

Is Salvation Guaranteed? What Scripture Teaches about Faith, Works, and Salvation

Gary Michuta

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SCRIPTURE

Matthew 7:12 "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets."

Romans 3:28, "For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law."

HOW SOLA SCRIPTURA AFFECTS HOW PROTESTANTS APPROACH SCRIPTURE

- The Bible is not organized as a catechism.
 - Protestant tradition is passed on through Bible helps and instructions.
 - Theological template is placed upon Scripture so that it may serve for catechesis.
- Theological Reductionism
 - What determines which teaching is most important? (pragmatism)
 - Issues concerning salvation are placed at the forefront and all other issues are sidelined.
 - This is why a Protestant would be more apt to talk about salvation than questions about the Church.

THE CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE AND "TRUMP" VERSES

- "Scripture interprets Scripture"

"All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them" (Westminster Confession, Chapter 1, 7).

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly (Westminster Confession, Chapter 1, 9).

WHAT MAKES ONE VERSE CLEARER THAN ANOTHER?

1 Peter 3:20-21 - who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."

- For Baptists and similar faiths who believe that baptism is nothing more than a symbol or sign that the person has *already been saved through faith*, 1 Peter 3:20-21 is one of the most difficult (unclear) verses it says baptism saves us.

- (Fundamentalist Protestants are persuaded by the number of verses can be brought to bear on an issue, not whether something establishes the point).

TRUMP VERSES

- Most common "trump verses" for the topic of salvation (faith / works):
 - **Titus 3:5-7**, "But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."
 - **John 3:16**, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."
 - **Romans 3:28**, "For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law."
 - **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast."

TRUMP VERSES IN ACTION

EXAMPLE 1 - WHY COUNTER VERSES DO NOT WORK

- CATHOLIC quotes **James 2:24**, "See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone."
- PROTESTANTS* will respond by appealing to a "clearer" verse on the subject. For example, **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith... it is not from works, so no one may boast." Ephesians 2:8-9 TRUMPS James 2:24 so that the latter verse must be re-interpreted to fit the former. Scripture interprets Scripture.

EXAMPLE 2 - WHY DISCUSSIONS ON OTHER DOCTRINES ARE LARGELY INEFFECTIVE

1. The hierarchy of trump verses explains why discussions on other topics, such as the Sacraments or Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist, often fail to make headway.

- a. CATHOLICS appeal to **John 6:53-54** to show the necessity of receiving Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist: "Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.
- b. PROTESTANTS* assume that since receiving the Eucharist (like all the other Sacraments) is *something we do* (i.e., a good work) and trumps verses like **Ephesians 2:8-9** supposedly teaches that justification is by faith alone and not by works then Christ's command to eat his flesh and drink his blood in **John 6:53-54** *must* be speaking about *faith*, not the Sacrament. THEREFORE "eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood" *must* be symbolic language for having faith. **Ephesians 2:8-9** trumps **John 6:53-54**.

"Trump verses" on the topic of salvation (faith and works) in order are:

- (1) Ephesians 2:8-9
- (2) Romans 3:28
- (3) John 3:16
- (4) Titus 3:5 (sometimes Romans 4:2-5).

HOW TO ADDRESS TRUMP VERSES

[IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION: Protestantism covers a wide range of beliefs and practices. There is no one Protestant position for anything. Therefore, when I say "the Protestant position" I mean the position that most of the people you'll encounter in dialogues on this subject will likely hold. I placed an asterisk * to indicate that the view is held only certain Protestants]

General Definition of Terms:

- a. **JUSTIFICATION** - Being made right or acceptable to God.
- b. **GRACE** - "God's undeserved kindness" / participating in God's life and strength
- c. **SANCTIFICATION** - The process of becoming holy (sanctified)
- d. **"WORKS"**
 - i. **PROTESTANT***: Anything we do (good, bad, either commanded by God or not).

- ii. **CATHOLIC:** Good works or good deeds that God's grace motivates, empowers, and will eventually crown. Living in accord with God's command of love.
- iii. **[JEWISH]:** Part of the ceremonial law that demarks or sets apart God's People (the Jews) from those outside (i.e., the gentiles).

EPHESIANS 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast."

