on this occasion? Instead of making the data set pictured in green the overriding and overruling vantage point that overlays Peter's presentation, picture it as the underlying and undergirding composite foundation that underpins and underwrites Peter's summation. In short, picture the green in Acts 10:43 on the bottom as the underlayer rather than on top as an overlayer.

The underlying OT prophecies have a soteriological foundation that occasionally rises to the surface. This is an NT occurrence of such a phenomenon. For this reason, the blue soteriological plane is at the top of the illustration. Sometimes, my illustrations picture the soteriological plane on the bottom to show its foundational status. Sometimes, my illustrations place it on the top, depending on contextual focus or emphasis. Even if Cornelius was a believer in the OT sense of the word and thus already had soteriological forgiveness and eternal life, he still needed to hear the NT soteriological message to "become one flock with one shepherd" (Jn 10:16).<sup>50</sup>

For MFG duality to be a stronger option than the highly probable inductive CFG position, NFG would have to have a respective degree of probability. Duality is normally more probable as a mediating position when the other two options are both strong contenders. So, if the NFG perspective is given any significant credibility, then I would opt for this MFG option. Otherwise, CFG suffices. If my CFG inductive analysis is given 99% ± probability, for example, why bother with NFG? In that case, NFG would only have a 1% ± probability. Suppose NFG is only given a 30% ± probability in accordance with its improbable status, then MFG might be granted the remaining 70% ± probability. Then again, one might pose 90% ± for CFG, 9% ± for MFG, and 1% ± for NFG. This approach would leave a little theoretical room for NFG's belief in theological unicorns to use Geisler and Brook's analogy.

## Non Sequitur and Ad Hominem

Da Rosa made some very questionable assumptions in his *non sequitur* objection. Indeed, in some forms of martial arts, such as Judo, you use your opponents' momentum against them. I must use this technique on this occasion because da Rosa's *non sequitur* accusation is itself a *non sequitur* objection. In other words, his objection does not logically follow my statement, as demonstrated by Lazar's and my responses.

Additionally, da Rosa's objection is an *abusive ad hominem*.<sup>51</sup> He retorted that he needed to give Lazar and me remedial classes on logic with his rhetorical question: "**Must I give you both remedial classes in logic?**" This retort is his way of saying, "Reject whatever they are saying because they do not even understand remedial logic." This attack is against the *person*, not simply against the *proposition*. I do not see anything positive coming from his *abusive ad hominem* other than my having taken the time to demonstrate the non-sequitur fallacy of his non-sequitur argument by moving the discussion to a higher level with more explicit descriptions of my logical methodology above. Even so, to avoid *ad hominem tu quoque*, I will commend da Rosa for appealing to logic. I appreciate his attempt to ground his argument in Scripture and logic, which is my approach also.

<sup>50</sup> See my book, *Salvation*, when released.

<sup>51</sup> See *abusive ad hominem*, Gordon H. Clark, *Logic* (Jefferson, MD: The Trinity Foundation, 1985), 15-16. See *argumentum ad hominem (abusive)*, Geisler and Brooks, *Reason*, 93-95.

# Chapter 3. Necessity of Eternal Life Proclamation

## Introduction

Da Rosa began his initial rejoinder with a car illustration, implying that the proclamation of eternal life is a soteriological necessity. In subsequent responses, he supported that initial impression with repeated affirmations for which I sought additional clarification. His initial rejoinder was also intertwined with an appeal to logic to object to my use of the word intertwined. That part of his objection was dealt with in the previous chapter. We can now turn our attention to the other aspect of his argument. Namely, how necessary is the proclamation of eternal life, and how explicit must that proclamation be to result in eternal life if believed?

## Initial Inquires About the Necessity of Proclaiming Eternal Life

### *Cauley's Question to da Rosa About Necessity in da Rosa's Car Illustration:*

Do I understand you correctly as saying that forgiveness is not a soteriological necessity because no Scripture explicitly states that it is required not to be sent to Hell? If so, does the same apply to redemption and justification?

Da Rosa responded with a link to a discussion between him and Lazar, in which da Rosa quoted John 5:24 and 12:44 and then proceeded to argue with the below comments about the necessity of preaching eternal life.

### *Da Rosa's Response to Cauley's Question About Necessity*

Guess what Jesus wasn't commanded to speak of and what He didn't speak of with regard to the eternal salvation of mankind?

Forgiveness and justification.

He was commanded a *very* specific and narrow testimony: **everlasting life**. He didn't speak on His own authority. *He was commanded to speak everlasting life....*

The word of Jesus is the command of the Father. The Father commanded Jesus what to say and speak. This command is eternal life. God commanded Jesus to give testimony to eternal life. He was required to do so. To believe the testimony is to believe in Jesus.

*This and nothing else has scriptural warrant for qualifying as saving faith....*

Preach eternal life. It is NOT optional. (Emphasis his.)

Da Rosa's statement poses an interesting dilemma if he is consistent with the logical implications of his statement. If **explicitly** preaching eternal life is not optional for eternal life, then preaching justification by faith is not saving. So, yet again, to get confirmation, I followed up with the same type of question.

