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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

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OF LOVE

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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

2nd 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 2nd 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 the 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? sSalvation 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.

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.

Just Have Jesus, any Doctrine will do? (Christian Universalism?)

This was originally written as an article for FatherOfLove.info

Here at Father of Love we believe that understanding doctrine is an important part of understanding Jesus and becoming reconciled with God. Jesus is the truth, and that means that understanding gospel truth accurately is a crucial to link us to Christ to receive righteousness by faith. We believe in study. But with study comes difference of opinion, especially since much of what Christianity teaches we have inherited from our ancestors who were influenced by paganism (in terms of how they interpreted the Bible). As we have studied the Bible in more detail, we have come to conclusions that are different than the traditions we have been taught, and this can be painful to point out to people who are attached to those traditions. When we try to share and encourage others to study, the reaction many have is "I know Jesus already" and "all this study is basically unnecessary". Is that true?

Our dear sister Azadeh had some questions in response to the recent booklet *On Universalism – Is faith in this life required to enter into eternal life?* regarding a form of universalism that exists among Christians: that believing in Jesus will get you to Heaven, regardless of any other consideration.

This is getting to the heart of the great controversy – the relationship between the law and the gospel, justification and sanctification, and the general confusion that exists in Christianity. We see it said "accept Jesus as your personal saviour and you will be saved". And this can be true for some people, and we remember the thief on the cross who was never baptized yet was assured of paradise by Jesus. But it seems too many just assume that a basic acknowledgement of Jesus as their Lord means they go to heaven, a kind of contract between them and God, and there is little heart searching, repentance, or change of life. How do we make sense of this?

Azadeh had an interesting point about 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. In this text it talks about the work done on a building, which if done according to Christ will survive, but if not it will be burned. Azadeh had originally thought that which would be burned would be false doctrines, but that the persons would be saved at the end.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; **Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.**

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)

But Sister White connects the building material in these verses to people! It is about the Bible teacher and his students - the Bible teacher can be saved, but the students would be lost:

"The figure which Paul uses of the *temple erected on the foundation stone is to represent the work of God's servants to the end of time. **To all who are building for God***, the apostle addresses words of encouragement and warning: "If any man's work abide, which he have built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." The Christian teacher who faithfully presents the word of truth, leading his converts to holiness of heart and life, is bringing precious material to the foundation; and in the kingdom of God he will be honored as a wise builder. He who neglects to teach the truth in its purity, will gather converts who are not holy in heart and life. **He is bringing material that will not stand the test.** In the day of God he will suffer loss. **Though it is possible that those who have spent the best of life in teaching error may, by repentance and faith, be saved at last, yet their work is lost.** Their life has failed of the good results that might have been secured. **Souls have gone down to ruin, who, by a faithful presentation of the truth, might have been saved.** Says the apostle, 'Let every man take heed how he buildeth.'" *SKETCHES FROM THE LIFE OF PAUL, PAGE 160*

So from this quote, in 1Cor 3:11-15, the "he" that is saved is the Christian teacher, and that only AFTER repentance, if he realises that what he has taught others was error and he repents. But the lower quality materials are all people that get actually "burned up" or lost!

So then there is another aspect here, which also needs to be cleared up. Has our Father really left the eternal destiny of souls into the hands of "some few" teachers/pastors? After all, our Saviour says: "woe to you false teachers, who will not enter heaven yourself, and also hinder others from entering in" (paraphrasing Matt 23:13). How are we to understand the agency and choice of those that were misled (or ALLOWED themselves to be misled) by false

teachers? Doesn't the Bible teach that everyone shall die because of his/her own sin? Is our Saviour taking away personal responsibility for being saved? These passages need to be harmonised.

***** Response *****

The same reason that pushes people to universalism - the anxiety caused by the people we know and love being lost - is pushing the type of behavior that Azadeh has noticed among regular non-universalist Christians. If not *all* are saved, then at least anyone who has had some sort of belief in Jesus Christ will be saved. And while it is relatively clear to show that the Bible says that not all men will be saved, it does say that anyone who calls upon the name of Jesus will be saved:

Romans 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

So where does that place Church standards, the law, morality, and Christian growth? It is the number one argument against Christianity by Buddhist, Muslims, Hindus, and other non-Christians: *You sin however you want and then you believe in Jesus and you go to heaven, isn't that too easy?*

Of course, this is a critique of the Christian who hasn't really changed; he lives the same and just uses a belief in Christianity to suppress his feeling of guilt. But even for those who do change and repent of certain things, how much of that is necessary to be saved? How important is character transformation? What is the place of doctrine in salvation? This question has troubled Christianity since its inception, and Adventism even more so because of its emphasis on living up to the requirements of the law.

Men in the past have (incorrectly) understood that professing Christ means we are free to sin. The Apostolic church, represented as the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2, had this issue with the Nicolaitans – “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the **deeds** of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (Revelation 2:6); and later the church at Pergamos (323-538 AD) allowed members to “hold the **doctrine** of the Nicolaitans, which thing I [God] hate” (Revelation 2:15).

The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives, that adultery and fornication were things indifferent, that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; and mixed several pagan rites with the Christian ceremonies. (Adam Clarke Revelation 2:6)

It is interesting to see that it starts off as the “deeds of the Nicolaitans” and then becomes “the doctrine of the Nicolaitans” – meaning that the acts come first, and then the theological justification for those acts come later. How accurately this process represents human nature! Man wants to sin, and then he rationalizes it!

There was the idea among Gnostics that anything related to the physical world was evil (laid out in the book *Showing Respect to Colossians*). So they avoided the Lord’s Supper, separated themselves from the world, and heavily encouraged asceticism – fasting, celibacy, etc. We see the influence of this in the history of Christianity through the hermit monks and their seeing the body as totally evil. Its extreme form is self-flagellation, hitting oneself as a form of punishment or as a means of bringing the flesh into discipline.

The inverse of this was that Jesus redeems us, and thus we can do anything in the body and it doesn’t matter – Jesus has purified us. This is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, where adultery and fornication didn’t make any difference because we were to be given spiritual bodies anyways, or that belief in Christ caused sins of the body to have no effect on them, as their minds were pure. An example of this is the *alumbrados* (the illuminated), a mystical sect of Christianity existing in Spain in the 15th-16th century:

The alumbrados held that the human soul can reach such a degree of perfection that it can even in the present life contemplate the essence of God and comprehend the mystery of the Trinity. All external worship, they declared, is superfluous, the reception of the sacraments useless, and ***sin impossible in this state of complete union with God***. *Persons in this state of impeccability could indulge their sexual desires and commit other sinful acts freely without staining their souls.* (from '*Alumbrados*' Wikipedia)

This group was lightly investigated by the Spanish Inquisition. Ignatius of Loyola, before founding the Jesuit Order, was even accused of sympathizing with the group, though not punished.

From this history we can see that sin finds ways to justify itself, even if the person believes in Christ. This is the great deception that can come upon the Christian:

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)

Little children, **let no one deceive you.** He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. (1 John 3:7-8)

The law is a witness that we are righteous. It convicts us of sin (or The Holy Spirit uses the law to convict us of sin), so we go to Christ; and when we are walking with God, the law teaches us more of how God is. Every Christian admits that murder, adultery, etc. is wrong, so the question usually ends up coming to the Sabbath. The righteousness of the 4th Commandment is questioned; the motivation of the believer who wants to keep the Sabbath is questioned. A Christian who avoids sexual images is not called a legalist, but the man who wants to keep the Sabbath is. Why is this? It has to do with our rationalization of sin, and our putting ourself in the judgment seat and judging God and His law; deciding for ourselves which laws we want to follow and which laws we don't want to follow, as well as how the law is to be interpreted. (see book [As You Judge](#)).

The epitome of this is the Catholic Church changing the 10 Commandments, removing the commandment to not make images/idols and splitting the 10th commandment into two commandments to still have ten commandments. Catholics would say they don't "worship" idols, they "adore" them, and that there is a difference. But they, like all of us, should consider whether they have been deceived.

This mind that sets itself as a judge of the law, that looks at the law with skepticism and diminishes the claims of the law, is not the mind of Christ. Christ never doubted God's law, for He knew the spirit of that law. Christ showed us the high righteousness of a life lived in perfect accordance to the law:

The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make *it* honourable. (Isaiah 42:21)

The Lord's prohibitions and requirements are in perfect consistency with His moral law, the great law of righteousness, which is a matter of character rather than of form. The heart work will lead to the righteous actions. The law of Jehovah is exceedingly broad. Jesus in His lessons on the Mount plainly declared to His disciples that this holy law of God may be violated in even the thoughts and feelings and desires, as well as in the word and deed. (Letter 51, 1888)

When the broad claims of the law are made clear to us - that even wrong *thoughts* are sinful - there comes great anxiety to the soul of the Christian. "Who then can be saved?" This conviction of sin, and the belief that Jesus can cure it through His word and through His teaching, is what propels the Christian forward in search of more truth, more grace, more doctrine – "the heart work will lead to the righteous actions." But when the law is ignored, despised, misunderstood, misused – then there is no drive to study further, to move forward in light, to grow in grace. There is only human defined growth that is common to all men; they get older and feel they are more wise – but not in accordance to the wisdom of God. We get the dry credal orthodox Christianity that we see today which, like aspirin, kills the spiritual conviction that would cause Christians to press with more urgency on the upward way.

But there are people out there who are not comfortable in the religious experience that they are born into. Though told to rest in the particular creed they inherited from their environment, their souls remain uneasy, and they want more. They drift from church to church, becoming non-denominational, and realize they are sinners. They read passages like Jesus saying that even lusting is sin and cannot find peace. It is men like this that need more light, purer doctrine, and greater truth. It is for men like this that we dig for treasure in God's word and put our energy into sharing the great systematic message we have been given. For men like this, truth that is seen as worthless by the Pharisee is received by them as life-giving.

What happens if we leave such men to read the law under a false understanding of God's character? We get men like the Atlanta Massage killer, who was so upset with himself and the world for his inability to get over his sex addiction that he went and killed those whom he had hypersexualized, whom he could not stop lusting after.

According to the police, ***Long described his actions as being the result of a sex addiction that conflicted with his religious beliefs.*** Long had been a patron of two of the massage parlors, and saw them as sources of sexual temptation. Police records show 10 people were arrested at the two Atlanta massage businesses on prostitution charges, but none since 2013. Almost all arrests came in undercover stings where a police officer paid for a massage. All three targeted spas appeared on an online guide to brothels. ***Long claims to have initially thought about killing himself but instead decided to target the businesses to "help" others dealing with sex addiction.*** According to the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department, ***Long wanted to "eliminate the temptation" by targeting spas.*** (["2021 Atlanta spa shootings" wikipedia](#))

The harsh, performance driven mind of this man reflect the character and government of the God He worshipped. What is the cure? To tell him he is a foolish legalist? Light is needed to drive away the darkness he is in! Does that light exist in the common sense of man where doctrine isn't important? No, it is in Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life; and that way is strait and narrow.

Is Adventism cured of a wrong understanding of the Law?

Adventism, because it has the Sabbath, can look at Sunday Christians and feel that they are doing better than them – but anyone who is honest about their Adventist experience and is observing Adventism around them can see that the same underlying problem regarding the law is there, just it isn't manifested around Sunday. Adventism still has man's problem of man setting himself up as a judge of God's law; if it didn't have that problem, Jesus already would have come. In many places it is manifested in questioning God's laws regarding diet. Others it is in demeaning His annual gatherings (an ironic one, seeing we berate Sunday Christians for ignoring the timing of when to worship, yet we will ignore the timing to worship regarding annual gatherings). Often it is in subtler ways, like in rejecting new light. In all of this, we are rejecting the Spirit of Christ, though we may do it in ignorance.

Modern men ask: Were men like Martin Luther sinners because they broke the 4th commandment? This is where ignorance comes up. God understands where men are at and what they are capable of understanding. It doesn't excuse sin, but Martin Luther was coming out of deep darkness (Being less aware, he was less guilty).

Originally the Adventist church was ignorant to some extent of their rejection of the feasts, but when 1888 came and they rejected the message given then, they became much more guilty. The more the Father-Son message is preached and rejected, the more hardened we become, and the more the rejection is not done from ignorance, but from willful hatred of truth (Christ). Our rationalizations of why we don't accept certain things becomes more and more set, until we think that our thoughts are God's thoughts.

The psychology of why humans are like this is becoming more and more clear as God has given us more insight in this field of study. Men don't want to learn more about God because, consciously or unconsciously, they realize that would mean more change in their life. We all have friends who want to be able to plead ignorance if they have to face God, and think they can do that by avoiding hearing truth.

Additionally, to actually correct someone else in their Christian walk means understanding very clearly our own Christian walk, which is something we generally aren't confident in. Correcting an Adventist or a Feast-keeper or a Character of God believer isn't comfortable for most people, because it requires getting inside that belief and understanding it first. It means being confident and certain in your own Christian walk, which most people aren't, regardless of all the talk of assurance of salvation. If we were so confident in our relationship with Jesus, we wouldn't feel so threatened by doctrines different to ours; we wouldn't feel the need to cling so determinedly to our creed and to our group.

I believe that, just as the Gnostics went two ways – extreme asceticism and extreme liberty to sin – so do modern Christians. Either they don't really care about doctrine and Jesus is enough; or they are fiercely creedal and want other Christians to believe the way they do . What makes some go one way and others the other way? I think it has to do with the culture and worldview you grow up with, and with your relationship and understanding of power. In a world run by secularism and anything goes, where ideas are allowed to be free and aren't seen as that dangerous, most people will tend to not care about doctrine. But as people start to realize the seriousness of the situation we are in, that ideas ARE affecting the world and how we live and where we are headed, there will be more fighting over doctrine and using politics and power to uphold your own position.

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. DA 763.2

The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion. DA 763.3

As the truth becomes more clear in our character and in our communication and in our fellowship, the harder it will be to reject it. Rationalizations of false traditions will become more rigid and dogmatic. **The meekness and humility of Christians that allows for others to think for themselves will steadily be replaced by a desperate, domineering Christianity that sees force and submission as necessary to save this world (rather than truth and love through freedom of conscience).** Misplaced urgency and passion on the part of those who misunderstand God's character will cause them to persecute those who disagree with their beliefs.

At the heart of this problem is the need to perform for God to be considered worthy of God's love. The consequence of this is that we set *ourselves* up as a judge of whether we are worthy (not whether God says we are worthy), and then we judge others of whether they are worthy. The way to escape our fear of judgment is to come into the light, but instead the world will do this by killing those who are convicting them of sin.

Finally, let us look at how Ellen White understands 1 Corinthians 3:14-15 –

To all who are building for God, the apostle addresses words of encouragement and warning: "If any man's work abide, which he have built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." ***The Christian teacher who faithfully presents the word of truth***, leading his converts to holiness of heart and life, is bringing precious material to the foundation; and in the kingdom of God he will be honored as a wise builder. He who neglects to teach the truth in its purity, will gather converts who are not holy in heart and life. He is bringing material that will not stand the test. In the day of God he will suffer loss. Though it is possible that those who have spent the best of life in teaching error may, by repentance and faith, be saved at last, yet their work is lost. Their life has failed of the good results that might have been secured. Souls have gone down to ruin, who, by a faithful presentation of the truth, might have been saved. Says the apostle,

“Let every man take heed how he buildeth.” SKETCHES FROM THE
LIFE OF PAUL, PAGE 160

“To all who are building for God...” Is not God calling all Christians to build for Him? It doesn’t mean they need to be pastors or doctrinal teachers, but all Christians are called to do the work of saving other souls. Part of that work is studying God’s word and God’s will to know best HOW to save souls. If we have this love for others in our hearts, this will to serve others at the core of our lives, then we can be saved even if we have taught some error.

It is the Christian who only cares about his own salvation, who cares little for serving others and doesn’t see himself as “building for God,” who will be lost because of the false teachings of those he follows. Is this God’s fault? God has told man to join in the work of saving and warning the world for *the worker’s own good*, and when we accept Jesus for mainly selfish reasons and don’t live up to the truth or carry the cross or preach the message, then we risk being lost and misled. When we DO take up the responsibility of being a teacher, to be a priest (which we are called to be 1 Peter 2:9), then we consequently draw nearer to God and spend more time studying.

I can even use myself as an example. When I am just thinking of my own salvation, I don’t study the Bible so much, neither do I pray much. But when I am working for God, when I feel a responsibility to answer questions, I study much more, and consequently I am BLESSED much more because I spend more time with God and His word and thinking of heavenly things. When I teach error, in time I may see that it is not bearing fruit, and then I learn from it and repent from it. In this sense the text in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is encouraging.

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (Phillipians
2:12)

Of course, not all are called to be pastors of the flock. We do believe in the Divine Pattern though, of every person being a teacher in their sphere of influence. Even a high schooler, who is to learn from his teachers, is called to

be a co-teacher and a positive influence on the younger students in his school. So are older siblings to seek out wisdom so as to guide their younger siblings.

Azadeh, in asking sincere questions as she has and drawing on her experience, shows that she is taking responsibility for herself and for those that she may have influence with. This is something we all should learn from, and strive to do, asking for wisdom from God, who “gives to all men liberally” (James 1:5) and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14)

Many men subconsciously are preparing the responses they will give to God for their own failings on the judgment day. They will blame the lies they were taught, their lack of education, their responsibilities they had to the world. The Holy Spirit has convicted them that something in their walk is not right, and rather than praying and seeking for answers, they comfort themselves that if they are wrong, it is the fault of their teachers, and God will excuse them because at least they still believe in Jesus. This is a deception, and in the resurrection they will be shown that they have not believed in Jesus, because when He came to them to call them to Him and to live in them more fully, they have rejected Him. Is this the fault of their teachers? No, it is the fault of those who followed the teachers, who misunderstood what role the teacher was to play for them in their Christian walk.

All this I speak as a warning to myself too. God help me that I don't rationalize my sins, nor get atonement that I am "better" and "more knowledgeable" than others. Let us keep growing every day, asking God, like the disciples, to increase our faith. (Luke 17:5)

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 2nd 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?