- Protestant points for Ephesians 8:8-9
 - We are saved by God's grace (undeserved kindness), which they believe contradicts Catholicism that supposedly teaches that we have to earn God's acceptance.
 - We are saved by faith, which they believe contradicts Catholicism that is sometimes thought to teach that faith is not necessary for salvation.
 - "It is a gift of God, it is not from works" - that is justification is by faith alone apart from anything that we do (i.e., works), which contradicts the Catholic position that we are justified by faith working in love.

JUSTIFICATION: BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER

BEFORE we are made acceptable to God in justification.

"It is furthermore declared that in adults **the beginning of that justification must proceed from the predisposing grace of God through Jesus Christ**, that is, from His vocation, whereby, **without any merits on their part...**" (Trent, Session 6, chapter 5).

"... **[W]e are therefore said to be justified by faith, because faith is the beginning of human salvation**, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and **we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification. For, if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise, as the Apostle says, grace is no more grace.**" (Trent, Session 6, chapter 8)

Canon 1. If anyone says that **man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.** (Trent, Session 6, canon 1).

	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
Catholicism	By grace through faith / not by works		
Protestantism*	By grace through faith alone / not by works		

DURING justification (HOW God makes us acceptable)

"For though no one can be just except he to whom the merits of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ are communicated, yet this takes place in that justification of the sinner, when by the merit of the most holy passion, the charity of God is poured forth by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of those who are justified and inheres in them; **whence man through Jesus Christ, in whom he is engrafted, receives in that justification**, together with the remission of sins, all these infused at the same time, namely, faith, hope and charity. For faith, unless hope and charity be added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of His body" (Trent, Session 6, chapter 7).

"...[T]he single formal cause is the justice of God...by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by Him, are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and **not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just...**"

"In which words is given a brief description of the justification of the sinner, as being **a translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace and of the adoption of the sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Savior**" (Trent, Session 6, Chapter 4).

	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
Catholicism	By grace through faith / not by works	Not only reputed (called) but truly are just (imputed / infused).	
Protestantism*	By grace through faith alone / not by works	Only reputed or called just (imputed).	

AFTER we are made acceptable to God

"For since Christ Jesus Himself, as the head into the members and the vine into the branches, continually infuses strength into those justified, which strength always precedes, accompanies and follows their good works, and without which they could not in any manner be pleasing and meritorious before God ..."(Trent, Session 6, Chapter 16)

	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
Catholicism	By grace through faith / not by works	Not only reputed (called) but truly are just (imputed / infused).	Good works are necessary, but not inevitable. We can sin and if we die unrepentant we can lose our salvation.
Protestantism*	By grace through faith alone / not by works	Only reputed or called just (imputed).	Good works are the inevitable fruit of those who are truly saved. Salvation cannot be lost.

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast. For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them."

Ephesians 2:8-10	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
Vs. 8-9	"For by grace <u>you have been saved</u> through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.		
Vs. 10		For we are <u>his handwork, created in Christ Jesus...</u>	
Vs. 10			<u>...for the good works</u> that God has prepared in advanced, that we should live in him."

Titus 3:5-8, "But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

Titus 3:5-8	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
VS. 5	"But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, <u>not because of any righteous deeds we had done</u> but because of his mercy..."		
Vs. 5-7		<u>...he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we may be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life"</u>	
Vs. 8			"This saying is trustworthy. I want you to insist on these points, <u>that those who have believed in God be careful to devote themselves to good</u>

			<u>works</u> ; these are excellent and beneficial to others.
--	--	--	--

BACK TO JAMES 2:24

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works. 23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called "the friend of God." 24 See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James 2:21-24		AFTER INITIAL JUSTIFICATION
James 2:21		Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? (Genesis 22:9-18)
James 2:22	You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works.	
James 2:23	Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," (Genesis 15:6).	
James 2:24		See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone

IS SALVATION GAURANTEED?

"If we are justified by faith alone, why are we at the Final Judgment judged on the basis of our works?"