### *Cauley's Follow-Up Question About Necessity:*

Are you saying that if you believe in Jesus for eternal security by means of believing in Him for forgiveness, redemption, or justification, you have believed a non-saving gospel and are going to Hell?

### *Roza Poses Illegitimate Importation For Cauley's Follow-Up Question*

**If a person who is evangelizing somehow illegitimately imports the values of eternal life into forgiveness and justification terminology, and THEN a potential convert puts their faith in Jesus for forgiveness or justification, thinking of them with the values of eternal life, I would say, yes, they are saved.**

**But if they believed in Him for forgiveness and didn't believe at the same time that eternal security was a value of forgiveness, then they have yet to believe in Jesus and be saved. Why? Because assurance is of the essence of saving faith. If they aren't assured of eternal security, they have yet to believe the gospel of Christ.**

Da Rosa and I agree regarding his second statement. Assurance is the essence of saving faith, and the essence of this faith is the assurance of eternal security. In short, assurance of *eternal security* (i.e., OSAS) is the essence of saving faith. You do not get eternal security if you trust Christ for temporal security. You do not get unconditional security if you trust in Christ for conditional security. As explained in my TOD's "Necessity of OSAS," contrary to a panel at the *Free Grace Alliance* (FGA), if you trust in Christ for probation, you do not get salvation. Or, to use my ham sandwich illustration from *Woolly Wolves and Woolless Sheep* (WWWS), you do not get eternal life if you believe in Jesus for a ham sandwich.<sup>52</sup>

I also liked da Rosa's first statement above but wonder if it is logically consistent with his model. From my model, I would insist that believing in Jesus for *forgiveness* or *justification* (while **legitimately** thinking of them as equivalent values to *eternal life*) would save if the convert trusts in Christ for eternal security by doing so. My model easily affirms the soteriological validity of any of these three avenues because they are equivalent values in terms of eternal security. However, da Rosa believes that his model derives the same result even if the converts are **illegitimately** believing. How does this work in his model? Is this equivalent to arguing that converts can believe in Christ for a ham sandwich and get eternal life instead? Is da Rosa saying that converts can believe in Christ for something that is not equivalent to eternal life and get eternal life instead? How does this transmutation work in his model? Surely, he does not believe that you can get eternal life by simply believing in Jesus for a ham sandwich. That sounds more like an FGA model. So, is he saying that you can believe in Jesus for a ham sandwich as long as you think you are getting eternal life on the side, perhaps like a side of fries? After all, with the following statement, da Rosa reiterated his affirmation that non-saving forgiveness saves if erroneously assigned soteriological value.

***Da Rosa's Affirmation of Soteriological Efficacy of Illegitimate Forgiveness***

**Preaching of forgiveness is not a legitimate biblical saving message. Now while I stipulate that importing of eternal life values into forgiveness in preaching CAN save a man who believes, the BIBLICAL message itself of forgiveness is NOT a message of eternal salvation.** (Caps his.)

Even if da Rosa is able to pull off an explanation that works, will it be consistent with his model and his other statements, such as his indwelling-Spirit objection below?

***Da Rosa's Indwelling-Spirit Response to Cauley:***

God grants Holy Spirit indwelling to those who believe in Jesus.

Well, I believe in Jesus for Holy Spirit indwelling, so I am saved!

I don't think so.

***Cauley's Response to da Rosa's Indwelling-Spirit Argument:***

You seem to be arguing that if you believe in Jesus for eternal life by believing in Him for the Spirit's indwelling, you will go to Hell? Did I understand the logic of your argument correctly in that regard? If so, does the same apply to the new birth? If you believe in Jesus for eternal security by means of believing in Jesus for spiritual new birth, does this mean you go to Hell?

***Da Rosa's Cadillac Response to Cauley's Question about Spirit Indwelling***

You can't believe in Jesus for eternal life by believing in Him for the Spirit's indwelling.

Your use of the preposition "for" would make such impossible and contradictory. "For" represents "for the purpose of obtaining."

Logical point: If someone is believing in Jesus "for the conscious purpose of obtaining" eternal life, then that is his conscious purpose.

Your statement that someone can believe in Jesus for eternal life by believing in Him for Spirit indwelling is an absurdity. Let me take that to the *reductio ad absurdum*. What you say with that statement is no different than saying:

*You can believe in Jesus for eternal life by believing in Him to provide for you money to get new wheels for your car, or to get you a Cadillac.*

<sup>52</sup> Marty Cauley, *Woolly Wolves and Woolless Sheep*. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Woolly-Wolves-Woolless-Sheep-necessarily/dp/1456443151>.

To believe in Jesus FOR something is to make that something the object of your trust in Him for the purpose of obtaining that something.

When you believe in Jesus for eternal life, you believe in Him with the conscious purpose of appropriating eternal life.

