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**Is Faith  
in this life  
necessary for  
salvation?**

**Danutasn Brown**

# On Universalism

Is faith in this life necessary to enter into eternal life?

Danutasn Brown

Printed by



[www.maranathamedia.com](http://www.maranathamedia.com)

April 9, 2021

Updated November 12, 2023

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# Introduction

It can be easy to sympathize with the idea of universalism: the idea that all men will be saved. It does seem that many don't have the chance to hear the gospel – how can they not be allowed into heaven? We also know God is loving, shouldn't He save all His children?

But there are a massive number of problems with the idea. The first is it undermines the whole process of preaching the gospel. Why preach at all, if the outcome is the same? Is there any reason to overcome sin? And about the atonement: did Jesus really need to suffer and risk being lost forever if all are going to heaven whether they believe in Him or not, whether they know God or not? Jesus came to show us the character of the Father, that we might be reconciled to the Father and the Torah. But if we could be reconciled by God showing us His goodness after death, then that seems to decrease the value of all that God has tried to show us while we are alive. There is much less urgency to get people to know God *now*. While we don't want to panic about the fact that some will be lost, is universalism the answer to our anxiety on this?

There is no doubt that God WANTS all men to be saved. But the whole reason He has to appeal to all men, that He has to struggle so hard to seek after us, is that mankind is rejecting Him. Why appeal to us if He is just going to have all of us worship and live with Him eternally anyways? Wouldn't that go against man's free will? What if men don't want to live an eternal life? What if they don't want to worship God forever? Will God force them to change their minds? Will He force reconciliation on them?

It is argued that once people see the truth in the end they will simply accept they were wrong, confess their error and be saved, but this assumes all men will accept a universal principle of truth and embrace it. Human history shows us that heart change is the hardest thing in the entire universe. It is wishful thinking that it can all just be solved for everyone after death; this denies the realities of free choice and the responsibility of the decisions we make.

Hopefully this booklet will answer some of these questions.

## Two Groups: Saved and Lost

Universalism goes against one of the central principles of the Bible – that the righteous are saved and the wicked damned. Let us look at a clear text:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be **saved**; but he that believeth not shall be **damned**. (Mark 16:16)

At face value, the verse reads that there are two groups, one saved and the other damned. Now the idea of us or someone we know being “damned” is distressing. This is a text that demands action on our part. What is that action to be? Isn’t it to determinedly study the Bible and pray and share and try to ensure that we and those around us believe and are saved? That is what has driven the church for ages.

But what if we say that “damned” just means a period of difficulty before the unbeliever makes it to Heaven? In this scenario the unbeliever will be damned, but damnation is only temporary – somehow after death (purification, purgatory, cleansing of fire, etc.) the “damned” will make their way into the category of saved. Is this really what the Bible teaches?

Does the Bible teach that someone who doesn’t believe can be saved? The Bible is explicitly mentioning two groups/categories. To confuse this distinction is to undermine the point God is trying to make. It doesn’t make sense for it to be “believe-saved” and “not believe-saved after some difficulty after death”.

The most famous verse in the Bible has this explicit distinction of two groups:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not **perish**, but [opposite] have **everlasting [perpetual] life**. (John 3:16)

The verse sets up two opposites, a white and a black. The clear point brought out by this text is that there are two distinct groups which are separated by the word “believeth”. The point here is not to focus on perish but to recognize that these two groups are separate and thus are not one group. One has

eternal life and the other will perish. The text places the group that is to “perish” as set apart from those who will receive eternal life. If you do not have eternal life, then it means you have what remains when there is no eternal life – and this would be death. If “perish” means simply a temporary death, then they would still have everlasting life and this destroys the distinction of the categories in the text. If the two groups really aren’t distinct and different, why does the Bible keep stressing the point?

He that hath the Son hath **life**; and he that hath not the Son of God hath **not life**. (1 John 5:12)

In each of the three verses listed above, simple logic provides the clear definitions of what the words mean.

1. Believes = saved not damned – Mark 16:16
2. Believes in the Son = not perish but eternal life – John 3:16
3. Hath the Son = life

In each case belief is required to be saved. The use of the word “not” makes the clear division between being saved or not. If we reverse the elements of each of the formulas, we have the following:

1. Damned = not saved
2. Perish = not eternal life
3. Hath not the Son = Hath not Life

The logic is clear, simple and unmistakable for the candid reader. There are two groups, one is saved and one is lost.

It is also clear that humans lack the ability to know precisely who is in these two groups, because faith is invisible to us. But just because we can’t say exactly who is saved or not (though we do have guidelines that can help us know), doesn’t mean that there isn’t a saved group and an unsaved group.

If one does not believe in the distinction between a saved group and an unsaved group, it would be necessary to explain how those who rise up in the

2<sup>nd</sup> resurrection of the unjust (after the 1000 years. Rev 20:5-8), who, according to scripture, don't have the Son of God and don't have life, actually come to have life and have the Son of God, especially in the light of a verse like the following that seems to say there is no 2<sup>nd</sup> probation.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: (Hebrews 9:27)

This is where the discussion on this matter should begin. It must be admitted that on the face of it the Bible seems to teach clearly against universalism. To say all are saved would require a very systematic approach that continues to provide harmony with the points raised so far.

