

# PAPER ON FAITH

by Karl Kemp

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This paper was originally published in May 1997. It was produced using a word processor that didn't allow me to use italics, footnotes etc. Now (July 2006) I'm scanning this paper into my computer to put on the internet. I am modifying the paper a little at this time. Now (October 2011) I am improving the paper a little, as I prepare some excerpts from this paper to put on the Christian Article sites I have been using for a few months now: Christian Articles Resource; Christian Article Bank; Christian Articles, and FaithWriters.

I used the New American Standard Bible, 1997 edition, unless otherwise noted. I frequently make comments in brackets in the middle of quotations [ ] or [ ] to make them more obvious.

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Sometimes I will use the abbreviations cf. and e.g. in this paper. The first means “compare” and the second means “for example.”

INTRODUCTION. I have several reasons for wanting to write this paper. For one thing, in my last paper (*Once Saved, Always Saved?*), we discussed the influential view of Augustine, which was followed by the Calvinists, and others. He taught that man is so fallen, so totally depraved, that he cannot respond to, or cooperate with, God’s saving grace; God must do everything, including giving faith to the ones He chooses (the elect). In that paper I mentioned that it seems clear to me

that the Bible clearly shows that faith is something we do (as we respond to and cooperate with God's saving grace in Christ), but that it was beyond the scope of that paper to discuss this topic. In this present paper, we'll deal extensively with this important topic.

I feel it's important for me to say that I don't want to be seen as attacking other Christians. I sincerely respect, for example, a great number of Christian leaders who hold the Augustinian/Calvinistic viewpoint, and I have learned a lot from them. However, I believe it's very important for us to make every effort to find the balanced truth of what God says in His Word. What we believe will very much affect our Christian walk, and we pay a price for every error. The primary loyalty of each one of us must be to God Himself, and to the truth (His truth). We desperately need the balanced truth. Most of us have plenty of room to balance out what we believe. I'm making every effort to present the balanced truth in this paper (and in all my teaching). I'm trying to be fair to viewpoints I disagree with, including fairly treating the verses used to back up those viewpoints.

The noun *faith* and the companion verb *believe* are certainly two of the most important words used in the New Testament. These often-used words are all the more important for us to understand because, probably more than any other words, they show our role in God's salvation plan. We certainly need to understand our role if we are going to fulfill it. However, there is much confusion in the Body of Christ regarding these words. I wish the confusion were limited to these key words. There is also confusion regarding other key words like grace, righteousness, holiness, redemption, and justification.

The Greek noun *pistis* is used 243 times in the New Testament. In the NASB it is translated faith 238 times and faithfulness 3 times. The Greek verb *pisteuo*, which was derived from *pistis*, is also used 243 times in the New Testament. In the NASB it is translated as follows: believe (118), believed (73), believers (3), believes (29), believing (10), entrust (1), entrusted (6), entrusting (1), has faith (1). *Pistis* is also translated pledge (1), proof (1) and *pisteuo* do (1). (These numbers were taken from the "Greek Dictionary" in the back of the *NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. A Concordance like this is one of the most important Bible study tools available.) In general there is no difference in meaning between saying "have faith in God/Christ/the gospel" and saying "believe in God/Christ/the gospel." For one thing, different writers of the New Testament sometimes prefer one word over another. The Gospel of John, for example, uses the verb *believe* (in some form) 98 times, but it does not use the noun *faith* one time.

The best place to learn the meaning of Bible words (like faith/believe) is the Bible itself (using a Concordance), studying the words in their Biblical contexts. In this paper we'll look at more than a hundred verses that use faith/believe, including quite a few verses that are (from my point of view) often misinterpreted. Sometimes I'll mention the wrong interpretation, but often I'll just give what I consider to be the correct interpretation. This study will not be limited to the meaning of faith/believe; we will be discussing the overall meaning of some very important Bible passages. (All the passages use the words faith/believe.) For many years most of my teaching has been verse-by-verse teaching of books of the Bible, or sometimes just Bible passages, and I want to get this teaching down on paper. Frequently I'll refer the reader to discussions of Bible passages contained in my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* or in my book

*Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

More on the Question Whether Saving Faith Is Just a Gift of God. It really is important to find the balanced truth regarding what the Bible says regarding this question. There is much confusion in the Body of Christ. At one extreme there are people waiting (sometimes even passively waiting) for God to give them saving faith. We are responsible before God to respond to His grace with repentance and faith (which includes making it a top priority to find out what He says in His Word, especially regarding the gospel of new-covenant salvation). We must always be seeking for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. Faith includes trusting God and submitting our will to Him, having a desire to do His will. (See on John 5:40; 7:17.) To not submit to the gospel in faith is regarded as disobedience to God. (See on Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8.) And it is to make God a liar (1 John 5:10-12). Faith in Christ/the gospel includes having a desire to become/to be righteous before God (in accordance with what He requires of us in His Word). (See on John 3:19-21; 2 Thess. 2:10-12. In these verses we are informed that the reason [it is, at least, a big part of the reason] that people don't submit to Christ/the gospel is that they love/take pleasure in sin and they don't want to change.) On the need for us to press on in faith to the end of the race, including the fact that this doesn't just happen automatically, see, e.g., on Rom. 11:19-23; 1 Thess. 3:5-10. I'll have more to say regarding these issues as we continue in the Introduction and throughout this paper.

At another extreme there are people boasting in their faith. Saving faith (faith that results in salvation) is nothing for us to boast about any more than a drowning man could boast in himself for taking hold of a life preserver instead of drowning. No one who understands faith (whether it is saving faith, faith for holiness, faith for healing, faith for miracles, etc.) will boast in himself. When we submit to God and His saving gospel by faith, we glorify Him; however, to the extent we do not submit to Him and doubt His Word, we rob Him of glory. Having faith in God and His Word in our hearts, or doubting God and His Word in our hearts are things we do. But we do not have faith in God and His Word independent of His grace, and He must always receive all the glory.

For some background on the Augustinian/Calvinistic viewpoint, see *Once Saved, Always Saved?* pages 20-24 and the Appendix of that paper. In his earlier days Augustine believed that man is able to believe in response to God's call in the gospel. But in his later view, which was influenced in part by Romans chapter 9, he taught that faith is a work of God wrought in the elect. (The two preceding sentences were derived from *The History of Doctrines* by Reinhold Seeburg, Vol. 1 [Baker, 1977], page 339.)

As we discussed in *Once Saved, Always Saved?* Augustine in his later view said that man is so fallen that he has no capacity to cooperate with God's grace or to have faith and that if we did have any capacity to cooperate with God's grace or to have faith then we would have something to boast about in ourselves and God would not get the full glory for our salvation, since it would not be totally of grace. However, the apostle Paul, for example, did not teach that our appropriating God's saving grace by faith somehow detracted from the fact that we are saved 100 percent by the grace of God in Christ (see Rom. 4:16, for

example). We do not earn salvation to any extent by receiving God's grace in Christ by faith. Rather we appropriate His grace through faith.

I'm not an expert on Augustine, and I don't want to be overly critical, but I do want to mention two other areas where he changed his viewpoint in later years with (from my point of view) very negative results. The results were so significant because Augustine was so influential. The topic I have been the most interested in for the past thirty years (now it's forty-five years) is holiness and victory over sin. It became obvious very early in my Christian walk and studies that the interpretation of Romans chapter 7 is of crucial significance. (I won't get into much detail here, but see the discussion of Romans 7 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, starting on page 104 and see my paper titled, "The Interpretation of Romans Chapter 7 and Righteousness and Holiness.") The wrong interpretation of Romans 7 (which has been widespread since the days of Augustine) tends to have enough power, in itself, to render faith for victory over sin essentially impossible, no matter how many other passages teach victory over sin, and there are many.

In his earlier years Augustine held the almost unanimous viewpoint (of the Christian church up to that time) that Rom. 7:14-25 wasn't speaking of a Christian. But in his later years, Augustine presented the viewpoint that it was speaking of a Christian. However, his new viewpoint included a very important qualification (a qualification that few seem to be aware of), but this qualification has typically been abandoned by those who have adopted his new viewpoint. His important qualification was this: If the person spoken of in Romans 7 is to be understood of Paul as a Christian, it speaks of him having sinful thoughts and desires, not of him actually sinning. This new viewpoint wasn't original with Augustine; he mentioned that he learned it from others. The only pre-Augustine writers that I am aware of who taught the later viewpoint of Augustine are Methodius (AD 260-312); Epiphanius (about AD 315-403); and Gregory of Nazianzus [about AD 329-390]. Significantly, they all included the important qualification.

Another topic where Augustine changed his viewpoint in his later years dealt with eschatology. In his earlier years Augustine held the pre-millennial viewpoint, which was the dominant viewpoint in the early church, and I'm convinced is the correct viewpoint. In his later years Augustine abandoned the pre-millennial viewpoint. This also turned out to be very significant because of his extensive influence. I'll quote from J. W. Walvoord (pages 47, 48 of *The Millennial Kingdom* [Zondervan, 1959]): "It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Augustine in the history of theology. Not only did his thinking crystallize the theology which preceded him, but to a large extent he laid the foundations for both Roman Catholic and Protestant doctrine. ...

The importance of Augustine to the history of amillennialism [meaning no millennium] is derived from two reasons. First there are no acceptable exponents of amillennialism before Augustine. ... Augustine is, then, the first theologian of solid influence who adopted amillennialism.

The second reason for the importance of Augustinian amillennialism is that his viewpoint became the prevailing doctrine of the Roman Church, and it was adopted with variations by most of the Protestant Reformers along with many

other teachings of Augustine. The writings of Augustine, in fact, occasioned the shelving of premillennialism by most of the organized church.”

Augustine’s later viewpoint (regarding mankind being so totally fallen that God must do everything, including giving us faith) was followed by John Calvin and the Calvinists (and others). You can learn a lot from Augustine and the Calvinists, but it seems clear to me they miss the Scriptural balance here. *When you go to the Bible to see how the words faith/believe are used, you find a multitude of examples (easily a hundred verses) where the context shows that faith is something man does (in response to, and in cooperation with, God’s grace).* Quite a few pages of this paper are devoted to a discussion of many of these verses which show, quite clearly I believe, that faith is something we do (but not something we do independent of the grace of God). See the section titled “Some Passages that Help Show that Saving Faith Is Our Part.” I should also mention that many other verses discussed in this paper that are not included in this section are applicable to this topic, including verses where people are commended for faith and/or receive blessings because of their faith, and verses where people are rebuked for their unbelief/doubting. Another section is titled “Some Verses that Have Been Used to Try to Show that God Just Gives Us Saving Faith.” Although these verses will help bring some balance to the picture – thank God for the balanced truth! – none of these verses comes close to saying that God just gives us saving faith.

We desperately need the balanced truth. If we understand faith in a way that gives man some glory, instead of giving it all to God, we’re missing the balanced truth. Faith appropriates (with empty hands) the salvation that God has made available to us at a very high cost to Himself. Faith isn’t a work of man; it doesn’t earn salvation in any sense. (I have heard Christians speak as if they earned/deserved the things they had received from God through faith. The more we truly understand, and walk in, Bible faith, the more we will be humble and thankful before God. There’s no room for pride, arrogance, or presumption.) And it’s very clear that we couldn’t have saving faith if God didn’t do His part first, and continuously.

God took the initiative. He sent His Son to die for us and raised Him from the dead; He kept the devil from devouring us; He kept the gospel alive on the earth and called us as individuals to Himself by the gospel; furthermore, there is a convicting, revealing, and drawing work of God. Our faith in Christ/the gospel is dependent on God’s grace, and He must receive all the glory. But, again, this is very different from saying that God gives us saving faith. The fact that we must respond to, and cooperate with, God’s saving grace doesn’t detract from the fact that our salvation is entirely of God’s grace, or rob God of any glory. On the other hand, we do deny God the glory He should receive when we fail to understand and to act in accordance with His Word by His grace through faith.

Although the Augustinian/Calvinistic viewpoint is the primary source of the idea that God just gives us saving faith, there are many others who don’t hold the Augustinian/Calvinistic viewpoint who speak of God giving us saving faith. However, they frequently don’t mean very much by their assertions. They say things like God gives us faith by giving us the gospel. ((There is no doubt that we couldn’t have faith in the gospel if God didn’t give us the gospel, but giving us

the gospel doesn't begin to equate with giving us faith. We still have to submit to the gospel in faith after hearing it. Many hear the gospel and reject it. [See, for example, on Rom. 10:16-18.] It is also true that we must continue to press on in faith [by God's enabling grace] to the end of the race.)) Those who say that God gives us saving faith typically appeal to a few verses like Eph. 2:8 and Rom. 12:3. In my opinion their understanding of these verses is clearly wrong. These verses are both discussed, in their contexts, in the Appendix of this paper. See the Table of Contents.

More on the Meaning of Faith/Believe. First I should say that when a word is used hundreds of times in different contexts and by different writers (as is true with faith/believe), you will find the word (almost any word) used with some breadth of meaning. The apostle Paul, for example, uses the word *faith* somewhat differently than James, but (once you understand what they are saying) they do not contradict one another. (See on James 2:14-26 in this paper.) And Paul uses the word faith more than one way, depending on the context. Each word must be studied in its context before its meaning can be adequately discerned. Most people are not aware just how much the context in which words are used affects the meaning of those words.