- **ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14**, "The last word, when all is heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all; because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities..."
- **PSALM 62:13**, "And you render to each of us according to our deeds."
- **ROMANS 2:6-9**, "[God] who will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness.
- **REVELATION 20:12-13**, "I saw the dead, the great and the lowly, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. Then another scroll was opened, the book of life. The dead were judged according to their deeds, by what was written in the scrolls...All the dead were judged according to their deeds."
- **MATTHEW 12:36**, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak."
- **JUDE 15**, "...to execute judgment on all and to convict everyone for all the godless deeds that they committed and for all the harsh words godless sinners have uttered against him."
- **MATTHEW 25** - The sheep and the goats are separated on the basis of good works (feed the hungry, clothed the naked, care for the ill, visit the imprisoned, etc.).

- **MATTHEW 7:21-27** - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine AND ACTS ON THEM, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and DOES NOT ACT ON THEM, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand." The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall."
- **Galatians 6:7-8**, "Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a person will reap only what he sows, because the one who sows for his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit."
- **2 Corinthians 5:10-11**, " For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive recompense, according to what he did in the body, whether good or evil."
- **1 Peter 1:17**, "Now if you invoke as Father him who judges impartially according to each one's works, conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning,"
- **Matthew 12:36-37**, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will render an account for every careless word they speak. By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

THE PROBLEM:

JUSTIFICATION		FINAL JUDGMENT ON THE BASIS OF...
FAITH ALONE	?	WORK ALONE

COMMON RESPONSE:

Good works are the INEVITABLE RESULT of "true saving faith."

Three points to establish: (1) The person was truly saved, (2) they sin (whether through commission or omission), (3) truly damned.

ARGUMENTS

Adam and Eve

David

1 Samuel 13:14, "...The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and has appointed him commander of his people..."

1 Samuel 16:13, "Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David..."

Psalms 51:11-14 "Turn away your face from my sins; blot out all my guilt. A clean heart create for me, God; renew in me a steadfast spirit.¹³ Do not drive me from your presence, nor take from me your holy spirit.¹⁴ Restore my joy in your salvation; sustain in me a willing spirit.."

St. Paul

1 Corinthians 9:25-27, "Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be **disqualified**."

"disqualified" = Greek, *adokimos*

2 Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, of course, you fail the test (*adokimos*)."

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES (JOHN 15:1-6)

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. 2 He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. 3 You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. 4 Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.

(1) "...every branch **in me**" = "truly saved"

John 17:21, "...so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may *be in us*, that the world may believe that you sent me."

Romans 8:1, "Hence, now there is no condemnation for those who are *in Christ Jesus*."

Romans 12:5, "so we, though many, are one body *in Christ* and individually parts of one another."

1 Corinthians 1:4-5, "I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you *in Christ Jesus* that *in him* you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge,"

2 Corinthians 5:17, "So whoever is *in Christ* is a new creation"

2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God *in him*."

Galatians 3:26, "For through faith you are all children of God *in Christ Jesus*."

Galatians 5:6, "For *in Christ Jesus*, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."

Ephesians 1:7-8, "*In him* we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us..."

>> **Ephesians 2:10**, " For we are his handiwork, created *in Christ Jesus* for the good works..." <<

Philippians 3:8, "...that I may gain Christ and be found *in him*, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ..."

Colossians 3:6-7, "So, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk *in him*, rooted *in him* and built upon him..."

For more Bible studies on CD/DVD/MP3, visit www.GaryMichuta.com.

Colossians 3:9-11, "For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily, 10 *and you share in this fullness in him...* 11 *In him you were also circumcised...with the circumcision of Christ.*

1 John 2:5-6, "But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected *in him*. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: whoever claims to abide *in him* ought to live (just) as he lived."

1 John 3:24, "Those who keep his commandments remain *in him*, and he *in them*, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit that he gave us."

(2) Commit sin (whether commission or omission)

John 15:6, "Anyone who does not remain in me..."

John 15:10, "If you keep my commandments, you will remain (abide) in my love..."

John 15:12-14, "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you."

(3) Truly damned.

John 15:6, "Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned."

COMMON OBJECTIONS

Objection #1 - "John 15 is a parable."

Answer to Objection #1 - Even if it were a parable, its teaching is forthright and easy to understand. Christ is the vine (John 15:1, 5), the branches are all who are "in Christ" (i.e., Christ's disciples) (John 15:2, 4, 5, 6-7). Remaining or abiding "in Christ" means sharing in the life of the vine (Christ)(John 15:4-5). We remain or abide in Christ by keeping his word and his commandment to love (John 15:7, 9-10, 12-14). The meaning of not remaining or abiding in Christ is implied as not remaining in Christ's word and/or not loving one another as Christ loved us. There is no mystery here.