We are going to look at some verses that are used to support universalism. I do this wishing that those entertaining this theory would establish their position more broadly, considering the serious implications of what is being said and addressing also the philosophical and practical ramifications of this ideology. Still, I do think looking deeply at some of the disputed texts can be insightful to us in our understanding of the Plan of Salvation.

## Are all men of “all nations” saved?

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee [Abraham] shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3)

“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Genesis 18:18)

By “all families of the earth” and “all nations of the earth” shall be “be blessed,” are we to understand *that all the members* of all the families of the earth are to be saved? That everyone will be blessed, and none cursed? The first part of the first quote seems to suggest otherwise, because if “all families” are blessed

in Abraham, why would anyone curse him and thereby be cursed? So is it all the families, or is it some of the families? All nations or some of the nations? I will hope to make it clear that it is *some* of the members of *all* the nations.

I think we can agree that this is referring to the gospel promise of Abraham and his heirs inheriting the whole earth through Christ the seed. All the nations would hear of Christ and have a chance to be blessed, but it is not certain they will accept it. Paul explains how we are to understand this verse:

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, ‘In thee shall all nations be blessed.’ So **then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham**...that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:7-9, 14)

Through Christ, some of every nation would be blessed through faith. The only way that *everyone* could be blessed is if *everyone had faith*. Does everyone have faith in Christ? That cannot be the case, because:

“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: **for all men have not faith.**” (2 Thessalonians 3:2)

Not all men believe in Christ; they don’t believe the promises of God; they don’t want to repent; they don’t want to go to Heaven and God won’t force them. But some from every nation, from every family (tribe/kindred) will accept and be blessed, and therefore the promise that “all nations shall be blessed,” remains true, even if some refuse to believe. The blessing shall reach all the nations. This interpretation also fits with the two distinct groups (saved and lost) mentioned earlier.

So the same reasoning applies to Revelation 21:24-26.



“And the nations of them shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.” (Revelation 21:24-26)

“And the nations” here refers to *those of faith* from all the nations. Those who were made righteous by walking with Christ are the glory and honour of the nations. This is contrasted by those who walked not in faith, noted in the next verse:

“And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Revelation 21:27)

Some will not accept the promises of God, and God will not force them to accept. When they refuse, the result is unrighteousness, and these people cannot enter as stated in Revelation 21:27.

That the faithful of all the nations is the meaning is reiterated here:

Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:20-22)

To conclude this section:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, ‘In thee shall all nations be

blessed.’ So **then they which be of faith** are blessed with faithful Abraham.  
(Galatians 3:8-9)

All nations = they which be of faith from all nations

“And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: **for all men have not faith.**” (2 Thessalonians 3:2)

All men of faith ≠ all men

All nations ≠ every person from every nation

## Apollumi and its Context

Another argument I have encountered is that the word “perish” (in Greek it is *Apollumi*, G622) doesn’t really mean perish.

When discussing Greek and Hebrew words, a number of factors should be taken into consideration. Firstly, there is the voice it is written in (active-destroy or passive-was destroyed) and the context of it (who/what is doing it and to whom/what). We can’t just take its meaning in one context and put it on another. Even in English we can’t do this. If I say “I got killed in tennis yesterday”; it doesn’t mean that I died – it just means I lost the game badly. How much more should we be careful with a language that is not our natural tongue!

There are two meanings to the word *apollumi* according to the Thayer definition:

1. to destroy
  - a. to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to ruin
  - b. render useless
  - c. to kill
  - d. to declare that one must be put to death

- e. metaph. to devote or give over to eternal misery in hell
  - f. to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed
2. to destroy
- a. to lose

Luke 15:24 is used to make the point that it doesn't mean lost forever:

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose (apollumi) one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

In this case the sheep was lost and then it was found again. Thus things that are killed can be found again, it doesn't mean they are gone permanently. Because *apollumi* is used that way here, the universalist says it is possible in other cases where it is used. But is that true? Are meanings interchangeable like that? In this case, could we translate the word 'lose' here as 'kill'? No, it wouldn't make sense.

Consider what is written in Matthew 12:14 -

Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy (apollumi) him?

Can we translate 'destroy' here as 'lose' (or 'make lost')? "The pharisees might make Jesus lost..." We could do that but how can we be sure that that is the meaning? Is that even possible in Greek? Is there ever a place in the Bible where a man loses another man? What about in ancient Greek literature? If there isn't, it is erroneous to interpret the verse that way.

The context of how a word is used needs to be brought into consideration. We can look at all the uses of the word 'grill' and notice that it is sometimes used to mean 'to interrogate' a suspect. (I grilled him for information) Then we could say that a chef who is grilling meat is interrogating the meat. Native English speakers would immediately tell the non-native speaker that this doesn't work. But because Greek is not our natural tongue, we are easily

capable of misunderstanding words. Certain rules need to be used to avoid this issue. For a language we are not familiar with, we should find an application of a chef interrogating some meat somewhere before we think it possible that a word can be used this way. We must also carefully notice if the verb is in the active, middle, or passive sense.