Faith is an attitude of the heart where we put God first (we love Him as required by the first and foremost commandment); we trust Him; we believe (have faith in) what He says; and we obey Him. (Putting God first involves where we spend our time, our energy, our talents, our money, etc. Regarding the fact that faith/believing includes obedience to Christ and the gospel, cf., e.g., John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"; and see on Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8.) However, and especially in the new covenant, when we speak of obeying God in our daily lives, we must emphasize that we are enabled to obey through His saving work and by His grace/Spirit. By faith we respond to, and cooperate with, God's grace/Spirit.

By faith we stop rebelling against God and His divine order, and we humbly submit ourselves (our hearts; our entire being, spirit, soul, and body) to Him. We submit to Him as our Creator, our Savior, and our Lord. We begin to live in line with the fact that the God of the Bible really is God. We were created with the capacity for, and the need to continuously manifest, faith in God. Unbelief, along with pride, is at the root of sin and rebellion. By faith we stop acting as if God were non-existent, or just irrelevant and a liar, and we submit to Him and His Word. By faith we make God and His Word (especially the gospel) top priority. We must know the truth; we must speak the truth; we must pray in line with the truth; we must live the truth. Our goal must be to bring ourselves/our lives into divine order—God's will must be done! If we're not careful, we'll be trying to use faith to bring our will to pass. We must make it a top priority to learn, and to submit to, God's will for our lives.

Faith is of the heart. We are responsible for the condition of our heart. For one thing, what we were doing yesterday (and especially as related to the things of God) has helped establish the condition of our heart today. The good news is that we can get our heart fixed up by beginning to respond to God and His Word, especially the gospel. (See, e.g., Luke 8:4-18 on the Parable of the Sower.) God,



by His grace/Spirit enables us to be strong in faith and faithfulness (cf. Gal. 5:22; Eph. 3:16, 17).

Faith isn't a work, but true, saving faith cannot help but work (doing righteousness/the works of God, which includes walking in love) by God's grace/Spirit. (See on Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:10 [in the Appendix]; and James 2:14-26.) But didn't the apostle Paul teach that it's faith not works? He did, but he would be the first to agree that we must have the works that come with being a new creation in Christ Jesus (as the first two references just cited confirm). What Paul was against was works without faith in Christ (as was the case with most of his countrymen); he was against bringing the ceremonial works of the old covenant into the new covenant (as was the case with the Judaizers); against works of the flesh being done for the glory of man; and against works being done trying to earn what God had already freely given in Christ.

Our faith must have its proper object, namely God/Christ/the Word of God (especially the gospel). Our faith cannot be in man, in our faith, or in anything else unworthy of ultimate trust. Some Christians have gotten into serious error by disconnecting faith from its proper object: One danger (and some Christians have done this) is that of tapping into occult, demonic powers instead of the power associated with God's kingdom. This, of course, will always work for ultimate evil, not good. God demands that we make Him and His Word top priority in our hearts, manifesting an undivided loyalty. Doubting God and His Word manifests a divided heart. (See on James 1:5-8.) Many Christians don't seem to realize how important it is for us to reject doubt in our hearts. Having thoughts of doubt in the head doesn't mean that we have doubted in our hearts. Thoughts in the head can come from many sources. We must, of course, resist doubt in our heads, but it is much more important to keep it out of our hearts.

We have every reason to have faith in God and His Word (the Bible); they are totally trustworthy and worthy of our faith. The more we know the truth about God the easier it is to have faith in Him. But Satan and this world (Satan is the god of this world [2 Cor. 4:4]) have as a top priority to attack the character of God and His Word before mankind; this started in the Garden of Eden. Satan and his hosts are committed to the task of trying to keep us from faith, or to get us out of faith. They use such things as lies and half-truths, and temptations to doubt, discouragement, and fear (that is, to fear other persons or things instead of God). They are always trying to get us to sin, to keep us in bondage to sin, and to keep us feeling guilty. We must make walking in God's truth and His righteousness and holiness a top priority, and we must be quick to repent and ask for forgiveness if we should sin. They also try to keep us busy doing the things of this world, so there is no time left for God and the things of God. We must keep our eyes fixed on God in faith. By faith we can see the unseen. (See on 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1-40.)

The fact that we may be in trials and hard places doesn't mean that we're out of the will of God. We don't have to panic, doubt, get discouraged, etc. We can trust God and rest in Him. He will guide us and bring us through every trial. However, if our sin is the cause of our trial/problem, the only answer is for us to repent and begin to do what we must do (by God's grace). Standing in faith is not the appropriate response when repentance is required.

I would like to quote the last paragraph from the article on faith, by Leon Morris, in the *New Bible Dictionary*, Second Edition (Inter-Varsity Press, 1982, page 368): “Faith is clearly one of the most important concepts in the whole NT. Everywhere it is required and its importance insisted upon. Faith means abandoning all trust in one’s own resources. Faith means casting oneself unreservedly on the mercy of God. Faith means laying hold on the promises of God in Christ, relying entirely on the finished work of Christ for salvation, and on the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God for daily strength. Faith implies complete reliance on God and full obedience to God.”

What do we receive by faith? Literally everything we need for this life and the life to come. According to God’s Word, it has all been provided for us in Christ Jesus by God’s grace. To illustrate: We are justified by faith (e.g., Gal. 3:8); we are saved by faith (e.g., Eph. 2:8); we receive the Spirit by faith (Gal. 3:2); our hearts are cleansed by faith (Acts 15:9); we become sons of God by faith (Gal. 3:26); we receive, and walk in, the righteousness of God by faith (e.g., Phil. 3:9) [Having sought first for God’s kingdom and His righteousness in faith, we can be assured that the things we need for our daily lives, like food and clothing, will be provided by God – Matt. 6:33.]; we are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18); we live by faith (Gal. 2:20); we walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7); we preserve our souls by faith (Heb. 10:39); we overcome the world by faith (1 John 5:4); we please God by faith (Heb. 11:6); we glorify God by faith (Rom. 4:20); we gain God’s approval by faith (Heb. 11:2, 39); we are healed by faith (e.g., Mark 5:34); we move the mountains that need to be moved and receive the things we need from God by faith (e.g., Mark 11:22-24); and we receive the things promised for this age and the age to come (especially referring to full salvation now and eternal glory in the age to come) by faith (e.g., Heb. 6:12). (Each of the verses listed here actually uses the word faith. Most of the verses listed are discussed in this paper.)

It is very clear in the OT and the NT that God wants to be the source of everything His people need. If we didn’t look to God for these things, where would we look? To the world? To the god of this world? To other religions? To man, including ourselves? Creation was set up that man be submitted to, and dependent on God. We are to know Him, to look to Him for all things, to trust Him, to be humble and thankful before Him, to obey Him, to worship Him, Him and Him alone. (Based on the fuller NT revelation, by God I mean God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.)

Everything we need has been provided by God’s grace in Christ Jesus, but we need some wisdom regarding which things are more important. I’ve often been amazed to hear Christians speaking of faith for things like healing and financial blessings while hardly mentioning (if mentioning at all) our need to receive the much-more-important things like holiness and victory over sin by faith. I suppose some assume that the sin problem has already been solved, but this cannot be assumed in our day. A lack of holiness in our lives can greatly limit God’s ability to bless us in areas like healing and finances, and the consequences of willingly living in sin (and not making it a top priority to change/be changed) could be much worse than a loss of blessings for this age.

Essentially every aspect of Christianity is dependent on our faith, and our faith is dependent on knowing (accurately knowing) the Word of God. (I’m not talking about the need for a high I.Q. and a doctor’s degree in Biblical studies. The

basics of Christianity aren't that complicated. I've often said, and I still believe it's true, that if you just heard the apostle Paul for a few hours, as he presented the basics of the gospel, you could know enough to live a successful Christian life. However, we must continue to learn of, and grow in, the things of God throughout our Christian life.) Our faith cannot rise above our understanding of God's will, which we learn from His Word. For example, we can't have faith for holiness, and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in this area, until we clearly see that this is part of God's salvation plan and is provided, and required, in Christ Jesus.

This certainly underscores the importance we must place on coming to, and then rightly dividing, the Word of God. The Holy Spirit will, of course, help us understand God's Word, but He can't help us much if we don't cooperate with Him by making this a top priority, and by committing ourselves to really want to know and to live in line with the truth. If we don't make the truth top priority, we probably won't have much of it. I'm often amazed at the lack of zeal to study, and rightly divide, God's Word that I see among some Christians. They must not understand the awesome importance of knowing the truth of the gospel, God's glorious plan of salvation, the pearl of great price. Many think they adequately understand the basics of the gospel when they don't.

One major problem in the Body of Christ is that many Christians don't know the basics of the gospel (speaking of things like knowing we can, and must, be holy by God's sufficient grace through faith). But even if we know the truth, it doesn't just automatically follow that we will believe/have faith in the truth; we still can doubt the truth, or parts of the truth. It is important to know that we can, and we must, resist doubting the basics of the gospel in our hearts. If we have faith in the Word of God, it will be manifested in our acting on/living in line with the truth. (Many have substituted mental assent to the truths of God's Word for faith in the heart. They haven't really taken the Word into their hearts or committed themselves to God and His Word. Mental assent doesn't enable us to rise above the flesh; it doesn't enable us to receive and cooperate with God's grace/Spirit.) Then again, just because we have faith in the truth now doesn't mean that we couldn't begin to doubt the truth later if we aren't careful to walk close to God, keeping the right priorities.

We can't manifest faith, or live the Christian life, by striving in the flesh. In fact, striving in the flesh is a sure recipe for defeat. We are called to rest (Thanks be to God!); God is carrying the load. By faith we rise above the limitations of the flesh, putting ourselves and all our cares in the hands of God (cf. 1 Peter 5:7). At the same time, there is a fight to faith (see on 1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:10-20); but we're not striving in the flesh. The Word of God and the Spirit of God enable us to rise above the flesh. We must find and cling to the truth (especially the truth of the gospel) and resist doubt (and discouragement), and we must live in line with the gospel (by the grace/Spirit of God). The victory certainly isn't automatic. We must walk in faith on a continuous, persistent basis. Faith isn't just a momentary (one-shot) decision to follow Christ; it must be a lifelong (eternal) commitment.

We certainly don't get faith by being under condemnation; condemnation hinders faith in God. (See on 1 John 3:16-23 in this paper.) If we have missed it in any area, we must repent, receive God's forgiveness, and begin to act in accordance with God's Word by His sufficient grace. Even if there is an area in

our lives where we haven't achieved the full victory yet, God knows our heart; He knows if we are making His will top priority.

All quotations in this paper are taken from the NASB, 1997 edition, except as noted.

May God's will be accomplished and His people be edified through this paper!  
I'll close this Introduction by quoting Prov. 3:5-7:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
And do not lean on your own understanding.  
(6) In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He will make your paths straight.  
(7) Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.”

### **SOME PASSAGES THAT HELP SHOW SAVING FAITH IS OUR PART**

We can learn a lot about faith from these passages, and we can learn a lot about God's plan of salvation.

**Genesis 15:6. Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD [Yahweh]; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.** Compare Deut. 24:13; Psalm 106:31; Rom. 4:3, 20-22; and Gal. 3:6. Genesis 15:1-5 show that Abraham was believing God regarding His promise of future blessings. This promise ultimately culminated in salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the seed of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:16). In believing this promise (and other closely related promises), Abraham was believing the gospel in an early form. Of course it is true that Abraham, who is “the father of all who believe” (Rom. 4:12-17; cf. Gal. 3:7), could not have believed God if He hadn't taken the initiative and revealed Himself to Abraham and made promises to Abraham, but still it seems clear that believing (having faith) is something that Abraham did. His believing God did not merit salvation, but it made him receptive to salvation. And God commended/rewarded Abraham for his faith, but He often rebuked/chastened/judged others for their unbelief, as the following passages will demonstrate.

**Numbers 14:11. And the LORD [Yahweh] said to Moses, “How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?”**

**Deuteronomy 9:23, 24. And when the LORD [Yahweh] sent you from Kadesh-Barnea, saying, “Go up and possess the land which I have given to you,” then you rebelled against the command of the LORD [Yahweh] your God; you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice. (24) You have been rebellious against the LORD [Yahweh] from the day I knew you.**

**2 Kings 17:7-18, especially verses 12-17. And they served idols, concerning which the LORD [Yahweh] had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.”**

**(13) Yet the LORD [Yahweh] warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.”**

**(14) However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD [Yahweh] their God. (15) And they rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD [Yahweh] had commanded them not to do like them. (16) And they forsook all the commandments of the LORD [Yahweh] their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. (17) Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire [as sacrifices to a pagan god], and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD [Yahweh], provoking Him.**

**Psalm 78:21, 22. Therefore the LORD [Yahweh] heard and was full of wrath, And a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also mounted against Israel; (22) Because they did not believe in God, And did not trust in His salvation.**

**Psalm 106:24, 25. Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe in His word [This is speaking of the “land” of Canaan, which God had promised to give to His people. But Israel rebelled at Kadesh-Barnea and did not believe (and trust) God to fulfill His promise. They had their eyes, so to speak, on the giants and other opponents who dwelled in the land instead of on their God, who was much greater than all opposition. See Numbers chapters 13, 14.], (25) But grumbled in their tents; They did not listen to the voice of the LORD.**

**Mark 16:14-16. And afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. (15) And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. (16) He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”**

Water baptism, when rightly viewed, is not a work. Rather it is the most appropriate (Biblical) occasion for us to begin to appropriate by faith the benefits of Christ’s atoning death. He died in our place, bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties. At water baptism we put off our sins (e.g., Acts 2:38; 22:16), and we become united to the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., Gal. 3:27) and die to the old man (e.g., Rom. 6:2-5; Col. 2:12). I realize that there are several different views regarding water baptism in the Body of Christ, and I’m not suggesting, for example, that sins could not be put off apart from water baptism. God has been very generous with His people, and He has often blessed us even when we were not fully lined up with His Word. However, it is very important for each of us to make it top priority to line up with His Word in every area.