Objection #2 - The vine and the branches are speaking about the church. Some people *are thought* to be "in Christ," but they really are not, as John Calvin wrote:

"Can anyone who is ingrafted into Christ be without fruit? I answer, many are supposed to be *in the vine*, according to the opinion of men, who actually have no root *in the vine*. Thus, in the writings of the prophets, the Lord calls the people of Israel *his vine*, because, by outward profession, they had the name of The Church." (Calvin's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, John 15:6).

Answer to Objection #2 - John 15 is told from God's perspective, not the branches and certainly not from the perspective of outside observers viewing the branches. If Christ says the branches *are* in the vine, they *are* in the vine. What the narrator sets the story. Calvin is trying to insert an element into John 15 that is not there.

Objection #3 - Not "remaining" in the vine does not necessarily imply that they were originally "in" the vine.

Answer to Objection #3 - Yes, it does. You cannot remain seated unless you first sat. You cannot remain standing unless you've already stood. You cannot remain in the vine unless you are already in the vine.

Objection #4 - John 15 is talking about fruit-bearing, not salvation. Scripture uses the image of fire for testing one's good works and purifying the believer. As the late J. Vernon McGee wrote:

"Let me say again that this is talking about our fruit-bearing, the product of our salvation. It is not talking about how we are to be saved. Paul uses another illustration for this same thing..."

[quotes 1 Corinthians 3:11-12, "for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire (itself) will test the quality of each one's work].

"This is talking about the works of the believers, the fruit in the life of a believer. Fire will purify gold and silver and precious stones and draw off the dross. Wood, hay, and stubble will go up in smoke. That is the same as our verse which says the works will be cast into the fire and burned... A branch that is not abiding in Christ "is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This is amplified by 1 Corinthians 3:15: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." He may get to heaven smelling as if he had been bought at a fire sale, but he will not lose his salvation."¹

Answer to Objection #4 - This interpretation is wrong for a number of reasons:

1. Metal is purified by fire, not branches. Scripture uses the image of smelting precious metal to convey this idea (1 Cor. 3:11-12, also Is. 4:4, 6:6-7, Zech. 13:9, Malachi 2:2-3). Branches aren't purified by fire. They're destroyed.
2. The focus is not on fruit-bearing, but on our life in Christ. "I am the true vine...every branch in me....remain in me..." Fruit-bearing is dependent upon our "remaining" in Christ. Those that do not remain, do not bear fruit, and they will be cast off, gathered together, and burned.
3. 1 Corinthians 3:11-12 is very different than John 15. It is not the fruit that is tested by fire in John 15, but it is the branches (i.e., the disciples that do not bear fruit) that are thrown into the fire.
4. All purification or sanctification comes through Christ since "without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). The branches, therefore, cannot be purified by the fire because they had been cut off from the Christ, the vine, their only source of purification.
5. 1 Corinthians 3 isn't the only place in Scripture that uses images found in John 15. Other passages use the very same images for damnation. For example:
 - "withered" (Greek, *xeraino*) is used for the seed that is sown on rocky ground. It grows (showing that the person is truly saved), but it is soon scorched by the sun and withers (Matthew 13:6, Mark 4:6).
 - "gather together" (Greek, *synago*) is used in Matthew 3:12 to speak about the day of judgment when God will "clear his threshing flood and gather (*synago*) his wheat into his barn."

¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee* (Thomas Nelson), 1983, vol. 4, p. 468.

- "burn" (Greek, *katakiao*) is used Matthew 13:38-42 where at the end of the age the angels will collect the weeds that were sown by the devil and burn them (*katakiao*).

Objection #5 - "Jesus was speaking to the Apostles, not us. If they remained in Christ they would bear fruit, but if they didn't (like Judas) they will be damned."

Answer to Objection #5 - There are verses that seem to apply exclusively to the Apostles.

John 15:3, "You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you."

John 15:15-16, "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you."