Our effort to determine what a word actually means in any given context must be informed by all the relevant contextual information. One such piece of information is how we know an author uses the same word in similar contexts elsewhere. If one of the Gospel writers, for example, always uses a word in a specific way in a certain kind of context, we would be unwise to pick an example of them using that same word in the same sort of context, but insist that on this one special occasion they mean something quite different – because the word is technically capable of meaning more than one thing. For example if a man frequently refers to his mother in law as “the dragon,” and is in the habit of telling people, before she arrives, that “the dragon is coming to visit,” it would be unjustified to hear him say that for the hundredth time and suppose that this time, unlike all other times, he means that a scaled monster is about to swoop down from the sky. This would be a case of special pleading, because we know that he didn’t mean that any other time. (<https://rethinkinghell.com/2012/10/27/the-meaning-of-apollumi-in-the-synoptic-gospels/>)

So if we look at every case of the verb *apollumi* in the active voice where one human is doing it to another human, it always means kill (in KJV translated as ‘destroy’). It never means ‘lose’ to be salvaged again.

In [Matthew 2:13](#), Herod wants to kill the baby Jesus.

In [Matthew 12:14](#) the Pharisees conspired together about how they might kill Jesus.

In Matthew 21:41 (story of the wicked tenants) the vineyard owner kills the wicked tenants.

In Matthew 27:20, the elders and chief priests urge the people to have Barabbas released and Jesus killed.

In Mark 3:6, the Pharisees plot to kill Jesus.

In Mark 9:22, the parents of a boy with an unclean spirit tell Jesus that the spirit often throws the boy into water or into a fire, trying to kill him.

In Luke 6:9, Jesus asks if it is lawful on the Sabbath to save life or kill.

In none of these cases is the meaning to lose with the hope to find again and restore. The Pharisees didn't plot to lose Jesus and restore him later. Does Herod want to "ruin" baby Jesus and take away his 'well-being' in a way that can later be reclaimed? No, he wants Him dead.

Furthermore, we would not say a "perished" coin or that I "killed" that coin in the parable of the lost coin, because the story is obviously about a coin being lost, not a coin being dead. So then we must assume the 2nd definition of lost for it, which the translators did, so it is a "lost" coin, not a dead coin.

The context of using the active verb with a sheep is different than with a man, so to carry over the definition is illegitimate. In the case of the prodigal son, *apollumi* there is used in the passive voice ("He was lost, and is found...") and therefore an equivalence cannot be made with the active voice. Would it make sense here to say, 'He was perished, and is found?' Spiritually maybe, but for normal common people a dead man can't ask for help and be considered 'found' – dead people don't talk. That's why it is translated 'lost'.

## A Careful Look at Destruction

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished... (2 Peter 3:6)

It may be argued that in this verse the world “perished,” yet it was not lost forever – Noah and His family continued on and restored it. But what is meant by “the world” here? The Thayer dictionary says it can mean “the inhabitants of the earth” and all “earthly goods and endowments, riches, pleasures,” etc. I take this verse not to mean the land perished, but the people and their dreams and riches and pleasures did. That Antediluvian civilization was never renewed. We cannot infer from this verse that because the world continued to maintain life through Noah’s family that all the Antediluvian race will be renewed and saved also.

It has also been suggested that *apollumi* never refers to eternal death, only to physical death. But is that what John 3:16 is talking about?

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish (*apollumi*) but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

In this verse, does *apollumi* mean a physical death? No, because many who have believed in Christ are now in the grave. The disciples believed in Christ, yet they are physical dead. If they were never to have a physical death, then they should have ascended straight to Heaven like Elijah. Therefore *apollumi* here must be referring to the 2nd death at the end of the 1000 years.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

If everyone survives, that means that everlasting life has the same meaning as perish. But in John 3:16, the two are contrasted with each other, not made

parallel. If it was to mean that all who perish will have everlasting life, the verse should read:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that all who perish should have everlasting life.

Or at least

All who perish who believe should have everlasting life.

But it doesn't say that. It lists two categories, those who perish, and those who have everlasting life. And then it makes a condition for that life – to believe in Christ.

Should not perish

But

Have everlasting life

People either perish (everlasting death at the resurrection of the wicked) - or they have everlasting life

I can't see how this verse can be said to mean that those who perish will have everlasting life. If so the verse makes no sense, and the contrast is meaningless. What universalism (or universal restoration) implies is that those who believe will have everlasting life, and those who don't believe will perish and also have everlasting life.

Perish ≠ everlasting life

Belief ≠ unbelief

Belief leads to everlasting life

Unbelief leads to perishing, everlasting death

## Repentance after Death?

It may be supposed that yes, you must have faith to believe. Yet this could still happen after a man dies; he could begin believing then. The wicked who are resurrected could all repent and thus be reconciled with God. In fact, they will do so (according to the Universal theory), because God will reveal Himself in the fullness of His love and this will cause all the wicked to repent.

This is at best an assumption, and so far I have yet to find evidence that such a thing is possible. It seems to me to be highly irresponsible to give people hope that they can repent after they die, when God has given us this life to be a probationary period to repent now, *before we die*, and thus be called up in the first resurrection of the just. Should I assume that I will still gain eternal life if I have been resurrected in what the Bible calls the “resurrection of the wicked?”

I invite the universalist to explain how/when/why/where people can be reconciled after they die. What are the Bible texts? Where is a Bible text that states that we can repent and turn from our sins and do good works after we have died? What I see is a text like this:

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Ezekiel 18:20)

This verse seems to be saying that we will receive the consequences of our actions. Righteousness receives the reward of righteousness: eternal life. Does wickedness also lead to eternal life? Salvation is a gift that must be accepted; it is conditional. It is a promise of eternal life that must be believed or rejected. If there was no choice to be made, why preach it at all:

And he said unto them, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15-16)



God gives us the choice to not believe, in which we cut ourselves off from our life source. He gives every man enough time and is fair to allow us to make a decision in this life. Why have these conditional statements, if all are to be saved? Doesn't that hollow out our evangelizing and standing for the truth?