**There is no such thing as believing in Jesus for eternal life BY believing in Him for something else. Believing in Him for eternal life is essentially believing in Him for the conscious purpose of appropriating that life, not for the conscious purpose of appropriating anything else.**

To some extent, da Rosa's Cadillac illustration is an encouraging response in that parts of it sound like my ham sandwich illustration in WWWS or my GMR hamburger illustration in TOD. Per TOD, You cannot believe in Christ for a hamburger and expect to reach Heaven as a result. Per da Rosa, you cannot trust in Christ for a Cadillac and expect to reach Heaven as a result. Very good. We appear to be in complete agreement on that matter. Nonetheless, da Rosa cherry-picked part of my question for his response. He posed a rebuttal to my question about the Spirit's indwelling. But he failed to address the more difficult part of my question: If you believe in Jesus *for eternal security* by believing in Jesus *for spiritual new birth*, does this mean you go to Hell? If you trust in Christ *for eternal security via regeneration*, do you still go to Hell? In other words, if converts believe in Jesus for spiritual new birth or regeneration and thereby believe they have eternal security, are they saved? Or must they explicitly believe in Christ for eternal security via believing in Him for eternal life to go to Heaven?

In addition, da Rosa's earlier affirmation that you can receive eternal life through illegitimate importation needs reconciliation with his statements here. Since he says you can receive eternal life through illegitimate importation, why could the Spirit's indwelling not be one of those illegitimate importations? So, per his affirmation of illegitimate importation as being saving if the soteriological value of eternal life is illegitimately imported, the question remains: If you believe in Jesus *for eternal security* by believing in Jesus *for the Spirit's indwelling*, does this mean you go to Hell? If it means you go to Hell, how does this reconcile with da Rosa's allowance of illegitimate importation? Conversely, if he answers that you do not go to Hell, has he reduced his argument to *reductio ad absurdum*?

Granted, da Rosa attempted to circumvent the true nature of the question by calling attention to the preposition (*for*): If you believe in Jesus *for* eternal security by believing in Jesus *for* the Spirit's indwelling, does this mean you go to Hell? As we proceed with the car illustration, I will demonstrate that common sense shows his appeal to *reductio ad absurdum* to be a *reductio ad absurdum*—if **legitimate** equivalent values are used. In that case, Da Rosa's original car illustration will be a useful platform to demonstrate the *reductio ad absurdum* of his *reductio ad absurdum*. Perhaps, given his allowance of illegitimate values, his overall argument will be *reductio ad absurdum* even if **illegitimate** values are used.

## Cauley's Ordo Salutis Car Analogy

### *Two Weaknesses in da Rosa's Initial Car Analogy Response*

As a quick review, da Rosa initiated his response to my chapter one with a car illustration in which he charged me with using *non sequitur* logic because he assumed that I was arguing that **"because something comes in the salvation package that it = eternal salvation."**<sup>53</sup> Part of the problem with da Rosa's accusation is that it was made in response to Lazar's affirmation regarding my statement in chapter one: "Salvation in terms of having eternal life by simply believing is the principal subject matter. Forgiveness, freeness, salvation, and eternal life *seem intertwined* and conditioned simply on believing. Believing in Jesus as the Christ for any of these benefits *would seem to* result in all these benefits." As Lazar pointed out, Roza's criticism was ill-founded because I was making an inductive rather than deductive assessment in that context and statement. At that point in my argument, I was stating what the evidence inductively seems to indicate without jumping to the deductive conclusion that one of these benefits necessarily results in all these benefits. In short, saying *would seem to result* is quite different from saying *results*.

Another problem with da Rosa's criticism is that not only was that part of my argument based on inductive inference rather than deductive equality, but my entire methodology was to incorporate inductive probability and not rely on premature deductive certainty. Indeed, in chapter one, I pointed out that I would have strong grounds

<sup>53</sup> See *Da Rosa's car illustration and non sequitur response to Lazar and Cauley*, 34.

for equality: *redemption* = *forgiveness*. Yet I noted another viable alternative: *redemption* ≈ *forgiveness*. Thus, for inductive reasons, I hesitated to jump to deductive certainty even regarding this possible equality. So, I hedged my statement by saying, “If this redemption is soteriological and *basically* equated with a similar type of forgiveness, *as seems to be* the case, then soteriological forgiveness is the result.” In other words, I abductively factored deductive certainty as one possibility (i.e. =) in favor of my argument but also allowed a competing inductive possibility (i.e., ≈) as another possibility in favor of my argument. Both of these two possibilities support my argument and thereby increase the overall probability of my model.

### *Third Weaknesses in da Rosa’s Initial Car Analogy Response*

In chapter two, I responded to these two weaknesses in da Rosa’s opening response in further detail. In this chapter, I will explore another weakness in da Rosa’s initial reaction. In chapter one, I demonstrated that I do not believe that just because something is in the *ordo salutis* package, it is in the *soteriological* package. So, I might also be expected to throw da Rosa’s car analogy out as being ill-founded. On the contrary, doing so would be like throwing out the baby with the bath water. The illogical parts of his argument are the chaff that seems to be surrounding the seed of a good analogy. I will begin by adopting and adapting his model to express my ideas. Hopefully, I can contribute to his model by assisting him in refining his car illustration to better express his model.