**Luke 7:50. And He [Jesus] said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you;**

go in peace.”

**John 1:10-13. He was in the world** [Jesus Christ was in the world from the time that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14).], **and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.** [The world (mankind worldwide) should have known Him; however, because of rebellion, spiritual death, and unbelief, they did not know Him. John continues with this theme in the next verse.] **(11) He came to His own** [The Lord Jesus came to His own at His first coming. All things ever created (including every person/being ever created) were created by/through Him, the eternal Son of God (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:16). I believe “His own” refers to mankind worldwide. (Many limit “His own” to Israel.) The Greek helps confirm this viewpoint in that the Greek is neuter plural, viewing mankind as part of that which had been created by/through Him (and *for Him*, Col. 1:16), spoken of earlier in the chapter.], **and those who were His own** [though they were created by Him and owed Him everything] **did not receive Him.** [They did not submit to Him in faith, but they rejected Him. However, as the next verse shows, not all rejected Him.] **(12) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right** [authority] **to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name** [To believe in His name includes believing in (and submitting to) Him and all that is revealed concerning Him], **(13) who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.** We become children of God by being born...of God. This speaks of the all-important new birth that comes to all who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (e.g., John 3:3-8).

**John 3:14-21. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up** [As Num. 21:4-9 show, if anyone bitten by the fiery serpents would look at the bronze serpent set on a standard by Moses, according to God’s instructions, they would live. In other words, they wouldn’t die from the bite that would otherwise have killed them. (I believe we can assume that they looked in faith.) Even so must the Son of Man (Christ Jesus) be lifted up on a cross to bear the sin of mankind as the Lamb of God.]; **(15) that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.** [Those who believe in Christ Jesus (believing in Christ is something we do, as we respond to God’s grace) receive life in the eternal dimension by the Holy Spirit, starting with the new birth. We have all been bitten by the serpent of sin.] **(16) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son** [I would translate “His unique (only one of His kind) Son” with the margin of the NASB, or the equivalent.], **that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.** [Perishing means eternal death, the second death of Rev. 20:10, 14, 15, not annihilation.] **(17) For God did not send the Son into the world to judge [condemn] the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (18) He who believes in Him is not judged [condemned]; he who does not believe has been judged [condemned] already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten [unique] Son of God.** [Those who reject God’s offer of salvation are rejecting God’s only solution to the sin/spiritual death problem. In a very real sense they are determining their eternal destiny. Those who receive God’s offer of salvation through faith in Christ are also determining their eternal destiny. We

can even say that at the time they receive Christ they have their final judgment, and they pass from death to life. See, for example, John 5:24. It is assumed, of course, that they have true faith and that they will not later abandon their faith in Christ.] **(19) And this is the judgment [condemnation]** [These following words (through verse 21) are quite important to help confirm that faith/believing is our part. These words give (at least in part) the reason why many don't submit to Christ in faith.], **that the light is come into the world** [Jesus Christ is the light, and He brings light into the world. See 1:4-10.], **and men loved the darkness rather than the light** [The darkness includes sin, the lie, and everything else associated with the kingdom of Satan.]; **for their deeds [works] were evil. (20) For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.** [It certainly isn't surprising to hear that those who love the darkness and hate the light and are living in sin (and don't want to change) are not going to repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith.] **(21) But he who practices [does] the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.** [This verse is especially applicable for those who have had the benefit of much interaction with God and His Word before they are confronted with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of the Israelites of that day fit the pattern described here in verse 21. Such persons typically submitted to the ministry of John the Baptist, who called for repentance. The most righteous knew that repentance was required, and they knew that they needed the Savior from sin who would immerse His followers in the Holy Spirit and sanctify them. And even though their lives manifested some righteousness they understood that the good they had done was attributable to God and His grace, as the second half of this verse shows. The more hungry that people become for true righteousness the more they will readily, and totally, submit to the gospel of Christ Jesus—there is no other way to receive the imputed and imparted righteousness of God. It should be noted that Nicodemus, to whom these words were initially spoken by Jesus Christ (see John 3:1-10), was an example of one who came to the light. We know that he became a follower of Christ (John 19:38-42, cf. 7:50-52).]

**John 5:36-47. But the witness which I have is greater than that of John** [the Baptist]; **for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.** [The works which Jesus did were all the more effective as a witness because it was prophesied that He would do these works (cf., e.g. Matt. 11:2-6; Isa. 35:5, 6; Isa. 61:1, 2 with Luke 4:16-27; and Isa. 53:4, 5 with Matt. 8:16, 17).] **(37) And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me.** [The Father bore witness of Christ Jesus in many ways, but the witness spoken of here apparently speaks of the witness contained in the Old Testament.] **You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.** [Ancient Israel had heard God's voice at Mt. Sinai (Deut. 4:10-14; Ex. 19:9; 20:19, 22). And Moses had not only heard God's voice but had even seen His form (Ex. 33:11-23). Other prophets had also heard the voice of God, and some of them had been privileged to see Him in one form or another. It doesn't seem that Jesus was rebuking His audience for not having heard the voice of God, or for not having seen His form, but He certainly rebuked them, as 5:38-47 show, for not having God's word in their hearts, for not loving

God and believing His word, and for not believing in Him, the promised Messiah.] (38) **And you do not have His word abiding in you** [They thought they did, but their rejection of Christ proved they didn't, as the rest of the verse, and 5:45-47, show.], **for you do not believe Him [Christ] whom He [God the Father] sent.** (39) **You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me;** (40) **and you are unwilling to come to Me** [These words confirm that our will is involved in coming (or not coming) to Christ in faith (cf. John 7:17, which is discussed below). The following verses give some of the basic reasons why they were not willing to come to Him. Verses like 5:40-47 strongly confirm that having faith in Christ, or not having faith, is man's part and involves the foundational attitudes, priorities, and motives of the heart.], **that you may have life.** (41) **I do not receive glory from men;** (42) **but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.** [His audience would undoubtedly have insisted that they did love God, and that they were zealous for Him, but Jesus said that they did not really love God. Religious people, including Christians, can deceive themselves. We all need to stay humble and check up on our hearts. We can't just assume that all is well.] (43) **I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him.** [The prime example of these words coming to pass will involve Israel's acceptance of Antichrist at the end of this age.] (44) **How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?** [Christians too can be guilty of being motivated to seek the glory that comes from men (especially our religious associates) while God Himself is lost behind the religion.] (45) **Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.** (46) **For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me.** (47) **But if you do not believe His writings, how will you believe My words?** There is no doubting that His audience prided themselves on their allegiance to Moses and his writings, the Mosaic Law. But Jesus shows them that they neither love God nor understand His Word. Those who took these words of Jesus seriously could begin to make the necessary adjustments. We Christians need to make sure that we really love God and understand His Word. I'm quite confident that we need to make many adjustments in the Body of Christ in our day.

**John 7:17. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching [the teaching of Christ], whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.** This important verse demonstrates that the will of man is involved in the having, or not having, faith in Christ (cf. 5:40). And, significantly, it demonstrates that faith in Christ involves a desire/willingness/commitment of the heart to do God's will and be righteous and holy (cf. 3:19-21). The new covenant in the blood of Christ Jesus is the only means provided for man to receive the righteousness of God. For one thing, as John the Baptist said, Jesus is the One who can immerse men in the Holy Spirit, thereby sanctifying them and enabling them to do God's will. Those who do not have a desire to do God's will do not love Him (cf. John 14:15, 21, 23, 24).



**Romans 9:30-10:18. What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith** [The Gentiles attained (or you could say “obtained” with the NIV) the righteousness of God by submitting to the gospel in faith. To attain righteousness includes being forgiven, but it also includes the transformation to righteous living accomplished through the atoning death of the Lamb of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. God’s righteousness is imparted in Christ. For more on receiving the righteousness of God by faith/believing, see on Rom. 1:16, 17 and 3:21, 22 in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, pages 76-79. These four verses (which use the word faith four times and the word believe two times) are an important cross-reference for Rom. 9:30-10:18.]; **(31) But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.** [Israel (that is, the majority of the sons of Israel) did not submit to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They continued to pursue the law (the Mosaic Law/the old covenant), which certainly did teach about, and did require, righteousness. But it could not provide that righteousness. For one thing, it found men in spiritual death and left them in spiritual death (cf. Gal. 3:21). The Mosaic Law simply could not solve the sin problem (cf., e.g., Rom. 7:1-8:4); it wasn’t given for that purpose. The end result was that Israel (speaking of the majority who did not submit to the gospel in faith) did not arrive at the righteousness which the Law required, but could not supply.] **(32) Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.** [The NASB has “they did,” “pursue it,” and “it were” in italics since these words are not included in the Greek. The point is that Israel did not receive the righteousness of God, which comes only through faith in Christ; they continued trying to attain righteousness by doing works (of the Law).] **They stumbled over the stumbling stone [Christ Jesus], (33) just as it is written, “BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED [PUT TO SHAME].” (10:1) Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them [the sons of Israel] is for their salvation. (2) For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.** [They don’t know the truth of God’s new-covenant salvation plan, which centers in the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death. As Paul goes on to show in 10:14-18, the problem was not that they hadn’t heard the truth, but that they hadn’t accepted it in faith.] **(3) For not knowing about God’s righteousness** [They did not know about the righteousness of God, which comes only through faith in Christ. See above under 9:30-32.], **and seeking to establish their own** [Israelites could seek to establish their own righteousness by works, that is they could seek to do all that the Law required. However, the apostle Paul frequently makes the point that no one will ever be able to achieve righteousness that way.], **they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.** [In other words, they did not subject themselves to the gospel in faith.] **(4) For Christ is the end of the law** [That is, now that Christ has come and conquered sin, Satan, and spiritual death, and the gospel of salvation is being proclaimed, the old covenant (which centered in the Mosaic Law) has been superseded by the new covenant. Cf., e.g., Gal. 3:19, 23-25; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14-17.] **for [I would translate this Greek preposition resulting in, as it is translated by the NASB in 10:10.] righteousness to [or, for] everyone who believes.** [Believers

attain/obtain, subject themselves to, and receive and walk in, the righteousness of God by faith. See under Rom. 9:30.] **(5) For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.** [If anyone fully kept the Law, they would earn eternal life by their righteousness (by their works). However, no one has fully kept the Law, and no one could fully keep the Law without first being redeemed from sin and spiritual death through new-covenant salvation in the blood of Christ.] **(6) But the righteousness based on faith** [He means faith in Christ.] **speaks thus, “DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), (7) or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” (8) But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART”—that is, the word of [the] faith which we are preaching** [The apostle applies Deut. 30:11-14 in an interesting way here. His primary point is that in the new covenant it’s too late for the works of man. The work has already been accomplished by God. It’s too late for us to exhort Christ to come down from heaven to save us—He has already come down. It’s too late for us to try to bring Christ back from the dead (after He died for us on Mt. Calvary)—He has already been raised from the dead. The only thing left for us to do isn’t a work—we must humbly submit to the gospel in faith. (The gospel is, of course, “the word of [the] faith which [Paul was] preaching.”) Then, as we live the Christian life by faith, we will live in the righteousness of God, being enabled by His grace/Spirit.], **(9) that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord** [A big part of what Christianity is all about is the submission to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is assumed here that the confession of the mouth is done in faith.], **and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved** [Of course we must believe the gospel, which has more content than the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead.]; **(10) for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.** [The use of the words “mouth” and “heart” in verses 9 and 10 build on the use of these words in verse 8. Verses 9 and 10 confirm the important point that faith is of the heart. *Righteousness* and *salvation* are not two separate items that are received in sequence. When people receive the righteousness of God through faith, they are receiving salvation, and vice versa. The emphasis of verses 5-10 is on the fact that we are saved by Christ/faith/grace, not works/Law/merit. And that is also the emphasis of 9:30-10:4 and 10:11-18.] **(11) For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED [PUT TO SHAME].” (12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him** [Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) are both saved the same way, by calling upon the Lord Jesus Christ in faith (in response to the gospel).]; **(13) for “WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”** [We call upon the name of the Lord in faith, having heard the gospel (which offers salvation).] **(14) How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him [Jesus Christ] whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?** [We must hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ before we can believe in Him.] **(15) And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as**

it is written, “**HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS [PREACH THE GOSPEL] OF GOOD THINGS!**” (16) However, they did not all heed the glad tidings [I would translate they have not all obeyed the gospel, with the KJV. Obeying the gospel is part of, or equivalent to, having faith in the gospel.]; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?” [Paul’s quotation from Isa. 53:1 helps confirm the fact that not all would submit to (and obey) the gospel in faith.] (17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of [concerning] Christ. [We must hear the word of the gospel before we can submit to it in faith, but this does not mean that if we hear the gospel we will necessarily submit to it in faith. Many don’t obey the gospel.] (18) But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.” [In this verse the apostle makes it clear that the cause of unbelief was not a failure to hear the gospel.]