Believe and you will be saved, and believe not and still you will be saved, because no one is being damned. That is not what the text says. The disciples of Jesus didn't give up their lives for something that didn't matter – they preached because they felt the destiny of souls hung in the balance.

When Paul said this, did he mean that those who “judged themselves unworthy of eternal life” would be living with Christ eternally?

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (Acts 13:46)

Is the Gospel message that “All are going to heaven, praise God! Do good deeds now, so it is less painful for you at the entrance to Heaven!” No, it is “Repent, ‘For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.’” (Romans 6:23) We have the right not to accept that free gift. Do all want to go to heaven? In some religions, like Buddhism, annihilation is the goal (called Nirvana), not eternal life (samsara, death and rebirth). Are we not to allow them their decision?

It may be argued that the fire at the end of time will reconcile them to God and make them realize the error of their ways. Where is the Bible text that says this? Furthermore, how are we to preach this? “You may want annihilation, but during the fire of God's love at the end of time you will realize you are a sinner that needs to be saved, you will change your mind, and then you will accept His gift of everlasting life.” Universal restoration teaches that this fire will hurt according to our wickedness, purifying us and causing us to have a change of heart. Couldn't that be perceived as torture? That God would use fire to hurt us until we accept Him?

How can we preach that people who reject God in this life will be forced to accept Him and stay in heaven for eternity in some sort of brainwashed lobotomized state where their decisions in this life didn't matter?

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. **He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.** These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:11-13)

Does everyone have the Son of God? Are we to teach that those who reject and hate God, His law, His truth, His Son, and instead sin and do wickedly, are still to have eternal life? In direct contrast to the words of this above verse? That everyone actually has the Son and has life, no matter what it is they do, no matter how hard they try not to have the Son and not have life? Again, does this not make ridiculous all the work God has done to try to save us? God has given us the free will to believe, or not to believe. Or else why have a verse like this, that says that it is possible to not have the Son:

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. (1 John 2:23)

## Eternal Life is a Matter of Inheritance

For a full understanding we have to reconcile all the verses regarding who gets eternal life. To say that the word "destroy" does not provide conclusive evidence of destruction will not address the issue that mankind needs to deal with to inherit eternal life. Man does not have life in himself. Humans need not only to be not destroyed, they need to inherit eternal life. Does everyone inherit eternal life? Is that just a given for everyone?

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18)

Does this young ruler just assume that he will inherit eternal life? Does Jesus answer by saying, “all will inherit eternal life, but some will have to be purified more than others?” No, Jesus answers:

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. (Luke 18:20)

We need to do the commandments, be righteous according to the law, which we can only do through Jesus. If we are not righteous and without Christ, we have no hope of inheriting eternal life.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:7)

Is everybody already a heir? According to Col 1:27, we need Christ in us to have that hope, then we are heirs. Paul makes this unequivocally clear and warns us not to be deceived that somehow all men will inherit eternal life:

**Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)**

Until they accepted Christ, some in Corinth were not going to inherit the kingdom of God. “Such were some of you” – some of them were formerly unsaved and were not going to enter into eternal life, but they had been washed, sanctified, justified. It *is* possible to not inherit the kingdom of God.

Justification and sanctification are processes that men must go through in *this* life to become righteous.

And we desire that every one of you do **shew the same diligence** to the full assurance of hope **unto the end**: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who **through faith and patience inherit the promises**. (Hebrews 6:11-12)

It is not a given that we inherit the promises, but we are to continue unto the end to be “followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” It is important we be diligent in our faith, not just assume we will enter eternal life because everyone will, or assume that Jesus will make us righteous in the afterlife when we refuse to be made righteous now.

Even in the end of Revelation John makes it clear that there are two groups:

**He that overcometh shall inherit all things**; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:7)

One group is unbelieving, fearful, murderers, whoremongers, etc and they shall not “inherit all things.” Those who do inherit all things are those that overcome. Overcoming is to be done in this life, not in some future time. Remember Heb 9:27 – “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

Also, the wicked here are sent into the second death. Is that a purifying process where they finally repent and are made righteous? If so, calling it the second *death* seems strange; it would seem better to call it the second *trial* or second *test*. Does *death* here somehow have as its outcome *life*? That sounds remarkably like what the serpent said to Eve: “You shall not surely die.” Let us take heed to this warning in Isaiah:

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20)

God will honor the judgment that we have made in this life. 'As you judge, ye shall be judged,' and God will not overturn our own judgment. Will he use the spiritual fire at the end of time to force us to change our judgment? Doesn't that contradict the following verse, where it seems those who are wicked will remain wicked – they won't change after death?

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. (Revelation 22:11)

Universal Restoration teaches that the fire will take that which is filthy and unjust and make it clean and just. But this verse of Jesus is declaring that the moral character of a man is determined in this life.

## The Book of Life

Finally the Bible ends with this verse:

And there shall in **no wise enter** into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or makes a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:27)

Is everyone written in the book of life and therefore everyone will enter?