### *Usefulness of da Rosa’s Car Analogy*

As I have noted, my primary objective is not to win a debate. Rather, debates can be good tools to explore both sides of the matter more thoroughly and sharpen and strengthen both competing models, especially when debating with friends. On occasion, I help friends develop competing models to my own. Doing so tends to improve my model as well as theirs. Years ago, Antonio and I were members of the same GES chat boards. We spent years joining forces to debate various points of view, such as refuting LS and Calvinistic views. Occasionally, we disagreed with one another on particulars of FG theology and would debate each other on those occasions. Debating took away the time I needed to research and write my books. Eventually, I dropped out of the debating scene to focus on my books. Recently, however, I was asked to comment in an FG Facebook group about a misthological matter. I did so and popped my head out the proverbial door to make an occasional comment. When Antonio saw that I was doing so and had addressed soteriological forgiveness, he asked me to come to his FG Facebook page to debate the matter, like in the old days. Since I have been focused on my writing rather than debating for many years, I am now approaching the topic as a writer/debater. Hence, I am compiling the primary points of our debate in a book format to help catalog and analyze the particulars. With this said, let us reopen the door of da Rosa’s car illustration and see where this car takes us.

### *Cauley’s Adaptation of da Rosa’s Car Analogy*

I posed a logical sequence of events in chapter one, *Ordo Salutis Sequence* (p. 23). Since I consider saving faith the persuasion that one has eternal security (or better yet, unconditional security) by trusting in Christ for unconditional eternal security, I simply used *persuasion* as an appropriate term for *saving faith*. For this illustration and in accord with Eph 1:7 and Col 1:14, I also used *redemption* as a stand-in for *forgiveness*. Likewise, for the sake of phonetics, I used *regeneration* to refer to receiving *eternal life*. Accordingly, I posed the following as the first part of my *ordo*:

Persuasion → Redemption → Justification → Adoption → Regeneration → Salvation

Unlike many soteriologists, I do not assume that adoption is necessarily soteriological. In chapter one, I posed that adoption is part of the *ordo salutis* package yet not a soteriological benefit. I also pointed out that NFG could argue that this is a weakness in my argument for soteriological forgiveness and even gave NFG a suggestion as to how it might do so.<sup>54</sup> I will repackage that discussion in terms of the car illustration:

Persuasion (enter door) → Redemption (door 1) → Justification (door 2)  
→ Adoption (package in the trunk) → Regeneration (door 3) → Salvation (door 4)

<sup>54</sup> See *Justification and Forgiveness Before Regeneration*, 20.



Illustration 26. MFG Ordo Salutis Car



In my adaptation of da Rosa's car illustration to illustrate my model, you can enter the car of eternal security through any one of the four doors. Does this mean that door one = door two? Of course not. All four doors are clearly distinguished from one another. Does this mean that door one = eternal security in terms of being the same thing? No. Door one is part of eternal security, not all of eternal security. If you enter this car through any of the four doors, you have entered an eternally secure state and are unconditionally assured of reaching Heaven. Moreover, since you have entered into a car that has all four doors, you have all four benefits regardless of which door you used to enter the car. All four doors have equal soteriological value in that they all result in eternal security.

### *Equivalent Car Doors*

Dillow seems to argue that you must consciously enter the car through the door of redemption (i.e., forgiveness). At times, da Rosa seems to argue that you must consciously enter the car through the door of regeneration (i.e., eternal life). At other times, da Rosa seems to doublespeak and say that you enter the car (i.e., enter into an eternally secure soteriological state) through illegitimate importation as long as you think this illegitimate importation equates to eternal security. One such example of potentially saving illegitimate importation is forgiveness.

I counterargue that you can consciously enter the car through any of the four doors. Further, my contention is that you can enter the door through any of the four doors and that the Bible presents all four doors as intended means of entering this car. Incidentally, my model has been the standard GES model for many years.

In 2013, Wilkin confirmed this was the position of Zane Hodges:

Hodges's point is that we must believe in Jesus for everlasting life, **or the equivalent** (justification that is secure, forgiveness that cannot be lost, a guaranteed spot in Jesus' kingdom, etc.).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Bob Wilkin, "Another Look at the Deserted Island Illustration," JOTGES 26:50 (Spring 2013): 8. Available at: [https://faithalone.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Spring2013\\_layout.pdf](https://faithalone.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Spring2013_layout.pdf).

In 2014, the Wilkin confirmed this premise even regarding the OT:

First, the OT is not silent on everlasting life as John 5:39-40 shows: “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” The Lord’s audience did not object. They didn’t say, “Wait one minute. We don’t know what you mean by eternal life. Where is eternal life in the Scriptures?”

In the OT the promise is that the one who believes in the coming Messiah will live forever in a glorified body in the kingdom (cf. Gen 5:21-24; 12:3; 15:6; Job 19:25-27; Jude 14-15). That **is the OT equivalent of everlasting life** in the future.<sup>56</sup>

In 2017, as part of the GES staff at that time, Lazar confirmed:

If you are persuaded that you have everlasting life, then you have assurance. That’s what it is. That’s all it is.