But the rest of what Christ says in John 15 cannot be restricted to the Apostles alone. For example:

- The Apostles aren't the only ones "in Christ."
- The Apostles aren't the only ones who bear fruit.
- The Apostles aren't the only ones who apart from Christ can do nothing!
- The Apostles aren't the only ones Christ loved.
- The Apostles aren't the only ones who are to "love one another."
- The Apostles aren't the only friends of Christ.
- Nor are they the only ones who can fail to bear fruit, be cut off, and burned

Christ's words apply in a special sense to the Apostles, but they also apply to all Christians. This is confirmed by the passage's use of open-ended, non-exclusive, language:

- "Every branch in me... and every [branch] that does not..." (John 15:2).
- "If anyone does not abide in me..." (John 15:6).

ROMANS AS PROTESTANTS COMMONLY READ IT

REFERENCE	QUOTATION	INTERPRETATION
Romans 2:6-8	"[God]...will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness."	Hypothetically, one could be justified by good works. But Paul is positing an impossible situation because...
Romans 2:13	"For it is not those who hear the law who are just in the sight of God; rather, those who observe the law will be justified."	
Romans 3:10-18	"...'There is no one just, not one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have gone astray; all alike are worthless; there is not one who does good, (there is not) even one.' 'Their throats are open graves; they deceive with their tongues;' 'the venom of asps is on their lips;' 'their mouths are full of bitter cursing.' 'Their feet are quick to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they know not.' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes.'"	<p>....no one can be righteous by what they do. Why? Because all people without exception are unrighteous sinners.</p> <p>(N.B., In other words, Protestants understand this passage to be teaching about Original Sin)</p>
Romans 3:28	"For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law."	"Justification by faith is indeed made very clear, <u>while works are expressly excluded</u> . Hence, in nothing do our adversaries labour more in the present day than in attempts to blend faith with the merits of works. They indeed allow that man is justified by faith; but not by faith alone; yea, they place the efficacy of justification in love, though in words they ascribe it to faith. <u>But Paul affirms in this passage that justification is so gratuitous, that he makes it quite evident, that it can by no means be associated with the merit of works</u> (<i>Calvin's Commentary</i> , Romans 3:28).
Romans 4:1-6	"What then can we say that Abraham found, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² Indeed, if Abraham was justified on the basis of his works, he has reason to boast; but this was not so in the sight of God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." ⁴ A worker's wage is credited not as a gift, but as something due. ⁵ But when one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness."	Abraham was justified by faith alone apart from anything that he did.

ROMANS FROM THE NEW PERSPECTIVE

Reference	Quotation	Interpretation
Romans 2:1-2	"Therefore, you are without excuse, every one of you who passes judgment. For by the standard by which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God on those who do such things is true."	Paul is arguing against the Pharisees (or perhaps Judaizing Christians) who hypocritically pass judgment on the immorality of the gentiles, while they themselves do the very same thing. (cf. Rom. 2:19-23).
Romans 2:3	"Do you suppose, then, you who judge those who engage in such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?"	Paul's opponents believe that they can practice immorality (i.e. violate God's moral law) and escape punishment.
Romans 2:6, 9-11	"[God]...will repay everyone according to his works" "Yes, affliction and distress will come upon every human being who does evil, Jew first and then Greek. But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, Jew first and then Greek. There is no partiality with God."	Paul argues that God shows no partiality <u>in regards to whether one is a Jew or gentile</u> . Everyone (Jew and gentile) will be judged in accord with his works.
Romans 2:25-26	"Circumcision, to be sure, has value if you observe the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Again, if an uncircumcised man keeps the precepts of the law, will he not be considered circumcised?"	It doesn't matter if you keep the "works of the law" (i.e., the ceremonial law, which includes circumcision). What matters is keeping the moral law. (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:19).
Romans 3:1, 9	"What advantage is there then in being a Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?" "Well, then, are we better off? Not entirely, for we have already brought the charge against Jews and Greeks alike that they are all under the domination of sin..."	Simply being a circumcised Jew, although beneficial in some respects, <u>does not justify you from sin</u> (cf. Romans 2:3). An immoral circumcised Jew is just as worthy of condemnation as an immoral gentile.
Romans 3:10-12	"...as it is written: 'There is no one just, not one, there is no one who understands, there is no one who seeks God. All have gone astray; all alike are worthless; there is not one who does good, (there is not) even one.'" (quoting Psalm 14:1-3 or 53:1-3).	Paul appeals to Psalm 14:1-3 (or Psalm 53:1-3) to show that <u>there are circumcised Jews who are condemned by God for immorality</u> and circumcised Jews who are righteous. Circumcision doesn't mean anything.