We can learn a lot about the meaning of the words *faith* and *believe* (as these words are used in the New Testament) from this lengthy passage (Rom. 9:30-10:18). The word *faith* is used five times, and *believe* eight times. I’ll list some key things we can learn: Faith is contrasted with works of the Law (9:32); faith must be based on knowledge of the truth of the gospel (10:2, 3); faith involves subjecting yourself to the righteousness (salvation) of God—it’s something *we* do (10:3); one reason that people don’t subject themselves to the gospel in faith is because they are trying to establish their own righteousness by their works (10:3); if you could be saved by your own righteousness, then you would be saved by merit, not grace (10:5); faith is not a work of man, but it submits to God’s work of salvation in Christ (10:6-10); faith is of the heart (faith includes taking God’s Word into your heart, and giving God your heart)—it’s something *we* do (10:9, 10); we must call on the Lord in faith—it’s something we do (10:12, 13); to not submit to the gospel in faith is to disobey God’s Word, which equals disobedience to God—faith/obedience is something *we* do (10:16). For more on the important point that saving faith includes obedience to the gospel, see below under 2 Thess. 1:8.

**Romans 11:19-23.** You will say then, “**Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.**” (20) Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief [That is, those Israelites who did not receive Christ Jesus in faith were (like branches) cut off from (the tree of) God’s true Israel.], but you [speaking to Gentile Christians] stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; (21) for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. (22) Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God’s kindness, if you continue in His kindness [by continuing on in faith and staying away from unbelief]; otherwise you also will be cut off [as the unbelieving Israelites were]. (23) And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. These verses strongly emphasize that faith in Christ, or unbelief, is man’s responsibility. God does not just give us saving faith, nor do we just

automatically continue on in faith. We must continue to press on by grace through faith.

**Colossians 1:21-23. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, (22) yet He** [God the Father] **has now reconciled you in His fleshly body** [in/by the body of His (Christ's) flesh] **through death, in order to present you before Him [Himself] holy and blameless and beyond reproach** [Through the atoning death of His Son, God the Father has brought us from a state of alienation (from Himself), hostility of mind, and a life of sin (engaged in evil deeds) to a state of holiness, blamelessness, and beyond.

reproach. (At least this is the ideal state that every true Christian should be living in by God's grace through faith.) The apostle's viewpoint is that we should become holy and then stay holy until it is time to stand before God at the end of this age. (See pages 186-190 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for a much fuller discussion of these important verses, Col. 1:21-23. The last chapter of that book, which starts on page 169, deals with the very important, but often not well understood, topic of holiness.)—**(23) if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.** The apostle writes from the viewpoint that his readers have been solid in faith (they have been steadfastly continuing on in the faith that is in Christ Jesus), but that there is a danger that some of them will not continue to be solid in faith. He has learned of false views surfacing at Colossae. And there is always the danger that even if you continue to hold correct doctrine, you may fail to live in line with the truth of the gospel.

**Colossians 2:11, 12. and in Him** [Christ Jesus] **you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ** [In union with Christ Jesus, we receive the true circumcision, the circumcision “of the heart, by the Spirit” (Rom. 2:29). The removal of the body of the flesh is the equivalent of the crucifixion of the flesh/old man of Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24, and of the putting off of the flesh/old man of Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9. The idea is that our former (pre-Christian) lives that were characterized by sin are to be once for all gone and replaced by God's righteous and holy new creation. (To back up this point, read the four verses just listed in their Biblical contexts.)]; **(12) having been buried with Him in baptism** [Rom. 6:1-4 are an important cross-reference for these words. Rom. 6:3 even mentions that “we have been buried with Him through baptism into death [speaking of death to the flesh/old man]....” See page 97 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for a discussion of Rom. 6:1-4.], **in which you were also raised up with Him** [I agree with those who translate in Whom, instead of “in which.”] **through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.** [We become united with the Lord Jesus Christ and are raised up with Him to live as righteous and holy new creations. God by His Spirit/grace/power—and through union with His unique Son—raises us from spiritual death and bondage to sin as we submit to, and walk in, the gospel by faith. Without faith on our part, there is no new creation. Faith does not create, or earn, God's saving, resurrecting, life-giving, transforming, healing power, but it does receive and cooperate with that power, in

agreement with the gospel. I should mention that it is equally true that the death and burial of the old man (spoken of in verse 11 and the first part of verse 12) come to pass through faith in the working of God.]

**1 Thessalonians 1:6-10.** You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, **having received the word in much tribulation** [They received the word of the gospel in faith even though there was much tribulation.] **with the joy of the Holy Spirit** [One manifestation of the reality of their salvation was the supernatural joy provided by the Holy Spirit. Joy is the second fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal. 5:22. They had joy in spite of the tribulation.], **(7) so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. (8) For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you** [speaking of the word regarding their “having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit”] **not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. (9) For they themselves report about us what kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a [the] living and true God** [They turned to God in faith, or you could say in repentance and faith.], **and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.** [We will be delivered from the wrath of God which will come against sin at the end of this age because we have been redeemed out of the kingdom of sin, Satan, and spiritual death by Jesus Christ.]

**1 Thessalonians 2:13.** And for this reason we also constantly thank God that **when you received from us the word of God’s message** [the gospel], **you accepted it not as the word of men** [It was the Word of God given to the Thessalonians through the apostle Paul and his companions. Paul had received the gospel directly from God, “through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12).], **but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.** The gospel works in the hearts and lives of those who hear it, understand it, and submit to it, in humble faith. The gospel works by the power of God, especially the work/power of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Rom. 1:16, 17. It does the very work the gospel spells out. For one thing, it makes us righteous and holy new creations, starting with the new birth, and enables us to live in the will of God as we “wait for His Son from heaven.” God’s power works in us to strengthen us and heal us, spirit, soul, and body. The Greek behind “in you who believe” confirms that a continuous believing/faith is being spoken of. We must continue to believe the full gospel. God’s Word will not be working in us to the extent that we start doubting it in our hearts. Also, if there are parts of the gospel we haven’t adequately heard, understood, and accepted in faith, we won’t achieve satisfactory results in those areas. It is necessary for us to have faith in the full gospel.

**1 Thessalonians 3:5-10.** For this reason, **when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.** [See my paper, *Once Saved, Always Saved?* for a discussion of this verse. The point I want to make here is that although Paul knew that the Thessalonians had become born-again Christians

through faith, he could not be sure that they had continued in faith. If our faith was strictly the work of God, then Paul could have been sure that they would continue in faith. However, faith (both initial faith and continuing in faith) is something *we* do, but not apart from God's enabling grace. He must receive all the glory.] (6) **But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, (7) for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; (8) for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.** [Even though Timothy brought back to Paul a good report regarding the faith of the Thessalonians, there still was a need to complete what was lacking in their faith (3:10) and a need for the Thessalonians to continue in faith to the end of the race.] (9) **For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account, (10) as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?** [The apostle would not be satisfied that what was lacking in their faith had been corrected until, for one thing, their hearts had been established unblamable in holiness (3:13). See pages 183-185 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for a discussion of 3:10-13.]

**2 Thessalonians 1:3-12.** We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as it is only fitting, because **your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; (4) therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance [or, steadfastness] and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. (5) This is a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.** [We don't earn/merit salvation through our faith. For one thing, salvation is a gift. Also, God by His Spirit enables us to be strong in faith/faithfulness (cf., e.g., Gal. 5:22). However, as Paul says in this passage, it is fitting for God to come to save and bless those who have faith in Him (even when it involves persecution etc.) and to judge and remove those who have rejected Him and the gospel, and have even persecuted His people. God's judgment will be righteous, and it will come at the right time (even if it comes a little later than Paul anticipated).] (6) **For after all it is only just [righteous] for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed [manifested] from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire** [This glorious turn of events will come to pass when the Lord Jesus returns and is manifested—right in the middle of Daniel's 70th week—and we are raptured and caught up into eternal glory.], (8) **dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those** [I would omit these last two words ("to those") with the NIV and others (they are not required by the Greek). It seems that "those who do not know God" are the same persons as "those who do not obey the gospel." They are responsible for not knowing God; they could have come to know Him through submitting to the gospel in faith.] **who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** [To say that they did not obey the gospel is another way of saying that they did not submit to the gospel in faith. But perhaps by saying they

did not obey the gospel, Paul makes the point even stronger that they are rebelling against God. We have already come across this idea of not obeying the gospel in Rom. 10:16 (under Rom. 9:30-10:18). And there are other verses that speak of disobeying, or obeying, the gospel. I believe all such verses offer further strong evidence that man has his role to play in God's plan of salvation. That role is typically covered by the words faith/believing, but other words can be used, including repentance and obedience. In Gal. 5:7 Paul rebuked some of the Galatians, who had begun to waver on the basics of the gospel: You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? In Rom. 2:8 he speaks of those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth [of the gospel], but obey unrighteousness.... In Rom. 6:16 he writes to the Christians at Rome saying, But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching [The "form of teaching" at least includes that part of the gospel which shows that Christians are to be dead to sin and alive to God and righteousness by grace through faith.] to which you were committed [delivered over]. If in our hearts we have faith in the gospel, we will necessarily obey the gospel, by God's enabling grace. See pages 101, 102 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on Rom. 6:16. Acts 6:7 says, And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. And 1 Peter 4:17 says, For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? Compare also Rom. 7:7; 15:18.] **(9) And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (10) when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day** [Rather than being removed from His presence, we will abide in His glorious presence forever. We become saints (holy) by submitting to the gospel in faith/by obeying the gospel.], **and to be marveled at among all who have believed. (11) To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count [make] you worthy of your calling** [We are called to be saints, living in the will of God and for the glory of God. And we are called to eternal glory, reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ forever.], **and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power** [Faith is not static or passive, it works by the power/grace/Spirit of God.]; **in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him** [Most of the glory we have in the Lord Jesus is still future, awaiting His return—I'm confident that it will be more glorious than we can imagine; and it will last forever.], **according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**2 Thessalonians 2:8-15. And then that lawless one will be revealed** [Antichrist will be revealed/manifested/unveiled at the abomination of desolation, when he "takes his seat in the temple of God" (2:3, 4).] **whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming** [Antichrist will be destroyed at the end of Daniel's 70th week. See the last chapter of my book, *Mid-Week Rapture*, for a discussion of 2:1-12.]; **(9) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness** [Wickedness can be very deceptive. It can look good and promise you good, but

(starting with Eve in the Garden) it always leads to destruction.] **for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.** [The NIV has, “because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” The truth centers in the gospel of salvation through the Lord Jesus. Verse 12 gives us the reason (at least it is a big part of the reason) why these persons did not submit to the gospel in faith. It is because they “took pleasure in wickedness.” The primary purpose of the gospel is to get men out of wickedness (and spiritual death), so for those who take pleasure in/love wickedness, and don’t want to change, the gospel is foolishness, not good news. Some people actually choose wickedness/sin instead of God and His truth and righteousness (cf., e.g., John 3:16-21; 1 John 3:8-12). I consider 2 Thess. 2:10-12 further strong confirmation that faith isn’t just something God gives man.] **(11) And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged [condemned] who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.** [For those who willfully reject the gospel (and thereby reject Jesus Christ, the One who sent Him, righteousness, and salvation), God sends Antichrist to lead them to destruction. As 2:9, 10 show, Antichrist will come in such spectacular and deceptive fashion that it will be easy for those who hate God and righteousness to follow him.] **(13) But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning** [God, based on His foreknowledge, chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. See Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:28-30; Rev. 13:8; 17:8. We don’t have enough information/revelation to fully understand such things, nor is it necessary for us to fully understand them. However, let me mention two important things that we do know. It is mandatory that each of us do our part, including making it a top priority to find out what God says in the Bible (especially the gospel) and to begin to respond to God and His Word with humility, honesty, repentance, and faith. He will guide us, teach us, convict us, etc. as we begin to look to Him. And secondly, the fact that God chose us does not give us anything to boast about, as if we had earned salvation, or were in ourselves worthy of salvation. Our attitude must be one of thankfulness to God for His mercy/grace. However, I believe we can say that God’s foreknowledge of our hearts did figure in His election.] **for salvation through [in] sanctification [holiness] by the Spirit and faith in the truth.** [God brings us to a state of holiness by the Spirit (based on the atoning death of the Lamb of God). Faith in the truth of the gospel is our part. See pages 181, 182 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for a discussion of this verse.] **(14) And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.** [By faith we respond to God’s call in the gospel. For this age, we are called to the new birth, holiness and victory over sin, etc. For the age to come, we are called to eternal glory; in the near future we will be caught up into this glory; that is, assuming we continue in faith to the end. The apostle speaks of this continuing in faith in the next verse.] **(15) So then, brethren, stand firm [by faith] and hold [by faith] to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth [from Paul and his companions] or by letter from us.** [We need to make sure we are holding to the traditions taught in the Bible. There are many wrong traditions around the Christian church, and we need to be careful who we listen to. It could cost you your soul/salvation.]