Simple, right?

Of course, you don’t need to believe *those exact words* to have assurance. Instead, you could believe, “I will go to heaven when I die,” or “I will spend forever with God,” or “I am saved” **or the equivalent**. If you believed any of those propositions, you would be assured of your salvation.<sup>57</sup>

In 2018, Wilkin affirmed:

Belief in Jesus *for everlasting life (or the equivalent)* saves. In this view believing in Jesus means believing that all who believe in Him have everlasting life **or the equivalent** (justification which can’t be lost, guaranteed eternity with Jesus, an eternal relationship with Jesus, etc). In other words, the person believes that by simply believing in Jesus that he has an irrevocable salvation.

But isn’t that faith in faith? Absolutely. If you believe that those who believe in Jesus who have everlasting life, then you have faith in faith. That is, you believe that belief in Jesus is the sole condition of an irrevocable salvation. Whether you call that believism, easy believism, or hard believism, it is clear that in this view we believe that belief in Jesus is the only way.<sup>58</sup> (Italics his.)

In 2019, Wilkin affirms:

Assurance is of the essence of saving faith. That is, a person is not born again until he believes in Jesus “for everlasting life” (1 Tim 1:16), **or the equivalent** (for permanent salvation, for irreversible justification, for an eternally secure relationship with God, for a guaranteed home forever in heaven/the kingdom, etc.).<sup>59</sup>

In 2021, Wilkin continued to affirm:

A person is not born again until he believes that simply by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he has everlasting life that cannot be lost (**or the equivalent**). Theologians call that view *assurance is of the essence of saving faith*.

<sup>56</sup> Bob Wilkin, “What Do You Need to Know?” (11/1/2014). Available at: <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/what-do-you-need-to-know>.

<sup>57</sup> Shawn Lazar, “Assurance Made Simple” (1/1/2017). Available at: <https://faithalone.org/grace-in-focus-articles/assurance-made-simple>.

<sup>58</sup> Bob Wilkin, “What Does It Mean to Believe in Jesus?” (7/19/2018) Available at: <https://faithalone.org/blog/what-does-it-mean-to-believe-in-jesus>.

<sup>59</sup> Bob Wilkin, “Six Questions Regarding Assurance of Salvation, Part 4.” (10/16/2019). Available at: <https://faithalone.org/blog/six-questions-regarding-assurance-of-salvation-part-4>.

Passages that demonstrate that assurance is of the essence of saving faith include John 3:14-18; 5:24; 6:35-47; 11:25-27. A person must believe that what he receives when he believes in Jesus is *eternal or irrevocable*—whether you call that justification, salvation, regeneration, heaven when you die, or a relationship with God. Once you are saved, you are always saved. In the Lord’s words, the one who believes in Him will never perish, will never hunger, will never thirst, will never die spiritually, will never come into judgment concerning his eternal destiny, but instead has everlasting life and has passed from death into life. That’s what Jesus promised. That’s what we are called to believe.

You can put the issue in a different way: If a person believes that he is saved *for now*, but not *forever*, he is not believing Jesus’ promise of *everlasting* life.<sup>60</sup> (Italics his.)

Other examples could be cited, but these demonstrate that my affirmation of soteriological equivalency is well established. So, the new model posed by da Rosa needs to be clarified before I can picture this model adequately.

### *Internal Non-Car Parts*

A distinguishing part of my model is that, as a mishologist, I propose that adoption is a mishological treasure placed in the trunk. Adoption is in the car but not part of the car. Adoption is placed in your trunk presumptively when you enter this saved state. Many such presumptive rewards are placed in your trunk when you enter the car. Hence, I have put a plus sign beside adoption in the illustration to note that adoption is one of many such presumptive rewards placed in your trunk. These rewards are yours presumptively, that is, presuming you prove to be faithful. Otherwise, you will lose these rewards that are already potentially yours. Adoption is placed in a gold rather than a red font because it is mishological, not soteriological. It is in the car but not part of the car. It was placed in the car, and it can be removed from the car.

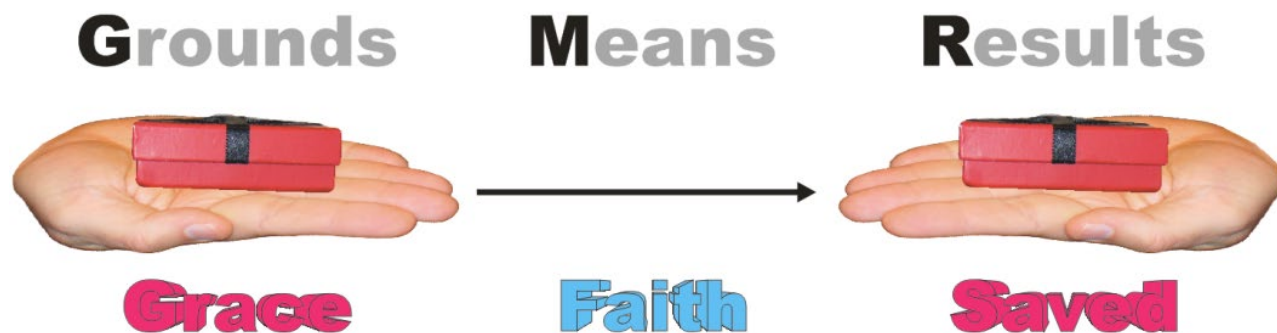
### *Equivalent Versus Imported Car Parts*