PSALM 14

Reference	Quotation	Interpretation
Psalm 14:1-3	"Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' Their deeds are loathsome and corrupt; not one does what is right. ² The LORD looks down from heaven upon the human race, To see if even one is wise, if even one seeks God. ³ All have gone astray; all alike are perverse. Not one does what is right, not even one."	At first, the Psalm appears to be condemning every individual who ever lived as always and only being unrighteous.
Psalm 14:4-7	"Will these evildoers never learn? They devour my people as they devour bread; they do not call upon the LORD. They have good reason, then, to fear; <u>God is with the company of the just</u> . They would crush the hopes of the poor, but the poor have the LORD as their refuge."	Among the circumcised there are wicked Jews worthy of condemnation (the "fools" who say "there is no God" and does loathsome and corrupt deeds) and righteous Jews (i.e., "my people" "the company of the Just (righteous).") If the "works of the law" justified, all of the circumcised would be righteous.

ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BY FAITH APART FROM THE WORKS OF THE LAW

Reference	Quotation	Interpretation
Romans 4:1-2	"What then can we say that Abraham found, our ancestor according to the flesh? Indeed, if Abraham was justified on the basis of his works, he has reason to boast; but this was not so in the sight of God."	If anyone was justified by circumcision, it would be Abraham, the one who received the covenant of circumcision. But did it make him righteous before God?
Romans 4:3	"For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."	Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 where Abraham is explicitly said to be righteous two chapters before he received the covenant of circumcision.
Romans 4:4-5	"A worker's wage is credited not as a gift, but as something due. But when one does not work, yet believes in the one who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness."	Abraham (in Genesis 15:6) was uncircumcised (and he lived before the ceremonial law was established by Moses), so he was essentially a gentile. Yet, he was justified by his faith apart from the works of the law.
Romans 4:6-8	[appeals to David]	

Romans 4:9-10	"Does this blessedness apply only to the circumcised, or to the uncircumcised as well? Now we assert that <u>"faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness."</u> Under what circumstances was it credited? Was he circumcised or not? <u>He was not circumcised, but uncircumcised.</u>	Verifies our interpretation. It was Abraham's obedient faith (Rom. 1:5, 16:26), which culminates in the offering Isaac (Gen. 22, James 2:20-24), that justified him, not his circumcision or obedience to the ceremonial law.
---------------	---	---

FAITH VS. GOOD WORKS OR FAITH VS. FAITH?

	Quotation	Interpretation
Romans 3:27-29	"What occasion is there then for boasting? It is ruled out. On what principle, that of works? No, rather on the principle of faith. ²⁸ <u>For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.</u> ²⁹ Does God belong to Jews alone? Does he not belong to Gentiles, too? Yes, also to Gentiles"	The Pharisees (Judaizers) cannot boast of the works of the law (ceremonial law), which distinguishes them from the gentiles because all people (Jews and gentiles) are justified by faith. Otherwise, God would belong to the Jews only since they alone had the covenant of circumcision and the other ceremonial laws.

Paul places the "works of the law" in opposition to "good works."

Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."

1 Corinthians 7:19, "Circumcision means nothing, and uncircumcision means nothing; what matters is keeping God's commandments."

If good works do not contradict faith, what is it about the "works of the law" that contradict or even nullify faith?

Galatians 5:2, "...if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you."

Galatians 5:4 "You are separated from Christ, you who are trying to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace"

Paul had Timothy circumcised in Acts 16:3. Is Christ no longer of benefit for Timothy?

St. Thomas Aquinas explains:

"All ceremonies are professions of faith, in which the interior worship of God consists. Now man can make profession of his inward faith, by deeds as well as by words: and in either profession, if he make a false declaration, he sins mortally. Now, though our faith in Christ is the same as that of the fathers of old; yet, since they came before Christ, whereas we come after Him, the same faith is expressed in different words, by us and by them. For by them was it said: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," where the verbs are in the future tense: whereas we express the same by means of verbs in the past tense, and say that she "conceived and bore." In like manner the ceremonies of the Old Law betokened Christ as having yet to be born and to suffer: whereas our sacraments signify Him as already born and having suffered. Consequently, just as it would be a mortal sin now for anyone, in making a profession of faith, to say that Christ is yet to be born, which the fathers of old said devoutly and truthfully; so too it would be a mortal sin now to observe

those ceremonies which the fathers of old fulfilled with devotion and fidelity. Such is the teaching Augustine (Contra Faust. xix, 16), who says: "It is no longer promised that He shall be born, shall suffer and rise again, truths of which their sacraments were a kind of image: but it is declared that He is already born, has suffered and risen again; of which our sacraments, in which Christians share, are the actual representation." (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II, Q. 103 Art. 4).