**1 Timothy 2:3-6. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** [“To come to the knowledge of the truth,” as these words are used here, includes submitting to the truth of the gospel in faith.] **(5) For there is one God** [Therefore the widespread polytheism of the ancient world was wrong, and, more importantly, the God of the Bible is the Creator and God of all mankind.], **and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus** [The Bible makes it clear that Jesus Christ was not just a man. He, the unique Son of God, is deity with the Father (and the Holy Spirit), a worthy Sacrificial Offering indeed.], **(6) who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony** [God’s plan of salvation, centering in the atoning death of His Son, certainly testifies to His desire to save all mankind.] **borne at the proper time.** [All mankind is called to repent and submit to the gospel in faith. In Acts 17:30, 31 the apostle Paul says, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, (31) because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Any person that will take such words seriously (and submit to them in faith) will find that they will be accepted by God.]

**1 Timothy 6:12. Fight the good fight of faith** [It would probably be better to translate the faith with the NIV. Kenneth Wuest (in *The Pastoral Epistles* [Eerdmans, 1952], under 1 Tim. 6:12) says regarding the faith, “The word faith is preceded by the definite article in the Greek text, the faith. It is not faith in general as exercised by the Christian, to which reference is made here, but to the Faith as consisting of a body of doctrine with its corresponding ethical responsibilities, namely, Christianity and the Christian life.” The fact that there is a fight to be fought confirms that we have a part to play, even though it is true that we fight the good fight by the enablement of God’s grace/Spirit through faith. If we understand the word faith in the full-orbed sense we frequently find in the New Testament, we can say the fight consists of continuing to hold the basics of the gospel by faith, and continuing to live in line with gospel truth (also by faith). Near the end of his life, the apostle Paul said, “the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:6, 7).]; **take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...** [The apostle is speaking here of eternal life in its yet-future sense (cf., e.g., 6:19; Titus 3:7). We take hold of this eternal life by continuing to press on by grace through faith until the end. Or you could say, “[by keeping] the commandment [of the gospel] without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ [by grace through faith]” (1 Tim. 6:14). We have been called to eternal life in the gospel.]

**Hebrews 2:1-3a. For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard** [speaking of the gospel of new covenant salvation], **lest we drift away from it.** **(2) For if the word spoken through angels** [speaking of the word of the old covenant in the Mosaic Law] **proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, (3) how shall we**

**escape if we neglect so great a salvation?** [By faith we pay close attention to what we have heard. This exhortation confirms that Christians have a part to play in continuing to press on in faith. Such exhortations/warnings permeate the epistle to the Hebrews.]

**Hebrews 3:12-14, 17, 18; 4:1-3a. Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. (13) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (14) For we have become partakers of Christ** [that is, we will partake of the glory of God’s eternal salvation in Christ], **if we** [by faith] **hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end....** (18) **And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?** (19) **And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.** [Note that disobedience and unbelief go together.] (4:1) **Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.** [We would come short of entering God’s heavenly rest if we backed away from a faith commitment to the gospel, which includes a promise of entering His rest. Hebrews was written to people that had already become born-again Christians. We would, of course, also come short of God’s heavenly rest if we failed to submit to the gospel in faith when confronted with it.] (2) **For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also** [“They” refers to the sons of Israel on the way to the promised land (Canaan), who had just left Egypt in the Exodus (see 3:7-19).]; **but the word they heard did not profit them** [They failed to enter the promised land.], **because it was not united by faith in [or, with] those who heard.** [For God’s Word to be effective in our lives, we must take it into our hearts, and keep it in our hearts, by faith. This includes submitting to, and obeying, the Word.] (3) **For we who have believed enter that rest....** [I agree with those who translate are entering instead of enter. The whole emphasis of Hebrews is that we must keep running the race before us until it is finished. Then, and only then, is it time for rest. But it is true that, in another sense, there is a rest for us as we run the race by faith. See, e.g., Matt. 11:28-30. As the next passage (and much other Scripture) shows, God’s grace is sufficient. It seems clear to me that these verses in Hebrews strongly confirm that faith is our part. We must submit to the gospel in faith, and we must press on in faith until the end of the race.]

**Hebrews 4:14-16. Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens** [to the right hand of God the Father], **Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.** [We continue to hold fast (by faith) our confession that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the truth. Holding fast our confession includes continuing to live in line with the gospel.] (15) **For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.** [And He, our great high priest, is able to keep us victorious over sin as we look to Him in faith.] (16) **Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.** [The

ideal, and it is not an unrealistic ideal, is that we would always come before God's throne "in time of need" and receive His sufficient grace to resist the temptation and not sin. Cf. Heb. 2:18. The primary temptation for the recipients of this epistle was that they would get discouraged and stop being faithful to God and the new covenant. Under 2:14, F. F. Bruce (*Epistle to the Hebrews* [Eerdmans, 1964]) says, "they are now shown how He is the one from whom they can receive all the strength they need to maintain their confession and resist the temptation to let go and fall back." God's grace is sufficient to meet every need for those who will appropriate it by faith. He will strengthen us; He will make us strong in faith. Because of "our weaknesses," we are all dependent on God's mercy and grace. The fact that the word "mercy" is used does not show that sin has already been committed. The Greek noun could be translated compassion instead of mercy. If we should sin, we must, of course, receive the mercy/grace of forgiveness and restoration.]

**Hebrews 6:11, 12. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, (12) that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.** We must press on in faith to the end of the race in order to inherit the things promised (the things that go with the glory of the age to come in God's eternal kingdom).

**Hebrews 10:35-39. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.** [The reward will be eternal glory for those who persist in their faith to the end.] **(36) For you have need of endurance** [We must press on in faith.], **so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised** [that is, the reward of eternal glory]. **(37) FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.** [The Lord Jesus Christ will come at the end of this age to judge the world and set up the millennial kingdom, which will ultimately lead to God's eternal kingdom. We must all be ready for the return of Christ and judgment day.] **(38) BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY** [or, out of, because of] **FAITH** [That is, those who have submitted to the gospel in faith and have thereby become righteous, and who press on in faith until the return of Christ (or to the time of their death), shall live. They shall live in the sense they shall inherit, and be caught up into, the fullness of eternal life, and this because of faith. We don't earn the heavenly reward by our faith, but we do receive salvation (in all of its aspects) by faith.]; **AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.** [That is, if anyone shrinks back from the gospel, instead of pressing on in faith, he will not be ready to stand before God and will not inherit eternal life.] **(39) But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction** [eternal death], **but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul** [instead of losing the soul to eternal death (cf., e.g., Matt. 16:26, 27; James 1:21; 5:19, 20)].

**Hebrews 11:1-40.** [We can learn a lot about faith from this chapter. For one thing, the word faith is used twenty-five times. The use of the word faith in this chapter strongly confirms the fact that faith is something we do. I should mention

the tie to the last verses of chapter 10, where the readers are exhorted to press on in faith to the end, so that they may preserve their souls and receive their heavenly rewards.] **Now faith is the assurance [confidence] of things hoped for** [The things we hope for are the things promised in God's Word. The primary thing we hope for is eternal glory (cf., e.g., Heb. 10:34-39; 11:10, 13-16, 26, 35; Col. 1:5, 27; Titus 3:7). However, as this chapter confirms, throughout this present life we receive by grace through faith everything we need to accomplish the will of God for our lives. I should mention that the believers discussed in this chapter, who all lived in the days before the cross, still had to wait for the sin problem to be solved by the Lamb of God (cf. Heb. 11:39, 40). Hope doesn't infer doubt, but it does mean the things hoped for are yet future. Those with faith in God and His Word have this assurance because they know that God's Word is true and that He is well able to bring to pass the things He has promised.], **the conviction of things not seen.** [The things not seen here include the things hoped for mentioned earlier in the verse. We can have a rock-solid conviction regarding the things not yet seen, things like God's New Jerusalem (cf. 11:13-16), because we have God's Word telling us that these things are real. By faith we can, in a very real sense, see the unseen (cf., e.g., 11:7, 13, 27; 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7).] (2) **For by it men of old gained [God's] approval.** [See 11:39. The NIV has: "This is what the ancients were commended for." These words confirm that faith is something that men do. As we have said many times though, faith does not earn God's grace, and it is nothing for man to boast about. We receive and cooperate with grace through faith.] (3) **By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.** [Here we have an illustration of being able to see the unseen, but only by faith. Since the Scriptures inform us that God created the world by His Word (Genesis chapter 1), and since we have faith in God and the Scriptures, we can know about God's creation. We can see, for example, that this present physical world is subsequent to, inferior to, and less substantial than God's invisible kingdom.] (4) **By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain** [Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice because he was a man of faith; he didn't just have faith when he made the offering. Cain was not a man of faith. Having faith includes having a right heart attitude toward God, an attitude of submission/putting God first. As Hebrews chapter 11 shows, it includes trusting Him, believing Him, and obeying Him. Genesis 4:5-9 show quite clearly that Cain's heart was not right toward God. He didn't show any signs of checking up on himself, or repentance, when God rejected his offering, or even when God warned him that sin was ready to devour him; instead, he killed his brother (cf. 1 John 3:12). Then he lied to God and spoke disrespectfully to Him (Gen. 4:9). Some say that God rejected Cain's sacrifice because it was not a blood/animal sacrifice; it is possible that this was a factor in God's rejection, but I doubt it. There is no evidence that a blood sacrifice was required, or that this was a sin offering. It probably was appropriate for Cain to bring an offering "of the fruit of the ground" since he was "a tiller of the soil" (Gen. 4:2, 3). But God doesn't accept offerings from those who don't first give Him their heart; in other words, it must be an offering of faith, like Abel's was.], **through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts** [God testified about Abel's gifts by accepting them. Genesis 4:4 says, "And the Lord had regard

for Abel and for his offering.” These words, along with the words he obtained the testimony that he was righteous confirm that the life of Abel is in view, not just his offering. Also note Gen. 4:5, “but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.” Quite often, as here (and see Heb. 11:7, 33; 12:23), believers from pre-Christian days are called “righteous.” By faith they lived relatively righteous lives, but I’m sure each one of them will testify that they need the salvation from sin that comes only through the Lord Jesus Christ. See 11:39, 40.], **and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks** [For one thing, faith in God brings a person into the eternal dimension; they become part of the family of God’s people; such people never really die. One thing he says as he speaks is that God always takes care of those who submit to Him in faith (cf. 12:1).] **(5) By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP** [See Gen. 5:21-24.]; **for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was well pleasing to God.** [This mention of Enoch’s being “well pleasing to God” comes from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) at Gen. 5:24.] **(6) And without faith it is impossible to please Him** [The writer of Hebrews just told us that Enoch was well pleasing to God. Now he tells us that this proves Enoch was a man of faith, because without faith it is impossible to please Him. These words demonstrate the importance of, and necessity for, God’s people to have faith. It is vitally important for us to understand faith, and for us to continually walk in faith.], **for he who comes to God must believe that He is** [Isn’t it obvious that we can’t have faith in God without the full assurance that He exists. Some of us start from a place of not being sure that God exists, but as we begin to cooperate with His grace through fellowship with His people, through getting into His Word, through prayer, etc., we come to the assurance of His existence, and more.], **and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.** [Every true Christian must know that God rewards those who seek Him (in faith). Some of the primary things we must seek Him for are the new birth, the power to live in righteousness and holiness, His wisdom and the balanced truth of His Word, and the ability to accomplish His will for our lives. These things are rewards, and there are many other rewards as He provides everything we need for this life; however, the primary reward centers in the eternal glory reserved for us in God’s heavenly kingdom.] **(7) By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen** [All the evidence Noah needed to be sure the flood was coming was God’s Word on the subject, because he had faith in God. By faith he could see the coming flood, and (by faith) he acted accordingly.], **in reverence** [Having a reverent attitude before God is part of faith.] **prepared an ark for the salvation of his household** [This chapter of Hebrews makes it clear that true faith in God’s Word includes obedience to that Word (see the next verse too).], **by which he condemned the world** [He *condemned the world* by contrast in the sense that he, unlike them, took God and His Word seriously and acted accordingly (cf. Gen. 6:5-7:1; Matt. 12:41; Rom. 2:27; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5).], **and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.** [I don’t believe the word righteousness is used here of the righteousness of God which comes to new covenant believers through faith in Christ, as in Rom. 1:17; 3:22; 10:4, for example. Here the idea, as with Abel in Heb. 11:4 (also see 11:33), is that Noah was (relatively) righteous because of his faith, and he was accepted by God as a believer. People of faith typically do

things God's way, and for the right reasons. Genesis 6:9 and 7:1 both speak of Noah as "righteous," and Ezek. 14:14, 20 speak of his "righteousness." See above under 11:4 on the righteousness of Abel and on the important need to qualify this righteousness. Noah and Abel (along with all believers) would be quick to admit that their ultimate righteousness and their place in God's eternal kingdom come through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ by grace through faith. Noah's (relative) righteousness when he lived on the earth would not suffice. He, like all of us who will have a place in new Jerusalem, will have that place through the ultimate (sufficient) righteousness of God that is imputed and imparted to us through the Lord Jesus (the Lamb of God). *That ultimate righteousness did not become available to believers until new-covenant salvation became available* (see Heb. 11:39, 40. These verses are discussed on pages 166, 167 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin.*)

I don't believe that the idea here is that Noah became a heir of the righteousness which is according to faith, but that he became an heir of God's new-covenant salvation, which culminates with the glory of God's new Jerusalem, from/by means of his (relative) righteousness (which demonstrated His faith in God and His Word/promises). It is to be understood that although Noah didn't fully understand God's new covenant plan of salvation, he would inherit that salvation when it became available because of His faith in God and His Word/promises – he was a believer.

The order of the words in the Greek is probably significant here, "and of [or probably better, "and from" or "and by means of" or "and by" or the equivalent (The Greek could be understood as an ablative of source, or of means, for example. See Dana and Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, for example, on the ablative case.) the according to faith righteousness he became an heir."

There is another interpretation of the last words of Heb. 11:7 that I could at least live with. Leon Morris (Vol. 12 of *Expositor's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1981]) says, "Heir is used in the sense of possessor." M. R. Vincent (*Word Studies in the New Testament*) says "became heirs" is practically equal "became partakers of." (8) **By faith Abraham, when He was called, obeyed** [It is important to see that faith includes obedience. However, and especially when it comes to the new covenant gospel, it is necessary to understand that God in Christ gives us the grace to obey Him in our daily lives.] **by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance** [See Gen. 12:1-4, 7; 15:18. The last reference shows that God promised the land "from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates" to the descendants of Abraham; however, the writer of Hebrews deals mostly with Abraham's looking beyond this land to his ultimate, eternal home, God's New Jerusalem.], **and he went out, not knowing where he was going.** [He had to go out, and walk, by faith in God. God's people have no choice but to walk by faith, trusting and obeying Him and His Word. To be where God wants us to be is the only secure place to be.] (9) **By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;** (10) **for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.** [As I mentioned, he was ultimately looking for God's New Jerusalem.] (11) **By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time**

**of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised** [Our faith is based on something super-solid, namely our faithful God and His faithful Word, including His Words of promise to us.]; **(12) therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE. (13) All these died in faith** [For one thing, they stayed in faith to the end of their lives, as we must.], **without receiving the promises** [He means that they died without receiving the things promised, referring to the full salvation provided in the new covenant, which includes a place in God’s New Jerusalem. During their lifetimes they did, of course, receive some preliminary things that God had promised (cf., e.g., 11:7, 11, 28-35).], **but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance** [They saw, with the eyes of faith, the things associated with God’s eternal salvation (cf. 11:1, 8-10, 14-16, 26, 39, 40).], **and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.** [In other words, they confessed that their true home was not in this world.] **(14) For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.** [As 11:16 shows, they were seeking for a heavenly country.] **(15) And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out** [that is, the country Abraham left when called out by God (11:8)], **they would have had opportunity to return. (16) But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore** [since they, by faith, have fixed their hearts on God and the things of God] **God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them** [New Jerusalem, cf. 11:10]. **(17) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son** [The NIV has, “his one and only son.” As 11:19 will confirm, the wording here is intended to cause us to think of a much greater manifestation of a Father offering His unique/one and only Son. Isaac was the promised son (e.g., 11:9, 11, 12, 18). It was understood that Abraham had fathered Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-16), but he was not the promised son. This testing of Abraham is described in Gen. 22:1-19. Here we have another example of Abraham, by faith, obeying God (cf. 11:8).]; **(18) it was he to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.”** [Gen. 21:12. The fact that Abraham knew that Isaac was the promised son and that the lineage must continue with Isaac (who, at that time, was young and did not have any offspring) made it all the more difficult for him to offer up Isaac. However, by faith, he obeyed.] **(19) He considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead** [Abraham proved his faith by trusting and obeying God when he was tested. (We will all be tested too.) The same God that gave Isaac to Abraham could also raise Isaac from the dead (if need be).]; **from which he also received him back as a type.** [Abraham didn’t literally receive Isaac back from the dead because, at the last second, God stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac (and provided a substitute). In this sense Abraham received him back from death, which was a type of (foreshadowed) another Father receiving His sacrificed Son back from death (by resurrection).] **(20) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.** [See Gen. 27:27-29, 39, 40.] **(21) By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph** [See Gen. 48:1-22.], **and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. (22) By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons**

of Israel [cf. Gen. 15:13-16], and gave orders concerning his bones [See Gen. 50:24-26; Ex. 13:19. Joseph's heart was with God and the people of God; he looked to the future fulfilment of all God's covenant promises, which include eternal life beyond the grave in God's eternal city.] (23) **By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child** [The NIV has, "they saw he was no ordinary child."]; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. [See Ex. 2:1-10. They put God first, fearing Him instead of/more than the king.] (24) **By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; (25) choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin** [Any pleasure gained through sin (and much suffering and pain comes with sin) is very brief indeed, and especially when viewed in the light of the eternal judgment to follow this life.]; (26) **considering the reproach of Christ** [The *reproach of Christ* refers to the trials and persecutions that come to the people of God because they are faithful to Him. Cf. Heb. 13:12-14.] **greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.** [Pay Day/Judgment Day is coming. For those who live for God in faith, the reward, according to the promise of God, will include eternal glory. Note "rewarder" in 11:6.] (27) **By faith he left Egypt** [The point is that Moses chose God and His people, thereby forsaking the temporary glory he had in Egypt as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.], **not fearing the wrath of the king** [With his eyes fixed on God through faith, Moses feared God (The King of the Universe) rather than the king of Egypt.]; **for he endured [persevered], as seeing [with the eyes of faith] Him who is unseen.** (28) **By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them.** [See Ex. 11:1-12:36. By faith Moses obeyed these instructions of the Lord.] (29) **By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.** [See Ex. 14:1-15:21.] (30) **By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been encircled for seven days.** [See Josh. 6:1-21. By faith they obeyed God's instructions, and the walls fell down. God's instructions, as it often happens, were not obviously logical. But once we're sure He has given us instructions, we must obey them, trusting Him.] **By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient [at Jericho], after she welcomed the spies in peace.** [See Josh. 2:1-24; 6:17, 22-25; James 2:25. Rahab's words and actions demonstrated her faith in God. In Josh. 2:9-11 she says, "I know that the LORD [Yahweh] has given you the land.... ...for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath." This same Rahab apparently ended up in the earthly lineage of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:5).] (32) **And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, (33) who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness** [The NASB has "acts of" in italics. The KJV has "wrought righteousness"; the NKJV has "worked righteousness." See under 11:4, 7 on righteousness.], **obtained promises** [There are many examples in the Old Testament of believers receiving things promised by God.], **shut the mouths of lions** [cf. Dan. 6:1-28, esp. 6:22; Jud. 14:5, 6; 1 Sam. 17:34-36], (34) **quenched the power of fire** [cf. Dan. 3:1-30], **escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war,**



**put foreign armies to flight.** [There are many examples in the Old Testament that fit the last four listings.] **(35) Women received back their dead by resurrection** [Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37) both raised women's sons from the dead. As with Lazarus and others, this was not the final resurrection with a glorified body, but a resurrection back to temporary life in this world.]; **and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection** [That is, they made it top priority to stay faithful to God, so that, at the end of this age, they might receive the resurrection to eternal glory. This resurrection is clearly much better than the resurrection mentioned earlier in the verse. Many commentators point out that the days of the Maccabees provided graphic illustrations of the things spoken of here, as recorded in 1 and 2 Maccabees.]; **(36) and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (38) (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. (39) And all these, having gained approval through their faith [See under 11:2.], **did not receive what was promised** [See 11:13. They did not receive the promised full salvation during their lifetime on earth because these things were not available yet. We'll deal with this promised salvation under the next verse.] **(40) because God had provided something better for us** [The "something better" refers to new covenant salvation, and "us" refers to Christians.], **so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.** [Now that salvation has become available in the blood of Christ, the believers from earlier days have been made perfect. In Heb. 12:23 they are spoken of as "the spirits of righteous men made perfect." They are spoken of as "spirits" since they have died and have not yet been resurrected. They are spoken of as "righteous" in that they lived relatively righteous lives by faith. (See Heb. 11:4, 7, 33.) They have been made perfect in that the fruit of Christ's atoning death and resurrection have now become fully available to them. For one thing, now that spiritual death had been overthrown, they were transferred from Sheol/Hades (the abode of departed spirits, but not a place of torment for God's people) to heaven. Now, like us, they are waiting for God's time to resurrect His people to eternal glory.**

We new covenant believers have already been made perfect in that we have been born again, sanctified (at least this is the ideal state we are supposed to be living in as Christians), and we have access to God beyond the veil. The book of Hebrews has quite a bit to say about this perfection/holiness. Hebrews 10:10, 14, for example, say, "By this will (God's will) we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (14) For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." For a discussion of these very important verses and 11:39, 40; 12:23, see *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, pages 156-167. At Note 10 on page 166 of the book, I recommended two commentaries on Heb. 11:39, 40; 12:23. Add W. L. Lane (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 47b, pages 392-394).]

**1 John 5:10-12. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself** [cf. 5:6-9; Rom. 8:16]; **the one who does not believe God** [regarding the

gospel of salvation in His unique Son] **has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son.** (11) **And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.** (12) **He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.**

SOME VERSES THAT HAVE BEEN USED TO TRY TO SHOW THAT GOD  
JUST GIVES US SAVING FAITH

**John 6:44, 65.** [I'll quote these two verses along with several other relevant verses from this passage and comment on their meaning, aiming for the balanced truth. When studied in context—and especially in the light of 6:45—these two verses don't begin to back up the idea that God just gives us saving faith. They don't seem to say much beyond the fact that God the Father didn't draw to Christ those Israelites who didn't have faith in Him (God the Father), or in His Word, but He drew those who had faith in Him and His Word. Much of the drawing came through His Word, as contained in the Old Testament.] (26) **Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.** [In the earlier part of John chapter 6, we read of Jesus' miraculous feeding of the multitude with the five loaves and two fish. Most of the Israelites were not seeing beyond the miracles to their need to repent and be saved through Christ Jesus. As Jesus says in this verse, they were not seeking Him for who He really was. The basic problem was, as the gospel of John frequently reminds us, that many of the people of Israel of that day did not really know God, love God, or understand His Word, even though many of them were religious.] (27) **Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.”** (28) **They said therefore to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”** (29) **Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”** [In other words, the primary thing they needed to do was to submit to the Father's salvation plan through faith in His Son.] ... (35) **Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me [in humble, obedient faith] **shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.** [He is speaking of the spiritual food and drink that brings eternal salvation and life (cf., e.g., 6:27, 32, 33, 47-58).] (36) **But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and Yet you do not believe.** [This unbelief demonstrated that they were not really the people of God (see, e.g., John 5:36-47; 8:37-47, 54, 55). It was still possible that some of these people would eventually repent and submit to Christ in faith. Such powerful discourses by the Lord Jesus undoubtedly caused some of them to begin to wake up.] (37) **All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.** [We can see something of God's part and of man's part (“the one who comes to Me”) in this verse.] (38) **For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.** (39) **And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.** [This verse puts all the**

emphasis on God's role in our salvation. If this verse (and several verses like it, including 6:44, 65) was not balanced out by much other Scripture, you would have to say that man doesn't have much of a role (if any role) in God's salvation plan. However, there is much Scripture that emphasizes our role. This paper is filled with such passages, as is my paper, *Once Saved, Always Saved?* As discussed in that paper, the Bible (in common with other ancient Jewish writings like the Dead Sea Scrolls) sometimes makes statements that seem to teach that man doesn't have a free will at all and God just pre-determines everything, but as you keep on reading you find that this assumption was inadequate and man does have something of free will and is responsible to do his part.

The Bible doesn't fully satisfy our curiosity and give us the full balanced truth in this area. However, our lack of complete revelation/information in this area doesn't give us the right to just emphasize those verses that emphasize God's part and ignore the much greater number of verses that emphasize man's responsibility to do his part. And, of course, we don't want to overemphasize man's part. God is sovereign. We don't earn salvation in any sense—it is all of grace. And God must receive all the glory.

Much of the paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* is relevant to this topic and should be read in conjunction with this present paper. In *Once Saved, Always Saved?* I quoted from D. A. Carson (*Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*). I believe he sees the balanced truth in this area better than most. Here I'll quote from another of his works (Vol. 8 of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1984], under Matthew 13:13) where he deals with the same topic. He is discussing the Parable of the Sower. "Biblical writers in both the OT and the NT have, on the whole, fewer problems about the tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility than do many moderns. This is not because they fail to distinguish purpose and consequence [result], as many affirm (e.g., Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 142), but because they do not see divine sovereignty and human responsibility as antitheses [thoughts in opposition]. In short they are compatibilists and therefore juxtapose the two themes with little self-conscious awareness of any problem (cf. Gen. 50:19-20; Judg. 14:4; Isa. 10:5-7; Hag. 1:12-14; John 11:49-52; cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*). ... Thus, even though he records Jesus' answer in terms of election [in Mark 4:11, 12, which tends to put all the emphasis on God's role], Mark does not thereby mean to absolve the outsiders of all responsibility. How could he, in the light of the interpretation of the parable of the sower he records (4:13-20), his record of John's demand for repentance (1:4), and much more? Matthew has taken up these themes in greater detail because he wishes simultaneously to affirm that what is taking place in the ministry of Jesus is, on the one hand, the decreed will of God and the result of biblical prophecy and, on the other hand, a terrible rebellion, gross spiritual dullness, and chronic unbelief. This places the responsibility for the divine rejection of those who fail to become disciples on their own shoulders while guaranteeing that none of what is taking place stands outside God's sovereign control and plan."

God has set things up in such a way that His perfect will (when it comes to individuals) isn't always accomplished; He leaves some room for men (and angels) to determine their own destiny. (This is relevant to the interpretation of John 6:39) See, e.g., 1 Tim. 2:3-6; Acts 17:30, 31; 2 Pet. 3:9. [2 Pet. 3:9 says,

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

“All” refers, at least for the most part, to Christians who need to repent. These words come across in a more powerful way when it is recognized that they are aimed (at least for the most part) at Peter’s *Christian* readers. Two commentators that I recommend on this verse are: R. J. Bauckham (Volume 50 of the *Word Biblical Commentary*) and D. J. Moo (“NIV Application Commentary” on 2 Peter and Jude). I doubt that the unbelief and rebellion of God’s people ever fits in the category of being in His perfect will.] **(40) For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.** [These words “and believes in Him” speak of something man does, but God’s role is emphasized in the immediate context.] **(41) The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven.” (42) And they were saying, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven’?” (43) Jesus answered and said to them, “Do not grumble among yourselves. (44) No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him [These words of 6:44 are important to our study, and we need to seek for the balanced truth. These words certainly show that God played a crucial role in drawing, or not drawing, these Jews to Christ. (For other verses that emphasize God’s role in our salvation see pages 22, 23 [in the internet version of the paper] of *Once Saved, Always Saved?* in the paragraph that begins with the words, “I believe the Arminian position....” Add Acts 18:10; 2 Thess. 2:13 to the list.) But before we go too far here, and miss the balanced truth, we need to consider what kind of Jews the Father drew to Jesus. It is significant that the next verse shows that He drew those sons of Israel who had really submitted to Him and His Word, and learned of Him. The Father knew those who were truly His people in their hearts. He also knew that many of the sons of Israel were far from Him in their hearts; they did not love Him and were not about to change. Such persons the Father did not draw to Christ Jesus. (There were, however, many sinners in Israel that hadn’t submitted to God, or learned much from Him, that the Father did ultimately draw to Jesus. For one thing, He knows the hearts of all people.)**

So, verse 45 shows us something of the reason the Father would draw one, and not draw another. Verse 45 also shows us something about how the Father drew these Jews to Christ, apparently mostly by teaching them through His Word recorded in the Old Testament (cf. John 5:38, 39, 45-47). This is significant in that being taught involves man’s active cooperation. To say that these Jews were drawn by the Father to Jesus is very different from saying the Father just gave them saving faith. Those Jews “who [had] heard and learned from the Father” were drawn to Jesus, and the time came when they, of their own will, submitted to the Lord Jesus in faith. This does not detract from the fact that salvation is all of grace. The fact that some are (or eventually become) receptive to God’s grace doesn’t change the fact that we are saved 100 percent by the grace of God in Christ.]; **and I will raise him up on the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, ‘AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.** [This important verse is also discussed under 6:44. It seems clear enough that the time during which they

“had learned from the Father” was the period of years that continued up to the time then present. I’ll quote part of what F. Godet (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*) says under 6:43-46: “This teaching should have been accomplished by the writings of Moses taken seriously (John 5:46, 47), by the Word of God inwardly received (5:38). The law by making the Jew feel the insufficiency of his obedience and the opposition between his feelings and the Divine will, and prophecy, by exciting the expectation of Him who should remedy the evil, make Jesus a being known and desired, towards whom a profound attraction cannot fail to make itself felt as soon as He appears. ... Isaiah [54:13] here declares that the whole Messianic community will be composed of persons taught of God, whence it follows that it is only men who are in the inward school of God who can truly give themselves to the Messiah. ... Hence it follows that if the Jews do not believe, it is because this divine teaching has not been effected in them. Hence their inability to believe (verse 44); but this inability is wholly chargeable to them. ... It is therefore through their previous want of docility with regard to the means prepared by God, that these hearers have brought themselves into an incapacity for believing. ... The inability of the Jews to believe arises from the fact that they come to Him, not as persons taught of God, but as slaves of the flesh. They possessed the means of doing better; hence their culpability.” M. C. Tenney (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Zondervan, 1981], Vol. 9) says (in part) under John 6:43-45, “Verse 45 indicates that God would do His drawing through the Scriptures and that those who were obedient to God’s will as revealed in the Scriptures would come to Jesus.”] ... **(64) “But there are some of you who do not believe.”** [I should point out that at verse 60 the scene narrows down from Jesus speaking to a multitude of Jews to those called His disciples. Jesus was speaking to His “disciples,” but we have to say that some of them never were true disciples in that (as this verse shows) they never really did believe (have faith) in Him.] **For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe** [including Judas], **and who it was that would betray Him** [Judas]. **(65) And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”** [Apparently Jesus was saying that these “disciples” who did not believe, never really did believe in Him, and that the Father (knowing their hearts from the beginning) had never granted them the privilege to really come to Jesus in faith. See 6:44, 45. The “faith” of those who come to Jesus, but who are not about to really submit to Him (or God the Father) in their hearts, would be totally defective, and God knows our hearts.] **(66) As a result of this** [speaking of the difficult things Jesus had said about His being the bread of heaven, etc. (especially see 6:52-60)] **many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.**

**John 12:37-41.** [I’ll also include several other verses from the immediate context (John 12:36, 42-50) that will help us interpret these verses, aiming for the balanced truth. John 12:37-41 have much in common with John 6:44, 65 (just discussed). As with John 6:44, 65, I believe we can say that John 12:37-41 don’t even come close to teaching that God just gives us saving faith. But, whereas John 6:44, 65 showed that there were some Jews that the Father didn’t draw to Jesus, John 12:37-41 go somewhat farther (though the end result was the same) and show that there were some Jews (even the majority) that the Father (in some

ways) hindered from coming to Jesus.

There were many ways God could hinder Jews (harden hearts) from coming to Jesus. For example, the gospel wasn't designed by God to appeal to the fleshly/worldly aspirations of those Jews that didn't really have faith in Him. Christ didn't have the proper worldly credentials or religious credentials. He didn't win the approval of the leaders of Israel, but instead He often sharply rebuked them. He greatly offended the religious leaders by going against their traditions and healing on the sabbath, etc. His birth in Bethlehem, in accordance with Micah's prophecy (and other relevant information), was obscured by the fact that many thought of Him as coming from Nazareth of Galilee (cf., e.g., John 7:41, 42). He wouldn't let His followers make Him king [John 6:15], and He didn't attack the hated Romans. Much hardening throughout the history of Israel came through false prophets/demon spirits spreading their lies and half truths, which God had to at least permit. Cf., e.g., Deut. 13:1-5; 1 Kings 22:13-23.

It is significant that there is enough information contained in the Gospel of John to show the reason (at least it is a substantial part of the reason) that God didn't want some Jews to come to Christ, namely the fact that they really didn't believe (have faith) in God the Father—they were not His people, and they were not looking for, or open to, major repentance and change. God never hardens the hearts of those who haven't already hardened their own hearts. (Consider, for example, Pharaoh at the time of the exodus.) Those who were Christ's sheep heard His voice (John 10:26, 27).] **(36) While you have the light, believe in the light** [This is a typical exhortation to submit to Christ Jesus, who is the light.], **in order that you may become sons of light. These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.** **(37) But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him** [They were responsible for this unbelief (they didn't have a valid excuse), but their greater problem (sin) was that they hadn't really submitted to the God of Israel in faith, though they thought of themselves as being His people.]; **(38) that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?"** [These prophetic words (from Isa. 53:1) indicated that many would not accept the message of the gospel. For one thing, the gospel, as it is outlined in this all-important chapter of Isaiah, is very unexpected/remarkable (and glorious). Who would expect that salvation would come to Israel and the world through such a Savior—One who was indeed a Sacrificial Offering?] **AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"** [Apparently the idea is that people will not believe the gospel unless God's saving work in Christ is revealed to them. This is comparable to the being drawn to Christ Jesus of John 6:44, 65. (See above on John 6:45 for a discussion of the type of Jews that the Father drew to Christ Jesus.) To say that God reveals/draws is quite different from saying God just gives people saving faith.] **(39) For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, (40) "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART; LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED [TURN], AND I HEAL THEM."** **(41) These things** ["These things" refer to the quotations from Isaiah in verses 38 and 40.] **Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.** [There is widespread agreement that the apostle John is saying that Isaiah saw the

glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God in Isa. 6:1-5. Isaiah 6 is a relevant chapter in that the “quotation” in John 12:40 is from Isa. 6:10. I put the word *quotation* in quotation marks because Isaiah 6:10 is modified (adapted) in John 12:40. We’ll take a look at Isa. 6:10 at the end of this section on John 12:36-50. Here we need to discuss the meaning of John 12:39, 40.

The end result of what these verses say is that it was the will of God that many of the sons of Israel *not* believe in the Lord Jesus and be healed by Him. If you read too much into these words, you end up with ideas John never intended. Why would God will such a thing? Doesn’t the Bible say He wants all to repent and believe and be saved (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:3-6)? The dominant theme underlying John 12:39, 40 (a theme that permeates John chapters 1-12 and Isaiah chapters 1-6) is that many of the sons of Israel were so far from God, and so given over to sin, that any repentance and faith would be extremely superficial, and the end result would be bad, bad for the people of God, and even bad for the persons who wouldn’t really be submitting to Christ or God the Father (their sin and guilt would ultimately be increased).

When John writes (quoting from Isaiah 6:10) “And I [Christ] heal them,” he is not speaking of the glorious spiritual healing (which includes the new birth and the transformation to righteousness and holiness) that is offered to all who truly submit to the gospel in faith. For all who receive that healing, the sin problem will truly be solved, as it must be. John is thinking of a superficial healing, mostly in the external dimension, that makes things seem a little better for a while, and that postpones judgment for a while, but doesn’t really begin to solve the primary problem, the sin problem. For one thing, God did not want to postpone intense judgment. (That was also true for Israel in the days of Isaiah.)

When John wrote these words, Israel was headed toward intense judgment and shaking because of the depth of their sin problem (cf., e.g., Matt. 21:33-46; 23:37-39). Intense shaking came to Israel after they rebelled against Rome, starting in AD 66. Jerusalem was taken by the Romans in AD 70, and the city (including the temple) was destroyed. Then there was another revolt against Rome from AD 132-135, led by Bar Cochba, who was regarded by many as the Messiah, at least until he was defeated and killed by the Romans. From the time of this failed rebellion, Israel did not exist as a nation, that is not until 1948.

I should mention that in the years following Isaiah’s ministry Israel also experienced intense judgment and shaking because of the magnitude of the sin problem in Israel. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (including the temple) in 587/586 BC, and they carried Israel (Judah) into captivity. I should mention that it was to be understood that out of intense judgment comes the salvation of the remnant of Israel. This is a common Biblical theme (see, e.g., Isa. 6:13; 10:20-23; Matt. 23:37-39; Rom. 9:27-29).

I’ll quote part of what D. A. Carson (*The Gospel According to John* [Eerdmans, 1991]) says under John 12:39-41: “The assumption that God may judicially harden men and women frequently surfaces in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 9:18; 2 Thess. 2:11). If a superficial reading finds this harsh, manipulative, even robotic, four things must constantly be borne in mind: (1) God’s sovereignty in these matters is never pitted against human responsibility... (2) God’s judicial hardening is not presented as the capricious manipulation of an arbitrary potentate cursing morally neutral or even morally pure beings, but as a holy

condemnation of a guilty people who are condemned to do and be what they themselves have chosen; (3) God’s sovereignty in these matters can also be a cause for hope, for if he is not sovereign in these areas there is little point in petitioning him for help, while if he is sovereign the anguished pleas of the prophet (Isa. 63:15-19)—and of believers throughout the history of the church—make sense; (4) God’s sovereign hardening of the people in Isaiah’s day, his commissioning of Isaiah to apparently fruitless ministry, is a stage in God’s ‘strange work’ (Isa. 28:21-22) that brings God’s ultimate redemptive purpose to pass. Paul argues rather similarly in Romans 9:22-33.” **(42) Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him** [I assume that John is speaking of a real faith here (of men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, cf. John 19:38-42), though it is clear as we continue that (at that time) their faith left much to be desired. These words then, like so many other words by John, help confirm that faith is man’s part/responsibility.], **but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; (43) for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. (44) And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me.** [These words help confirm the point that the primary problem in Israel at that time was that the majority of the sons of Israel did not really believe in, or love, God the Father, the God of Israel, which they demonstrated by rejecting the One He sent.] **(45) And He who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me.** [Therefore, when you behold Jesus and reject Him, you are also rejecting the Father, which demonstrates where your heart is with respect to the Father.] **(46) I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. (47) And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them** [in other words, he does not submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word by faith], **I do not judge [condemn] him; for I did not come to judge [condemn] the world, but to save the world. (48) He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges [condemns] him; the word that I spoke will judge [condemn] him at the last day.** [He who does not submit to the Word of Christ Jesus in faith, does not submit to Christ Jesus; and as the next two verses show, he is thereby rejecting the Word of God the Father (and is therefore rejecting God the Father). These words certainly emphasize the awesome responsibility we all have to make it a top priority to find out what God has said, to understand it, and to submit to His Word in faith—this is serious business.] **(49) For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. (50) And I know that His commandment is eternal life** [The commandment of God the Father yields eternal life for those who submit (in faith) to His plan of salvation, which centers in Christ Jesus, His cross, and His resurrection.]; **therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.**”

Isa. 6:8-13. [This discussion of Isa. 6:8-13 completes the discussion of John 12:37-41. As mentioned above, Isa. 6:10 was loosely quoted (adapted) by John in 12:40, and there is widespread agreement that John 12:41 builds on Isa. 6:1-5.] **Then I [Isaiah] heard the voice of the LORD [Yahweh], saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I, Send Me!” (9) And**



**He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’ (10) Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.** [In the first place, we must understand the terribly backsliden condition of the majority of the sons of Israel (Judah) at that time. This condition is spelled out, for example, in Isaiah chapters 1-5. The things Isaiah says here in 6:9, 10 were not applicable for all, just for the unrepentant (and not about ready to really repent), backsliden majority. For example, God said the following words to Isaiah in 3:10, 11: “Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, For they will eat the fruit of their actions. [This didn’t mean that the righteous wouldn’t have to suffer at all when intense judgment came to Israel, but that God would always take care of them.] (11) Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he deserves will be done to him.”