Do imported car parts work? Is assurance of eternal security through illegitimate importation valid? Da Rosa poses that converts can *illegitimately* import soteriological value into forgiveness and justification and yet be saved. His allowing illegitimate importation needs further examination. Clarification is required on how illegitimate importation legitimately works in his model. For the moment, it appears to be a very questionable proposition.

The standard GES comments above demonstrated that the affirmation of soteriological equivalence is not limited to the car doors but includes other car parts.<sup>61</sup> In other words, believing in Jesus *for eternal life* or *for the equivalent* saves. Yet da Rosa stated: “**There is no such thing as believing in Jesus for eternal life BY believing in Him for something else.**”<sup>62</sup> He considered it a *reductio ad absurdum* to assert otherwise. Is his response necessarily valid?

An expansion of my GMR model will be useful for the present discussion. As discussed elsewhere in my writings, in my GMR model, grace is the (G) *grounds*, and faith is the (M) *means* to be justified freely as a (R) *result*.

*Illustration 27. Standard GMR Illustration*



<sup>60</sup> Bob Wilkin, “I Did Not Realize How Prevalent Assurance by Works Is” (1/14/2021). Available at: <https://faithalone.org/blog/i-did-not-realize-how-prevalent-assurance-by-works-is>.

<sup>61</sup> See *Equivalent Car Doors*, 45.

<sup>62</sup> See *Da Rosa’s Cadillac Response to Cauley’s Question about Spirit Indwelling*, 42.

**Illustration 28. Standard GMR Acronym**

- G:** Faith in **Christ** alone as the *grounds*/benefactor.  
**M:** Faith in punctiliar **faith** alone as the sufficient instrumental *means* of being benefitted.  
**R:** Faith in the gift of **unconditional security** alone as the *result*/benefit.

Stated negatively and respectively, if one does not believe in *Christ* for eternal life (**or the equivalent**), then one's faith is not saving faith. If one does not believe that *faith alone* is the means of receiving eternal life in Christ, then one's faith is not saving faith. If one does not believe that one is *unconditionally secure* as a result of having believed in Christ for eternal life, then one's faith is not saving faith. As to the second point (i.e., faith in faith alone), which leads to a faith-in-faith perspective, quite simply, we cannot be saved if we do not believe that our faith results in salvation. Consequently, we must believe that our faith is saving faith. Thus, we must *believe in our faith* as the sufficient instrumental means of receiving the benefit of eternal life. This *belief in our faith* is *faith in faith*. Therefore, we must be able to have faith in our faith as the sufficient means (not grounds) for the benefit received. This realization allows securitists to counter the faith-works position as being *faith in faith-works* as the instrumental means in contrast to the Marrowistic position, which is *faith in faith-alone* as the instrumental means.

Although the above summation is not well received by all within the FG community, it should suffice for a quick summation of the standard GES position I subscribe to, as described above.<sup>63</sup> For the present discussion, a more detailed examination of the parenthetical affirmation of *or the equivalent* will require an additional term to be added to my summation of the typical GES model. So I will replace GMR with GMRM. The second "M" refers to "Mode." For GMRM, *mode* refers to the mode by which the benefit is bestowed, as in the *mode of payment* or *mode of transaction*, referring to the form or method by which the result is conveyed. The adjectival form *modal* refers to this *mode/modality*, such as the *modality of payment* or *modality by which the transaction is made or the benefit is bestowed*. This refinement will allow me to differentiate the means of bestowal (i.e., the mode) in order to isolate eternal life or other soteriological benefits as the means by which the result is bestowed.

**Illustration 29. Standard GMR Acronym**

- G:** Faith in **Christ** alone as the *grounds*/benefactor.  
**M:** Faith in punctiliar **faith** alone as the sufficient *instrumental means* of being benefitted.  
**R:** Faith in the gift of **unconditional security** alone as the *result*/benefit.  
**M:** Faith in **eternal life** (**or the equivalent**) as the *modal means* by which the result is bestowed.

Suppose da Rosa and I have the same hypothetical friend, Joe, who promises to give us \$2,000 (2K). Joe only asks that we trust him to do so, and we do so. Joe did not specify the mode of payment. Our faith is *grounded* in Joe. The *instrumental means* of our qualifying for the 2K is our faith in Joe for the 2K. The *result* is that Joe gives us the 2K. The mode by which he gives us the 2K is left unspecified. He could do so in cash, via a check, or by a gold coin, etc. We believe in Joe for 2k, regardless of whether it comes in cash, via a check, by a gold coin, etc.