GOOD WORKS VS. DISOBEDIENCE

Faith and Obedience

Romans 1:5, "Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles."

Romans 16:26, "but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith..."

"Faith is a personal act—the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself..." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 166).

Trump Verse

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

Faith versus Disobedience

John 3:36, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him."

Hebrews 3:18-19, "And to whom did he "swear that they should not enter into his rest," if not to those who were disobedient? And we see that they could not enter for lack of faith."

Hebrews 11:4, "...By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice greater than Cain's. Through this he was attested to be righteous, God bearing witness to his gifts, and through this, though dead, he still speaks."

Hebrews 11:7, "By faith Noah, warned about what was not yet seen, with reverence built an ark for the salvation of his household. Through this he condemned the world and inherited the righteousness that comes through faith."

Hebrews 11:8, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go."

Hebrews 11:17-18, "By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name."

James 2:21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar?"

ETERNAL SECURITY

Main obstacle for apologetics on eternal security: Faith in Christ is replaced with *faith in my faith* that I'm eternal secure. To doubt eternal security is the same as to doubt Christ. (Scripture never says, "If you believe that you are eternally secure, you'll be saved." It says, "If you believe, you'll be saved.").

Trump Verses for Eternal Security

John 10:27-29, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand."

Those who appeal to this verse for Eternal Security read this passage as if it says:

"My sheep *heard* my voice; I *knew* them, and they *followed* me. I *gave* them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

As if once you accepted Jesus, you possess eternal life and will never lose it. But the verbs in verse 27 are present and they have a durative sense, so that the passage really says:

"My sheep *keep on hearing* my voice; I *keep on knowing* them, and they *keep on following* me. I *keep on giving* them eternal life, and they will never perish."

As long as we keep on hearing and following Christ, he will keep on knowing and giving us eternal life and we will never perish AND no one can take us out of the Father's hand. However, if you cease to hear and follow Christ, he will cease to know and give you eternal life and you will perish since you have turned from God in a serious way. "For God 'does not forsake those who have once been justified by His grace, unless He be first forsaken by them'"(Trent, Session 6, 11, quoting Augustine, *Nature and Grace*, 26.29).

Romans 8:29-30, "For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified."

God calls some to grace and some to glory. Everyone called to glory has been called to grace, but not everyone who is called to grace is called to glory. Romans 8:29-30 refers to those called to glory.

Romans 8:35, 37-39, "What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?... No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nothing can separated us from the love of Christ, except ourselves. Paul does not list sins (i.e., murder, stealing, adultery) but afflictions (anguish, distress, persecution, etc.). Christ has transformed suffering into that which unites us ever more closely to Christ.

John 6:37, 39, 44, "Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me... And this is the will of the one who sent me, that I should not lose anything of what he gave me, but that I should raise it (on) the last day. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him, and I will raise him on the last day."

First, Christ does not reject anyone given to him by the Father. This is not eternal security.

Second, not losing any that the Father gave Christ can be understood as regarding predestination to glory (see comments on Romans 8:29-30). In this context, it is primarily meant to reassure Christ's followers that the abandonment of the disciples at the end of the Bread of Life discourse (John 6:66) and ultimately Judas' betrayal (John 6:70-71) was foreknown and on contrary to the will of the Father.

- John 6:40 says everyone who "sees the Son" and "believes in him" either applies only to the original audience (who physically saw Jesus).
- Christ himself explains the meaning of his words in John 6:37 and 44 as applying to the loss of Judas:

"'But there are some of you who do not believe.' Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. And he said, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father."

Christ essentially restates John 6:37-44 in John 17:12 and applies it specifically to the apostles:

"When I was with them I protected them in your name that you gave me, and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of destruction, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled."