

Appendix A: Greek Issues

Calvinists Admit Continuity Is Intended Meaning

Calvinists have always cited the Book of John to argue a one-time coming to Jesus guarantees salvation. Jesus will never thereafter cast you out. This is cited in support of their doctrine of perseverance of the saints. However, now even leading Calvinists concede the KJV mistranslated the verb for *come* as well as *believe* in the Book of John.

One of the leading advocates of Calvinist predestination is Dr. James White. He is the author of *Drawn by the Father: A Summary of John 6:35-45* (1999). He explains that the present tense for “come” in John 6:37 as well as “believe,” “see” and “hear” in other verses in John’s Gospel (such as John 3:16) signifies in Greek *continuing* action. He says:

Throughout this passage an important truth is presented that again might be ***missed by many English translations***. When Jesus describes the one who *comes* to him and who *believes* in him (3:16, 5:24, 6:35, 37, 40, 47, etc.), he uses the present tense to describe this coming, believing, or, in other passages, hearing or seeing. The ***present tense refers to a continuous, on-going action***. The Greek ***contrasts this kind of action against the aorist tense***, which is a point action, ***a single action in time that is not on-going***.... The wonderful promises that are provided by Christ are ***not for those who do not truly and continuously believe***. The faith that saves is a living faith, a faith that always looks to Christ as Lord and Savior. (White, *id.*, at 10-11)(emphasis added).

Please note Dr. White realizes “many English translations” erroneously translate Jesus’ words in John’s Gospel. (In fact, in English, only the *Young’s Literal* translates the verbs in John’s Gospel correctly.) Please also note that Dr. White concedes that a correct translation of Jesus’ words in John’s Gospel would mean a “***continuous ongoing*** action” is necessary to be saved. Jesus’ true meaning is that if you “don’t truly and ***continuously*** believe” you will not be saved. Jesus’ true words are salvation depends on “***always*** looking to Christ as our Lord and Savior.” So when Jesus tells us if we “believe for a while” but later sin—“fall into temptation”—that we are deemed “withered” (*i.e.*, dead) (Luke 8:13), we must regard obedience to God/Jesus as necessary to salvation. *Cf.* John 3:36, 8:51 (ASV).

Dr. White’s recognition of Jesus’ true meaning shows even Calvinists are beginning to acknowledge the Greek present active tense radically changes the picture. When will we change our doctrines? When will we say that a faith that endures saves (Matt. 10:22) while those who “continue to believe for a while” but in time of temptation sin and “fall away” are not saved? (Luke 8:13.) When will Jesus’ words have such priority that we no longer listen to any tradition which might teach otherwise?

Experts Explain How the Book of John's Meaning Changes On Salvation Doctrine

The dramatic impact of a correct translation of the Greek present participle active in John's Gospel is explained by an expert on Greek, Professor Dale Moody. He was a pastor and then for forty years Professor of Christian Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In *The Word of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), Professor Moody at page 357 explains what John 10:27-29 really means in the original Greek. In doing so, Professor Moody explains how a proper translation of the Greek present participles overturns the popular notion that a one-time coming to Christ eternally secures your salvation.

John 10:28 is frequently used as a security blanket by those who ignore many of the New Testament warnings about going back or falling away, but a literal translation of John 10:27-28... hardly needs explanation... 'My sheep **keep on hearing my voice**, and I **keep on knowing them**, and **they keep on following me**: and I **keep on giving them eternal life**, and **they shall never perish**, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.' Some read the passage as if it says: 'My sheep **heard my voice**, and I knew them, and **they followed me**, and I gave to them eternal life.' [But] **[t]he verbs are present linear, indicating continuous action by the sheep** and by the Shepherd, **not the punctiliar fallacy** of the past tense.

Those who should be secure in verses 28-29 are those sheep in verse 27 who *keep on listening* and *keep on following*. You are not secure based upon one-time having followed Jesus or one-time having listened to Jesus.

Now we can understand that John 3:16 is promising those who "keep on trusting" in Jesus *should* be saved. The meaning of John 3:16 is therefore likewise reversed when its grammar is properly reflected. This verse is talking about salvation by *endurance* in trust, not salvation by a one-time faith.

Likewise consider John 5:24. In our KJV this verse reads, "whoever *hears* my word and *believes* him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." In English, this means that if you once heard the word and just once believed it, you have crossed into the saved list. Right? But in the original Greek, the verbs for *hears* and *believes* are both *present participles active*. (See *Interlinear Scripture Analyzer*.) (Also, the "will not be condemned" is in the present middle passive deponent, not the future tense.) So what does this verse really say? It really should be translated: "whoever *keeps listening* to my word and *continues to trust* Him who sent me *keeps on having* eternal life and is not coming into judgment; he has stepped out of death into life." (See *Interlinear Scripture Analyzer*.)

When we translate accurately John 10:27-29 and John 5:24, there is a dramatic reversal of meaning from what we all assumed Jesus was saying in John's Gospel. Yet it is a truth that was always there. It was simply obscured for hundreds of years by its mistranslation in the KJV in 1611. (The Latin Vulgate which predominated prior to the KJV conveys the correct Greek meaning. Latin verb tenses have an identical correspondence to Greek verbs in their function.) It was also hidden by all

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other modern English translations that were not willing or courageous enough to repair the KJV error. Young's Literal Translation is a notable exception, translating the verb tenses accurately.

Grammar experts below will explain in depth what Mr. White conceded. They will concur unanimously that what Professor Moody taught is the only proper understanding of the Greek involved. This issue deserves serious unbiased consideration in light of the significant impact it has on doctrine.

Grammar Pros on Greek Present Tense

What is the present tense in Greek? One Greek grammar text explains the present tense and its meaning as follows:

The present tense is basically linear or durative, ongoing in its kind of action. The durative notion may be expressed graphically by an unbroken line (—), since the action is simply *continuous*. This is known as the progressive present. Refinements of this general rule will be encountered; however, the fundamental distinction will not be negated.¹

Dana and Mantey in their *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* likewise explain the Greek present tense has a primary meaning of action in progress. Dana and Mantey explain the present progressive (active) tense thusly:

The fundamental significance of the **present** tense is the idea of **progress**. It is the linear tense... the progressive force of the present tense should **always** be considered **as primary**, especially with reference to the potential moods, which in the nature of the case do not need any 'present **punctiliar**' tense...

There are three varieties of the present tense in which its fundamental idea of progress is especially patent. Under the **Progressive Present**...[t]his use is manifestly nearest the root idea of the tense. It signifies action in progress, or state of **persistence**....

Rydberg likewise explains:

Present. The present tense denotes an action in the present time with **continuing** aspect.²

Rydberg is saying the present tense in Greek signifies a continuing sense.

Within the Greek present tense are two distinct active forms. These two are the *present indicative active* and the *present participle active*. There is a slight difference as to the latter which is always to be translated with a continuing sense. The *Syntax Reference Guide* (Quick Verse 6.0) provides this further explanation, starting first with the *present indicative*:

1. James Hewitt, *New Testament Greek* (Hedrickson Publishers: 1986) at 13.

2. See "Jeffrey Rydberg Cox Overview of Greek Syntax," *WH Greek New Testament* (Tuft's University on-line).

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Present. Definition-Present tense in the *indicative* mood represents current action, as opposed to past or future action. In moods *other than the indicative mood*, it refers **only** to **continuous or repeated** action.

Thus, this means the *present participle active* (as in John 3:16) falls in the category of a mood “other than the indicative.” It thus signifies “**only...continuous or repeated** action.”

Contrast the Aorist Tense

What makes it clear that the Greek present active tense is continuous is that in Greek grammar we have the aorist tense.

The aorist tense signifies a punctiliar meaning. That is, it indicates a single point in time. Actually, it is such a singular point in time that it is without regard to past, present or future.

Some explain the aorist incorrectly as always translated into English with a past tense. Rather, to repeat, the aorist indicates a verb activity is one time and completed. It does not mean simply a past action. Such descriptions of the aorist miss the point that Greeks did not think so much in terms of past and present, like we do. They thought more in terms of continuous or one-time events.

For example, when Jesus says in Matthew 10:22 that he who has kept on enduring to the end shall be *saved*, the word for *saved* is the aorist future of *sozo*. (*Word Studies of the New Testament*.) Jesus means that he who kept on enduring to the end shall be saved (*aorist future*) enjoys this in a completed one-time sense in the future. The completion of your salvation is aorist *punctiliar* (single point-in-time) in the future.

So you can have the aorist tense even in the future. It is not always a past event. It is, instead, a completed one-time event.

Thus, for Greeks, their thinking was always “is this continuous, linear, and durative,” or, rather, is this “one-time, punctiliar, and not enduring”?

There is total consensus among non-Christian professionals on the proper manner of translating these Greek tenses. The *Vroma Project* on-line is an association of classic language scholars. They are un-attached to any Christian viewpoint. They are sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. *Vroma* explains:

You know that the *present indicative* indicates *continuous action* in the present time and the future indicative indicates future time. (It is important to remember that what we call ‘present’ represents *continuous action* in Greek. In the indicative form only it represents *continuous action* in the present time.)

The verb *epai-deuse* is an example of the aorist. The Greek *aorist* indicates punctual action. In the *indicative only*, the aorist represents punctual action in the past.³

3. <http://www.vroma.org/~abarker/tschapelevtwelve.html> (last visited 1-2006).

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Latin is similar. This helps explain why salvation doctrine did not take our modern twists and turns until the KJV in 1611 changed John's Gospel via translation. The rules in Latin are:

Verbs in non-indicative moods use the present to describe actions that are *continuous* or repeated; they use the *aorist* to describe actions that are *single* or finite.⁴

Thus, none of our ancient forefathers for fifteen centuries who relied upon the Latin translation ever heard the familiar idea of salvation by a one-time faith that we read every day in John 3:16. No wonder their doctrine differed.

Precision Available To Say Whether A One-Time Faith Saves

The presence of the Greek aorist tense is deadly to those who defend translating John 3:16 to imply faith is a one-time event. If John 3:16 had this meaning, the underlying verb should have been in the Greek *aorist* instead of the *present participle active*. The very existence of the Greek aorist is dispositive proof that if a one-time faith saves, the aorist tense would have been used to convey such meaning in John 3:16. Its absence in John 3:16 thus prohibits using the equivalent of the aorist in English—*believes*. A correct translation should have used the English Continuous Present (“is believing”) or a closer-to-original translation of “keeps on believing/trusting.” The KJV mistranslated John 3:16. This has had a devastatingly misleading effect on our perception of what is entailed in salvation.

The unvarnished truth is that John's Gospel uses the Greek *present participle active* in John 3:16. It does not use the aorist for *believes*.

Now compare this with the aorist active participle when used in a salvation passage. In Matthew 10:22, this aorist conveys a completed condition of endurance as what saves. Jesus says: “he who endured (aorist active participle) to the end shall be saved.” A single-momentary faith is not promised salvation here. Only a lifetime of endurance is promised salvation. Thus, we see the Gospel writers knew how to use the aorist in relation to salvation in such a manner compatible with the *true* translation of John 3:16.

Accordingly, every way you slice it, salvation is based on enduring to the end and not on a one time believing (trusting) in Jesus. A one time faith that has failed never can save and never will. The idea that a one-time faith means you are saved eternally is based on a fiction born from English defective translation.

The NIV Half-Step

English simple present tense, as Stanley unwittingly proves in *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?*, is a leaking tense. Stanley says *believes* means in English a one-time belief. Stanley proves this from many examples of the usage of the English simple present. (Stanley, *Eternal Security*, *supra*, at 95). For example, Stanley points out that if I say “I live in Atlanta” that may be true today but it does not have to continue. It can become a one-time event and exist only in the past. So

4. See <http://www.latin-uk-online.com/heuix/aspect.html> (last visited 2005).

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English simple present has a leaking meaning of a one-time event. Stanley did not realize the English-meaning corresponds to the Greek aorist present tense. “I live at this moment in Atlanta” in Greek aorist present can be translated into English as “I live in Atlanta.” Therefore, even as Stanley unwittingly admits, English simple present can convey the Greek aorist meaning.

English also has a tense known as the English Continuous Present. This is rendered “I am living” in Atlanta. So this emphasizes the action is ongoing and continuing. This is approximately what the meaning is for a Greek present active tense.

The Greek present active tense means in fact the action will continue and progress in the same direction. This is true unless an adverb signals it is to last for “a while” or end at a certain time.

So when translating the Greek present active tense, translation experts often prefer adding “keeps on” or “continue to” in front of the English verb root. Thus, in the NIV, in 1 John 3:5 we find the two uses of the Greek present active tense of *to sin* translated once as “keep on sinning” and another time as “continue to sin.”

In fact, the NIV’s frequent approach was to translate the Greek present active tenses using “keeps on” or “continues to” with the verb root plus *ing*. However, if the correct translation of the verb would affect the doctrines of faith alone or of eternal security, the NIV reverted to the KJV erroneous use of English simple present tense to translate Greek present active tenses.

For example, in 1 John 3:5, as just mentioned, the NIV twice correctly renders the present active (indicative) for the verb *to sin* by adding “keep on” once and “continues to” on the second occasion.

While the NIV made this correction over seventeen times to present active tenses, the KJV consistently did not correctly translate the Greek active (continuous) tenses. The KJV routinely erred by using English simple present tense. These seventeen corrected verses in the NIV include Matt. 24:42 (*paim* “keep watch” v. KJV “Watch”);⁵ Matt. 25:13 (*paim* “Keep watch” v. KJV “watch”); John 15:20 (*paim* “keep in mind” v. KJV “know” v. literally “keep on understanding”); Acts 18:9 (*paim* “keep on speaking” v. KJV “speak”); Romans 7:19 (*païnd* “I keep on doing” v. KJV “I do”); Romans 12:11 (*ppa* “keep your spiritual fervor” v. KJV “fervent” v. literally “continuing to be fervent”); Galatians 5:15 (*païnd* “keep on biting” v. KJV “bite”); Galatians 5:25 (*pasubj* “keep in step” v. KJV “walk” v. literally “to Spirit also should keep on observing”); 1 Tim. 3:9 (*ppa* “they must keep hold” v. KJV “holding” v. literally “continuing to hold”); 2 Tim. 2:14 (*paim* “keep reminding” v. KJV “put in remembrance”); Heb. 10:26 (*ppa* “if we keep on sinning” v. KJV “if we sin”).

In six other places, the NIV uses “continue” to render the Greek active tenses. For example, Galatians 2:10 (*pasubj* “we should continue to remember” v. KJV “we should remember”); Col. 2:6 (*païmp* “continue to live” v. KJV “walk”); Heb. 6:10 (*ppa* “you continue to help” v. KJV “do minister”); 3 John 1:3 (*païnd* “you continue to walk” v. KJV “thou walkest”). See also, 1 John 3:5 (*païnd* “keep on sinning” and “continue to sin” v. KJV “sin” and “sin”).

5. The abbreviations are: *pap* = present participle active; *païnd* = present active indicative; *païmp* = present active imperative; and *pasubj* = present active subjunctive.

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All these verses, however, have one thing in common. Their correction by the NIV editors did not upset the Pauline doctrine of a one-time faith saves you. You can readily see this inconsistency. In fact, what makes it obvious is that four times above you can see that the same *present participle active* used in John 3:16 is translated in a continuous tense, but not in John 3:16. What explains this different treatment? We already saw that Greek does not mandate this difference. Rather, ancient Greek mandates there should be no difference in John 3:16 than in those four instances where the NIV rendered it with a *continuous* sense. Wherever we find a present participle active, it should be rendered with a continuous meaning. This leaves doctrinal considerations as the most likely culprit to explain the difference.

Whatever their explanation, it is a fact the NIV translators never fixed the present active tenses in any verse that would flip it from Pauline-salvation formulas to Jesus' message of an enduring faith that saves. Thus, the NIV leaves alone the pivotal verse for so many: John 3:16. This verse really says all those who "keep on believing/trusting" should not perish but *should* have eternal life.⁶ The NIV left it "who believes." In English, *believes* can mean a one-time faith, as Charles Stanley abundantly proved in *Eternal Security, supra*, at 95. The NIV version thereby left intact doctrine that had become encrusted in reliance on the KJV defective translation. The simple fact is the Greeks had the aorist tense if a one-time faith was what Jesus intended to endorse as a predicate for what *should* make you saved. Yet any notion that a one-time faith is the true predicate is emphatically erased by the use in John 3:16 of the present participle active of *believes*, meaning "he who keeps on believing" (or "trusting") should be saved.

6. It is *should* have eternal life, as the KJV has it, not *shall* as the NIV renders it. See Footnote 14 on page 381.

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