He that **overcomes**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (Revelation 3:5)

Only those that overcome are in the book of life. Are we to suggest that they can overcome while they are being burned by spiritual fire at the judgment? But then it must be argued that all will overcome, which destroys the meaning

of the word. It should then just say, "He that is there, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life..." Overcome implies that there is the possibility of not overcoming, but universal restoration predestines everyone to overcome. All that is needed is for you to be there. It makes a farce of this verse, as it does with many others.

It also renders useless the need for the book of life. Why talk of those in the book of life if all are saved. Why should the disciples rejoice that their names are written in heaven if all names are written in heaven?

Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather **rejoice because your names are written in heaven.**" Luke 10:20

We know that this cannot be the meaning because some are not written in the book of life:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, **whose names are not written in the book of life** of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

Those that worship the beast are not written in the book of life. Are we to suggest that at some later point their names do get written in the book of life? Where does it say so?

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

How does the lake of fire purify them so that their names suddenly appear in the book of life? Where is the text that says that eventually all will be in the book of life? There seem to be only texts that say some will not be there.

Finally, does this text have any meaning at all if everyone somehow entered the book of life?

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part out of the book of life**, and out

of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.  
(Revelation 22:19)

## What of those who have not heard?

What about the charge that some people were never given the opportunity to know the truth in this life and it is only fair that God give them another chance?

God gives light to every person that comes into this world.

“That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” (John 1:9)

This is regardless of whether they have literally heard of God or not. He has given each man a conscience, some ability to know right and wrong. This comes from God, it is not inherent in us. It is the part of the promise made to Adam and Eve so that we are not totally under the control of Satan. Speaking to Satan, God says:

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed...” (Genesis 3:15)

The enmity in us towards Satan comes from the Spirit of God striving within us. The Spirit of God convicts **every** person in this world of three things.

And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment... (John 16:8)

The Spirit convicts the world, meaning all who are in the world, of sin and righteousness and judgment. Those who respond to the Spirit will come up in the first resurrection. Those who do not respond will come up in the second resurrection and reveal to all their hatred of God and the truth, and perish under the weight of their own guilt while in the presence of our loving Father.

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth— those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)

There are some who have not heard of the name of Christ and yet they have responded to the Spirit of God and obeyed the voice that speaks into their conscience.

When Gentiles, who do not have the Law [since it was given only to Jews], do instinctively the things the Law requires [guided only by their conscience], they are a law to themselves, though they do not have the Law. They show that the essential requirements of the Law are written in their hearts; and their conscience [their sense of right and wrong, their moral choices] bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or perhaps defending them on that day when, as my gospel proclaims, God will judge the secrets [all the hidden thoughts and concealed sins] of men through Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:14-16 AMP)

Every person in this world is moved upon by the Spirit to respond to the conviction of sin present in themselves and the conviction of righteousness to do the right thing, and that there is a standard of right and wrong which involves judgment. This means that every person is given an opportunity to know the truth and therefore they are without excuse.

...because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, (Romans 1:19-20)

This is because the heavens declare God's glory and through the Spirit of God, the human heart can be impressed with right and wrong. Each person will



either condemn or acquit themselves when they stand before God in the final judgment.

## Testimony of the Pioneers

The pioneers also had arguments against universalism/universal restoration and I will share them here also.

From the Memoirs of William Miller by Sylvester Bliss:

"Just as sure as the word of God is true, depend upon it, universal salvation is not true. Was this what David saw, when he saw the end of the wicked? Enter into the sanctuary of your own conscience, my brother, and you will find 'NO,' or declarations as plain. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall strive to enter in, and shall not be able.' Look at Daniel 12:9,10 - here we have the end described. What does conscience say? Be careful, my brother; remember that eternal consequences hang on your decision; and what is the answer? 'Many (not all) shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand.' See Malachi 4:1-3. Where are the wicked, the proud, and all that do wickedly? Do they enjoy the healing beams of the Sun of righteousness? {1853 SB, MWM 109.5}

'No.' Again, in Matthew 13:49,50. Are the wicked permitted to dwell with the just? Is heaven and happiness their abode? Enter into the sanctuary, and what do you hear? No! No! Again, in Matthew 25:12,30, and 46. Do the foolish virgins enter in to the marriage supper? or are they ever married to the Lamb? No! Is the unprofitable servant 'in light and glory?' No! No! And are the goats enjoying the same communion with the sheep? or are they going 'into life eternal?' No! No! NO! Read, again, Rom.1:18, to the fifth verse of the second chapter. Would it be unjust for God to condemn the characters there described? Your judgment tells you No. Your conscience responds the same answer, No! Your tongue must one day answer NO! For every tongue must and

will confess to the glory of God. Oh! my brother, enter into the sanctuary, and knock while the door may be opened; seek while you may find; look while you may live; and you will most assuredly learn 'their end.' All the plausible reasoning of all the Universalists under the whole canopy of heaven, cannot save one soul. 'Except a man is born of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" {1853 SB, MWM 110.1}

### Charles Fitch

But, say some of our beloved brethren, there must yet be a great multitude saved. The gospel must yet prevail a great while, so that at last the number of the lost shall be trifling in comparison with the multitude saved; and they think it must be so because of God's unspeakable benevolence. And so the Universalist, upon ground equally as good, takes God's benevolence as security that all will be saved. But one "thus saith the Lord" is worth volumes of such reasoning. Said our blessed Savior, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Thus we have the declaration of Him who cannot lie, that many go to destruction, and few find life. Where now is the necessity of putting forth our hands to stay up the ark of God's benevolence, by saying that few must be lost, and many saved, in order that God may fully vindicate himself? It is the self-same notion, to all intents and purposes, on which men attempt to build the doctrine of Universalism. But everything of this sort must be swept away, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind;" **while the words of Christ will remain an eternal truth, "many go to destruction, few find life."** Nor will he lack ways or means to vindicate his own benevolence, when his own words on this subject are found to be strictly true. {1842 CF, GGE 18.1}

### Josiah Litch

"And when Jesus doth appear, Soul and body, soul and body, Shall his glorious image bear." "But those measures of meal, (persons,) which do not receive this spirit, have no life in them; they can have no hope of glory. [Matt 13:33, Luke

13:21] Reader, have you that blessed spirit dwelling in you? Examine yourself and see whether you be in the faith. Christ is in you except you are a reprobate. But if the three measures of meal mean the whole world of mankind, then the leavening process will go on till all are saved; and Universalism is true. **But it is not so**; but each of Adam's race is a measure, and each must receive the spirit for himself, **or not be saved**. {1842 Josiah Litch, Prophetic Expositions Volume 1 32.2}

### J.N Loughborough

It may be well to note the connection in which the supposed statement is found, and what sinners she is talking about. We surely do not want to be like a man in my native town, in my youthful days, when there was a great "controversy" between the Methodists and the Universalists. This man said, "I can read universalism right out of the Bible, in the words of Christ, 'He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be!'" "He left out one word which spoiled the rest for universalism. J.N Loughborough, Great Second Advent Movement p537

### A.T. Jones

Exposition of Matthew 24. Details a shift in the Universalist position from 40 years earlier. During the time of the 1888 message the Universalist message had changed to include a period of mental torment for the wicked before being saved.

Disciples—"What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

Jesus—"When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."

Probably there is no chapter in the Bible which speaks more fully and more definitely on the second coming of Christ, than Matthew 24; and there is no chapter in the entire Bible which has been the subject of greater controversy. **But the nature of the controversy has almost entirely changed within the last forty years. Forty years ago the controversy was between the Universalist**

**and orthodox Christians.** The Universalists denied that there is to be, any future judgment and punishment. Of course they referred the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew altogether to the destruction of Jerusalem—to the past. Evangelical Christians then denied that it referred solely to the destruction of Jerusalem; they affirmed that it taught a personal coming of Christ, to reward his saints and to justly punish his foes. Those commentators who referred it in general to the destruction of Jerusalem in their expositions, still admitted that it had a further reference to the second advent and the end of the world. They uniformly applied a part of the Saviour's discourse in chapters 24 and 25 to the latter event. {March 14, 1890 ATJ, EMTF 7.3}

**The Universalists now take a different position; they have mostly become restorationists, admitting that there will be some punishment, even in the future. But they contend that it will be disciplinary or reformatory.** They still maintain their former position that Matthew 24 has no relation to that future punishment, but refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. {March 14, 1890 ATJ, EMTF 8.1}

Universalism/Universal restoration the fruit of rejecting the gospel.

"There is ample evidence to show how great had been the reaction from the simple genuineness of early Christian belief, and how nearly the Christian world had generally associated itself, in thought and temper, not to say in superstitious practise, with the pagan. We must not shut our eyes to the fact that much of the apparent success of the new religion had been gained by its actual accommodation of itself to the ways and feelings of the old. It was natural it should be so. **Once set aside, from doubt, distaste, or any other feeling, the special dogmas of the gospel, . . . and men will naturally turn to compromise, to eclecticism, to universalism, to indifference, to unbelief . . .** {1898 ATJ, Great Empires of the Prophecy (1891) 585.1}

## Testimony of Ellen White

I must add the testimony of Ellen White, out of respect for how graciously she has led the advent people in the past, and how she has continued to be a guiding light in leading us in all our beautiful present truths.

The following is a long section from Great Controversy that addresses this topic. For many it may be easy to dismiss this book, for me and many others this book was and is crucial to our whole Christian experience. In this passage Ellen White makes many arguments using Bible verses that should be addressed by anyone who wishes to convert the Adventist believer to the Universalist position.

A large class to whom the doctrine of eternal torment is revolting are driven to the opposite error. They see that the Scriptures represent God as a being of love and compassion, and they cannot believe that He will consign His creatures to the fires of an eternally burning hell. But holding that the soul is naturally immortal, they see no alternative but to conclude that all mankind will finally be saved. Many regard the threatenings of the Bible as designed merely to frighten men into obedience, and not to be literally fulfilled. Thus the sinner can live in selfish pleasure, disregarding the requirements of God, and yet expect to be finally received into His favor. Such a doctrine, presuming upon God's mercy, but ignoring His justice, pleases the carnal heart and emboldens the wicked in their iniquity. {GC 537.1}

**To show how believers in universal salvation wrest the Scriptures to sustain their soul-destroying dogmas, it is needful only to cite their own utterances.** At the funeral of an irreligious young man, who had been killed instantly by an accident, a Universalist minister selected as his text the Scripture statement concerning David: "He was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead." 2 Samuel 13:39. {GC 537.2}

"I am frequently asked," said the speaker, "what will be the fate of those who leave the world in sin, die, perhaps, in a state of inebriation, die with the scarlet stains of crime unwashed from their robes, or die as this young man died, having never made a profession or enjoyed an experience of religion. We are content with the Scriptures; their answer shall solve the awful problem. Amnon was exceedingly sinful; he was unrepentant, he was made drunk, and while drunk was killed. David was a prophet of God; he must have known whether it would be ill or well for Amnon in the world to come. What were the expressions of his heart? 'The soul of King David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.' Verse 39. {GC 537.3}

"And what is the inference to be deduced from this language? Is it not that endless suffering formed no part of his religious belief? So we conceive; and here we discover a triumphant argument in support of the more pleasing, more enlightened, more benevolent hypothesis of ultimate universal purity and peace. He was comforted, seeing his son was dead. And why so? Because by the eye of prophecy he could look forward into the glorious future and see that son far removed from all temptations, released from the bondage and purified from the corruptions of sin, and after being made sufficiently holy and enlightened, admitted to the assembly of ascended and rejoicing spirits. His only comfort was that, in being removed from the present state of sin and suffering, his beloved son had gone where the loftiest breathings of the Holy Spirit would be shed upon his darkened soul, where his mind would be unfolded to the wisdom of heaven and the sweet raptures of immortal love, and thus prepared with a sanctified nature to enjoy the rest and society of the heavenly inheritance. {GC 538.1}

"In these thoughts we would be understood to believe that the salvation of heaven depends upon nothing which we can do in this life;

neither upon a present change of heart, nor upon present belief, or a present profession of religion." {GC 538.2}

**Thus does the professed minister of Christ reiterate the falsehood uttered by the serpent in Eden: "Ye shall not surely die." "In the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." He declares that the vilest of sinners--the murderer, the thief, and the adulterer--will after death be prepared to enter into immortal bliss. {GC 538.3}**

**And from what does this perverter of the Scriptures draw his conclusions?** From a single sentence expressing David's submission to the dispensation of Providence. His soul "longed to go forth unto Absalom; for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead." The poignancy of his grief having been softened by time, his thoughts turned from the dead to the living son, self-banished through fear of the just punishment of his crime. And this is the evidence that the incestuous, drunken Amnon was at death immediately transported to the abodes of bliss, there to be purified and prepared for the companionship of sinless angels! A pleasing fable indeed, well suited to gratify the carnal heart! This is Satan's own doctrine, and it does his work effectually. Should we be surprised that, with such instruction, wickedness abounds? {GC 538.4}

**The course pursued by this one false teacher illustrates that of many others. A few words of Scripture are separated from the context, which would in many cases show their meaning to be exactly opposite to the interpretation put upon them; and such disjointed passages are perverted and used in proof of doctrines that have no foundation in the word of God.** The testimony cited as evidence that the drunken Amnon is in heaven is a mere inference directly contradicted by the plain and positive statement of the Scriptures that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:10. It is thus that doubters, unbelievers, and skeptics turn the truth into a lie.

And multitudes have been deceived by their sophistry and rocked to sleep in the cradle of carnal security. {GC 539.1}

If it were true that the souls of all men passed directly to heaven at the hour of dissolution, then **we might well covet death rather than life. Many have been led by this belief to put an end to their existence. When overwhelmed with trouble, perplexity, and disappointment, it seems an easy thing to break the brittle thread of life and soar away into the bliss of the eternal world.** {GC 539.2}

God has given in His word decisive evidence that He will punish the transgressors of His law. Those who flatter themselves that He is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner, have only to look to the cross of Calvary. The death of the spotless Son of God testifies that "the wages of sin is death," that every violation of God's law must receive its just retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father's face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed. In no other way could man be freed from the penalty of sin. And every soul that refuses to become a partaker of the atonement provided at such a cost must bear in his own person the guilt and punishment of transgression. {GC 539.3}

Let us consider what the Bible teaches further concerning the ungodly and unrepentant, whom the Universalist places in heaven as holy, happy angels. {GC 540.1}

**"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."** Revelation 21:6. This promise is only to those that thirst. **None but those who feel their need of the water of life, and seek it at the loss of all things else, will be supplied. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son."** Verse 7. Here, also, conditions are specified. In order to inherit all things, we must resist and overcome sin. {GC 540.2}



The Lord declares by the prophet Isaiah: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him." "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isaiah 3:10, 11. "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times," says the wise man, "and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked." Ecclesiastes 8:12, 13. And Paul testifies that the sinner is treasuring up unto himself "wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds;" "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Romans 2:5, 6,9. {GC 540.3}

**"No fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."** Ephesians 5:5, A.R.V. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14. **"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."** Revelation 22:14, 15. {GC 541.1}

God has given to men a declaration of His character and of His method of dealing with sin. "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.**" Exodus 34:6, 7. **"All the wicked will He destroy."** **"The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off."** Psalm 145:20; 37:38. The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being. {GC 541.2}

**God does not force the will or judgment of any.** He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies." God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited. He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character. He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; **but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided. Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?** {GC 541.4}

**Those who have chosen Satan as their leader and have been controlled by his power are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters. Can they enter heaven to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish.** What source of enjoyment could

heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests? {GC 542.1}

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to heaven and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,-- every soul filled with love, every countenance beaming with joy, enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb, and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,--**could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire.** They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God. {GC 542.2}

Like the waters of the Flood the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. They have no disposition to submit to divine authority. Their will has been exercised in revolt; and when life is ended, it is too late to turn the current of their thoughts in the opposite direction, too late to turn from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love. {GC 543.1}

She uses biblical arguments that represented the Adventist belief as being against the doctrine of universalism/universal restorationism. The following are other statements related to or concluding her thoughts on the cause of this doctrine and its fruit.

Another extreme which Satan has led the people to adopt is to entirely overlook the justice of God, and the threatenings in His word, and to represent Him as being all mercy, **so that not one will perish, but that all, both saint and sinner, will at last be saved in His kingdom.** {BEcho, August 10, 1896 par. 6}

**Satan and his angels have made a special effort to spread the deception and lie first repeated to Eve in Eden. "Thou shalt not surely die."** And as this error has been received by the people, and they have been led to believe that man was immortal, he has led them on to believe that the sinner would live in eternal misery [or somehow in eternal life after a period of misery]. {BEcho, December 20, 1897 par. 2}

The doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul has opened the way for the artful working of Satan through modern Spiritualism; and besides the Romish errors, purgatory, prayers for the dead, invocation of saints, etc., which have sprung from this source, it has led many Protestants to deny the resurrection and the Judgment, and has given rise to the revolting heresy of eternal torment, **and the dangerous delusion of Universalism.** {4SP 235.2}

I want to quote a more hopeful passage from Ellen White to finish this section. In it she states that there will be people in heaven who never have heard the gospel. While it is clear that faith in Christ is necessary to be saved, the Spirit of Christ is able to work on hearts and allow them to do what the law requires even without them knowing a lot of theology.

“Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. **Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish.** Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done

the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

We thank God for working on all men’s hearts, but we must also recognize that in the context of the Great Controversy a systematic and complete understanding of God and the plan of salvation has more persuasive power to reconcile men to their Father. Humans are logical beings, and God has called us, like Paul, to preach great interlinked truth to hearts and minds. Our thoughts, decisions, and actions matter; particularly in response to the Gospel.

## Conclusion

To me it is clear that universalism, with or without a probationary period after death, is untenable with scripture. The Universalist preaches that the sinner will be punished according to his works and then *after* that difficult time will enter Heaven. When the sinner hears this, does that make him feel like he needs a new heart and a radically changed understanding of justice and forgiveness? I don’t think so. Eternal death and eternal life become convoluted with each other. The flesh wonders to itself, “I can still be saved, even if I don’t believe?” I think most carnal hearts would immediately lose any sense of urgency in studying the word of God.

Let us really think about how such a message would affect a carnal man. Pain and sacrifice after the resurrection with no self-denial now vs. no pain and suffering after the resurrection while denying self now... I think most men of the world will think, “I will take my chances with the pain that comes after death, and just have fun now.” Or they may try to overcome now, but on reaching a little difficulty, they’ll think “Oh well, I’ll just let God do the rest of the purifying after I die,” and then relax in their Christian walk. Is that how Paul was?

I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27 ESV)

Some forms of universalism teach that people will be punished in this life. This also does not ring true with our experience in this world. Many wicked people live lavishly without consequences while continually pushing away the guilt of their selfish life. How can we say they have faced judgment in this lifetime, when they have yet to face their creator and know all that Jesus has done for them and how they have hurt Him and other men? This is something that happens in the judgment, when our works are placed before us and we must face them.

I cannot imagine that the disciples of Jesus turned the world upside down with a message to 'Repent, or face pain after death before entering eternal life.' Can such a message cause people to have a deep change of heart and set themselves apart from the world? To make Stephen die for Christ? People were willing to die for Jesus and share Jesus because He was the key to overcome sin. Without that key, we were not going to make it to heaven, because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor 15:50)

There is the idea that God will make things clear to all mankind at the resurrection, and then all men will repent and be reconciled to God. But why doesn't God just do that now? Why wait until then, yet have His word declare that an experience of righteousness is required in this life? This is where faith in God comes in, that He will be just in how He executes the judgment, and that it is we ourselves who will "judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13:46). The purification process is now in this life, and God is doing everything He can to draw us to Him *now*.

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, **now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.** (2 Corinthians 6:2)

We need to take seriously our eternal life *now*, and decide how we live *now* in light of our knowledge of God's plan of salvation. Let us take seriously faith, remembering that faith is the key to eternal life.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:9)

If we let not the good seed grow within us now, changing us and working within us, we risk being eternally lost, stuck outside the gates of New Jerusalem. Our decisions having been made in this life and there is no more God can do at the resurrection at the end.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (Revelation 21:11-15)

Two groups, the righteous "that do His commandments" that enter in to the city (v. 14), and the unrighteous who remain "without" (outside, v. 15) Let us not preach that there is no real distinction between these two groups; let us give the trumpet a clear ring.

# On Universalism

*God is Love, so somehow  
He will bring all men into Eternal Life.*

This is the basic underlying belief of all types of universalism. But is it what the Bible teaches? This book aims to answer this and other questions, such as:

Is there any distinction in what happens to believers and unbelievers at the end of time?

Are there saved and unsaved? What does it mean to be saved or not saved?

How do faith and free will fit into universalism?

What is the opposite of Eternal life?

Will anything be annihilated?

Does overcoming sin matter?

How does universalism relate with preaching the Gospel?

With the Book of Life? With the 2<sup>nd</sup> death?

With being inside and outside of the New Jerusalem?

Does universalism spur a man into action or inaction?

What does John 3:16 mean?