In my case, when I told Joe I believed him, he took his hand out of his pocket and gave me a gold coin worth 2K. I believed Joe that it was a genuine gold coin worth 2k and reached out my hand and took it. I trusted in Joe for the 2k coin and, in doing so, trusted in him for the 2k. Trusting in him for one was my instrumental means of trusting in him for the other. The modal means by which Joe gave me the 2K could have varied, as is proven by da Rosa's response. Suppose da Rosa likewise believed Joe, and Joe took a check of his pocket for 2K and gave it to him. In that case, in one sense of the word, da Rosa and I did not receive the same thing, but we received the same thing in terms of equivalent value. If da Rosa cannot consistently affirm equivalent value, he needs to clarify why not.

My model presupposes equivalent value. Suppose, though, our friend Joe is a practical joker. Instead of handing me a gold coin, he hands me a dime. Instead of handing da Rosa a check for 2K, Joe hands him a quarter. Then, of course, the analogy breaks down, at least for my model. Does it break down for da Rosa's model since he says you can be saved by importing illegitimate values? As noted, da Rosa says, **"If a person who is evangelizing somehow illegitimately imports the values of eternal life into forgiveness and justification terminology, and**

<sup>63</sup> See *Equivalent Car Doors*, 45.

**THEN a potential convert puts their faith in Jesus for forgiveness or justification, thinking of them with the values of eternal life, I would say, yes, they are saved.**”<sup>64</sup> In other words, if the convert thinks that forgiveness or justification is just as saving as eternal life, although they are not, then God will give the convert eternal life anyway. Does this mean that it will turn into a gold coin if I think my dime is worth \$2,000? Da Rosa would not pose something so silly. Perhaps da Rosa means that if Joe wanted to give me a gold coin and I mistakenly thought that he was only giving me a dime, Joe would give me the gold coin anyway. But that suggestion will not work because da Rosa immediately added: **“But if they believed in Him for forgiveness and didn't believe at the same time that eternal security was a value of forgiveness, then they have yet to believe in Jesus and be saved. Why? Because assurance is of the essence of saving faith. If they aren't assured of eternal security, they have yet to believe the gospel of Christ.”** In other words, I would have to believe that my dime is worth \$2,000 for Joe to give me the gold coin.

Yet, per NFG logic as thus expressed, my mistaken belief results in a soteriological transmutation so that my dime is turned into a gold coin. Per that reasoning, why could potential childish converts not just believe in Jesus for a hamburger or an endless supply of hamburgers and equate this with eternal life? Or why could potential adult converts not just believe in Jesus for healing and harmony and think that this means that everything is alright between them and God? Per da Ros’s NFG response, would the Lord not honor such faith, no matter how grossly mistaken, and assign it saving value? NFG must clarify its illegitimate importation position more fully since it appears to be a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Even worse, this NFG *reductio ad absurdum* might open the doors to a false gospel. Per NFG logic, why could potential converts not believe in Jesus for a reward and think it is a gift? FGA posed that you can believe in Jesus for probation and get salvation instead. I reject that proposition. Does da Rosa accept or reject it? If he rejects it, is his doing so consistent with his allowance of illegitimate importation? After all, familial harmony with God is conditioned on repentance and forgiveness. If potential converts mess up the *instrumental means* by mistakenly thinking that their turning from their sins is compatible with salvation by faith alone, as is often the case in LS, are they still saved? No, not according to the standard GES model. CFG and MFG pose that the *instrumental means* (the first “M” in GMRM) and the *modal means* (the second “M” in GMRM) must be in accord with reality. Potential converts cannot imagine that a gift is a reward and rightfully expect God to play along and give them eternal life as a gift when they have conditioned it on their works. NFG appears to be out of touch with reality.

### Internal Car Parts Versus External Counterparts

Da Rosa argues that just because a car comes with a stereo does not prove a stereo is in a car. So what? Where have I said otherwise? For that matter, I do not believe everything in the car is part of the car! Adoption is a case in point. So why would I think non-car parts are part of the car?

**Illustration 30. MFG Car Doors With External Misthological Counterparts**



<sup>64</sup> See Roza Poses *Illegitimate Importation For Cauley’s Follow-Up Question*, 41.

As to the doors, I have clearly shown that my model poses four distinct levels of forgiveness. I also noted that I do not believe redemption is soteriological in every passage. Rather, redemption can be soteriological, temporal, or misthological. Even so, for the initial car illustration, I limited the scope of redemption being referenced to its soteriological aspect, as indicated by the red font used for adoption and labeling it in association with the car door. However, I would not place misthological redemption in the car as part of the car. One might argue that misthological redemption is part of the presumptive treasure in the trunk. Even if that is the case, this will not make misthological redemption part of the car. The same goes for misthological justification, misthological regeneration, and misthological salvation. All four doors have misthological counterparts that are not part of the car. I have referenced these misthological values in a gold font outside the car to underscore that fact.

Da Rosa also argues that the Spirit's baptism, indwelling, and sealing, among 30+ other benefits, are in the salvation package, yet this does not mean they can be equated with eternal salvation. Not so fast. Take the Spirit's sealing, for example. The Spirit's soteriological sealing is part of our soteriological security. Associating this sealing with the seat belt would be a good analogy. God is not going to give us a car without a seatbelt. It is a standard issue in all of God's soteriological cars. When you sit in this car, it automatically straps you in a seatbelt. The seatbelt is not the car; it is simply part of the car—of the soteriological benefits of being in the car.

Consider some more challenging questions about da Rosa's argument to move this discussion to a higher level. Would you be soteriologically saved if you tried to enter the car by trusting in one of these 30+ soteriological benefits? Say, for instance, that you believe in Jesus for the Holy Spirit's sealing as your means of being eternally secure, and this is how you enter into the assurance of being eternally secure. Does this mean, in my model, you are eternally lost because you did not enter the car through one of the four intended doors? No. Per my model, you would still be saved. God would open the door for you, as it were, so that you could sit down and be strapped into the car via the electric seatbelt since this is the car's advanced safety feature that elicited your attention and compelled you to accept the car. Others might be sold on the car's other advanced safety features, especially when they discover this ultra-safe car is free! The essence of saving faith is the assurance of eternal security through biblically legitimate means. The doctrine of the Spirit's soteriological sealing is intended, among other things, to assure you of eternal security. Therefore, assurance of eternal security through the doctrine of soteriological sealing is saving faith. Can NFG not see any saving value to our baptism into Christ via the Spirit? Is there no saving value to our position in Christ? Is there no saving value to Spirit indwelling us? Is there no saving value to Christ's presence in us? Have these benefits not been used rightly by CFG as arguments for eternal security?

In any event, da Rosa is correct that the 30+ additional benefits in the salvation package do not equal eternal salvation (i.e., 30+ ≠ soteric benefits). Better delineation as to what belongs in that category in the NFG model is needed. Many benefits bestowed at salvation do not have soteriological value. They do not save us from Hell. Soteriological salvation is not their purpose. Da Rosa likens them to the car stereo. His analogy is permissible, especially since the car stereo is not a safety feature, though, in conjunction with the radio, it might be used to listen to traffic conditions and weather reports and have a secondary safety function. Even so, the stereo's primary purpose is to make the ride more enjoyable, not save us from wrecks and slippery roads.

Any analogy has limitations. Still, since I have equated the car with eternal security in my model, I will offer a similar analogy that is more compatible with my example. In my understanding, spiritual gifts are bestowed at the point of salvation but do not have a soteriological function/value. Speaking analogously, if we have been unfaithful stewards of the spiritual gifts and talents given to us at the point of salvation, we will lose those gifts and opportunities to serve the Lord when we die; they will be removed from our car.

Illustration 31. MFG Car With Presents in the Trunk



I have pictured representative samples of these 30+ benefits given to us at the point of salvation in the trunk as gifts within my model. They are part of the salvation package, which includes additional benefits in the *ordo salutis*. They are inside the car but not part of the car. Neither CFG nor MFG poses that potential converts are saved from Hell by trusting in the Lord for spiritual gifts or other such auxiliary benefits. If da Rosa is arguing that redemption (forgiveness), justification, and salvation are *legitimate illegitimate means* (whatever that means) in contradiction to *illegitimate illegitimate means*, he needs to explain what he means. What distinguishes *legitimate illegitimate means* from *illegitimate illegitimate means* in NFG? Why is it legitimate (i.e., saving) to import illegitimate values in for redemption but illegitimate (i.e., non-saving) to import illegitimate values for these 30+ benefits? The distinction is easy in CFG and MFG: Legitimate modal means can be legitimately imported because they legitimately have equivalent soteriological value. Since NFG denies this to be the case, it needs to supply a legitimate defense for its illegitimate apologetic.

## Potential To-Do List

In this final section, I will simply catalog statements that have been made but not yet addressed for possible subsequent inclusion as the Lord and time permits and as the flow of the discussion shows them to be relevant.

We will try to focus on one item at a time in the active discussion and put subsequent items to consider for discussion on the to-do list.

1. Antonio: explain Ps 32:1-5 from his perspective and refute Hodges and me.
2. Incorporate Antonio's no-OT-precedent argument and responses by Shawn and Fred.
3. Cauley: see if commentators of this passage or its NT counterpart help determine if CFG or MFG is the better option.
4. See if Anderson's argument needs to be included:  
[https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/chafer/files/v13n1\\_3anderson\\_is\\_belief\\_in.pdf](https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/chafer/files/v13n1_3anderson_is_belief_in.pdf)

Note to self: check commentators for further elaboration between MCMC and 4DF models for Ps 32:1-5 and Rom 4:7. At present, the two models seem about tied in terms of probability.

Note to self: perhaps interact with Anderson and Wilkin  
[https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/chafer/files/v13n1\\_3anderson\\_is\\_belief\\_in.pdf](https://faithconnector.s3.amazonaws.com/chafer/files/v13n1_3anderson_is_belief_in.pdf)  
<https://faithalone.org/blog/are-there-saving-promises-that-are-not-clearly-irrevocable/>