Even though God had been calling for Israel to repent for many years, there still was some room for people to repent before intense judgment fell on Israel. The words of 6:9, 10 didn’t mean there wasn’t any room for true repentance, but it was more dangerous to be unrepentant all the time, even as it is in our day, at the end of this age. However, these awesome words of 6:9, 10 did show Isaiah what the typical response would be to his message (which included a call to repent, but also a promise of a full and glorious eternal salvation for the repentant remnant).

The great majority would reject his message, and this would hasten the intense judgment of Israel. And, significantly, these verses show that it was the will of God that the great majority not repent with what He knew would be a superficial/shallow repentance, and that intense judgment come to Israel. Remember that this is the way John used Isa. 6:10 in his 12:40. But it is important for us to understand the scope of these words. God wasn’t interested in a superficial repentance that wouldn’t begin to solve the sin problem in Israel. A superficial repentance would only lead (at the most) to a superficial healing, which would allow Israel some relief from the results of God’s past chastenings. See Isa. 1:5-9. I’ll quote Isa. 1:5b, 6, “The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faint. (6) From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, Only bruises, welts, and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil.”

God, knowing the heart condition of His people, had determined that very intense judgment was required. This intense judgment included the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, including the temple. As Isa. 6:11-13 in conjunction with much other Scripture show, God’s dealings with Israel leads to the salvation of the remnant of Israel (see, e.g., Isa. 1:24-26; 4:2-6; 10:20-23; Rom. 9:27-29; 11:26, 27), not to mention the salvation of the great number of Gentiles that eventually submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before we leave these verses, I should point out that the Septuagint version of Isa. 6:9, 10, which is quoted in Matt. 13:14, 15 and Acts 28:25-27, gives a different slant to these verses. This version doesn’t mention any role of God in God’s blinding eyes and hardening hearts. As discussed above, Israel was responsible for their unbelief. God always willed the repentance and faith of the

sons of Israel (and of all men), but not on a superficial level. (Of course I'm not denying God's foreknowledge; He knew the hearts of all mankind before the foundation of the world.)

I'll quote Acts 28:23-29, a passage that quotes Isa. 6:9, 10 (from the Septuagint version) and helps confirm that Israel was responsible for their unbelief: "And when they [Acts 28:17 shows that "they" were "the leading men of the Jews (at Rome)."] had set a day for him [the apostle Paul, who had just been sent to Rome as a prisoner], came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. (24) And some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe. (25) And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, 'The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, (26) saying, "GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; (27) FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.' " (28) Let it be known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.'" (Isaiah 6:11) **Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people, And the land is utterly desolate, (12) The LORD [Yahweh] has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. (13) Yet there will be a tenth portion in it [This "tenth portion" includes the righteous, repentant, believing remnant of Israel.], And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. [That is, the intense judgment that came to Israel through the Babylonians was not to be the end of sin and judgment for Israel.] The holy seed is its stump.**

**Acts 3:16. And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him [through it] has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.** [This translation of the NASB communicates the idea that the faith which led to the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple by the apostles Peter and John somehow came through Jesus Christ. A more literal translation of the Greek will be helpful here: "And on the basis of faith in His name, this man whom you see and know His name has strengthened, and the faith which came through it [referring to His name] has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all." We have to hear about His name (His name includes all that the Bible reveals about the Lord Jesus) before we can have faith in His name and Him. His name includes, for example, the facts that He is God the Son; He is the Lamb of God; He is the promised Messiah/Christ; He is a Savior; He is the One who brings us to God the Father; and He is a healer. Peter and John (and probably the man who was healed too) had to know (for one thing)

that the Lord Jesus is a healer in order to have faith for healing. We have to know His name—we have to know about Him before we can have faith in Him. We respond to God’s grace by faith.

Note that “His name” is mentioned twice in this verse and that the name “Jesus” was not specifically mentioned in this verse (in the Greek), which demonstrates that the pronoun after the preposition “through” refers back to the words “His name.” I should also mention that Acts 3:6 uses the word “name,” “But Peter said, ‘I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!’ ” His name is often referred to in Acts, with the word “name” being used at least thirty times. I’ll quote three of those verses: Acts 4:7, 10, and 12. These verses are directly related to the healing of the lame man in the temple. “When they [“the rulers, scribes, and elders” (Acts 4:5)] had placed them [Peter and John] in the center, they *began to* inquire, ‘by what power, or in what name, have you done this [referring to healing the lame man in the temple]?’ ... (10) [Peter is speaking] let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. ... (12) And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

In context Peter was exhorting a large crowd of the sons of Israel at the temple to repent and submit (in faith) to the Lord Jesus Christ (and God and His new-covenant plan of salvation). In Acts 3:16 Peter emphasized to his audience that the name of Jesus, which God had given to them, had again been proved genuine in the miraculous healing of the lame man. Now it was time for them to repent and submit to that name (which includes, of course, submitting to that Person) and receive new-covenant salvation.]

**Acts 13:48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.** These words fit a common Biblical theme (Thank God for this Biblical theme!) that emphasizes God’s role in our salvation. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. (For other such verses see the paragraph in *Once Saved, Always Saved?* that I mentioned above under John 6:44.) These words were not intended to communicate the idea that God just gives faith to the elect (or that He makes them continue in faith to the end). These Gentiles believed (had faith) in the gospel; it is something they did. This present paper and *Once Saved, Always Saved?* are full of passages of Scripture that confirm this point. However, it is true, of course, that apart from the plan of God and the grace of God, no Gentiles (or Jews) would have been saved. Note that Acts 13:46 emphasizes that the Jews who rejected the gospel were responsible for their unbelief: “And Paul and Barnabus spoke out boldly and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we are turning to the Gentiles.’ ”

**Acts 2:39. For the promise** [This speaks of the promise of new covenant salvation, with some emphasis on the gift of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Peter

spoke these words on the Day of Pentecost.] **is for you and your children, and for all who are far off** [Luke apparently intended that we understand these last words to apply to the Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:13, 17).], **as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself**. The way the word *call* is used here, God doesn't *call* everyone. This is a common use of *call* in the New Testament (cf., e.g., John 10:3; Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14), which falls in the category of verses like Acts 13:48 (just discussed) that emphasize God's role in our salvation. The way the word *call* is used here (and often) God *called* "as many as had been appointed to eternal life" (Acts 13:48). However, we must understand that, in another sense, a very real sense, *all* are called to repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith (cf., e.g., Acts 2:22-40; 17:30, 31; 26:20; Mark 16:15, 16; 1 Tim. 2:4-6). One primary point I want to make here is that there is a big difference between calling the elect to salvation and just giving them saving faith. (We still must respond to God's grace and answer the call, and we must continue in faith to the end.) And keep in mind that God's choosing (and calling) of one, and not of another, is based (at least in part) on His foreknowledge of what is in their heart.

As we seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches, one thing that we must understand is that words like those in Acts 13:48 and in this verse that emphasize God's role in our salvation weren't given to cause some to question whether they have been called to repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ—as I mentioned, it is biblical to say that all have been called to repent, as demonstrated by the verses listed in the preceding paragraph, and by much other Scripture.

Verses that emphasize God's role in our salvation show that He is in control, and they enable us to understand the security we have in Him, security we have in Him as long as we continue to do the things he requires of us by His enabling grace. He didn't just give us faith to begin with, and He will not force us to continue in faith to the end. We are responsible to press on in faith to the end by God's sufficient enabling grace.

**Acts 16:13, 14. And on the Sabbath day we** [Paul and his companions] **went outside the gate** [at Philippi] **to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer** [for Jews]; **and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.** (14) **And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshipper of God** [This terminology (cf. Acts 17:4, 17; 18:7) means that Lydia was a Gentile attracted to the God of Israel but that she hadn't become a full convert to Judaism. Paul's gospel was perfectly suited for such people.], **was listening; and the Lord opened her heart** [cf. Luke 24:45] **to respond to the things spoken by Paul**. [These words appropriately show our dependence on God, and He must receive all the glory (we have nothing to boast about in ourselves); but I don't believe they come close to saying that God just gave Lydia saving faith. She was responsible to repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith. Her heart was already open (to some significant extent) to God and His Word (the Scriptures); and for people like her, the gospel is good news indeed. I'll quote from C. Gempf (*New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1994]): "Luke's phrase the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message...is a

lovely way of giving credit to the Lord for successful preaching. ... That the Lord was responsible for the successes does not detract from Paul's (or our) responsibility to speak, much less the hearers' responsibility to repent and turn to the true God.”]

**Acts 18:27, 28.** **And when he [Apollos] wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren [at Ephesus] encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he helped greatly those who had believed through grace; (28) for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.** The end of verse 27 is frequently misunderstood, as if Luke was saying that the Christians at Corinth had believed through grace. I believe Luke was saying that Apollos “helped greatly those who had believed” at Achaia (a Roman province that included the cities of Corinth and Athens; Acts 19:1 mentions Apollos was at Corinth) through the grace of God which flowed through his ministry. This is a common use of the word *grace* in the New Testament (cf., e.g., Acts 6:8; Rom. 1:5; 12:3, 6; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 2:7-9; Eph. 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7). Also note that verse 28 goes on to speak of the effective ministry of Apollos. This ministry was clearly effective by the grace/Spirit of God. Apollos is in the spotlight, starting with verse 24. H. A. W. Meyer (Vol. 4 of *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament*) says, “[grace] is not to be connected with [those who had believed], but with [he helped greatly]; for the design of the text is to characterize Apollos and his workings, and not the [having believed]. The [grace] is to be explained of the divine grace sustaining and blessing his efforts. ... Apollos thus labored, not by his art, but by grace.” I. H. Marshall (*Acts* [Eerdmans, 1980]) says the view that “by his (gift of) grace he helped the believers...is preferable.”

**Romans 10:17.** **So faith comes** [This verb was supplied by the NASB in italics; there is no verb in the Greek.] **from hearing, and hearing by the word of [concerning] Christ.** This verse was discussed earlier in this paper as part of Rom. 9:30-10:18. I wanted to briefly discuss this verse here since it is sometimes used to try to show that God just gives us saving faith. Although it is true that we can't have faith in the gospel before we have heard it, that is very different from saying that by giving us the gospel, God is giving us faith. We still have to submit to the gospel in faith, having heard it. Verses 16 and 18 suffice to prove that the apostle Paul didn't include in verse 17 any idea of God's giving us saving faith. In verse 16 he speaks of the fact that many didn't submit to the gospel in faith; he says that they didn't obey the gospel. And in verse 18 he mentions that the problem wasn't that they hadn't heard the gospel.

**Romans 12:3.** This verse, which is frequently used to try to show that God just gives us saving faith, is discussed in detail in the Appendix of this paper, under the heading Rom. 12:1-8. As discussed there, I don't believe this verse says anything about God's giving us saving faith.

**1 Corinthians 12:9.** **to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing[s] by the one Spirit.** In context the apostle Paul is discussing the fact that the Spirit of God distributes the charismatic gifts as He wills. It is clear that

Paul is speaking of a charismatic gift of faith here, not saving faith. For God to give a believer such a gift is very different than giving a person saving faith. A charismatic gift of faith can be pictured as an amplification of the faith the Christian already has, which enables them to deal with situations they couldn't handle without this special manifestation of grace. In conclusion, I don't believe this verse offers any real support for the idea that God just gives us saving faith.

**Galatians 2:20. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me** [In other words, the apostle Paul had died to the old man, and he was a new creation in union with Christ Jesus.]; **and the life which I now live in the flesh** [Here Paul doesn't use the word *flesh* in the negative sense he often uses it (e.g., 5:16, 17); he just means the life he is living in the body (in this world). He walked/lived by the Holy Spirit (cf., e.g., Gal. 5:16).] **I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.** The reason we're considering this verse is because of the KJV translation: "I live by the faith of the Son of God." These words have often been understood to teach that the faith we are saved by, and live by, is actually the faith of the Son of God, somehow given to us. And there are several other verses where the KJV translates in a similar way, including Gal. 2:16; 3:22; Rom. 3:22; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9; and Col. 2:12. I'm not sure what the translators of the KJV intended to communicate here. Some scholars understand "faith of Christ" in the sense "faith in Christ." Anyway, I believe the NASB communicates the right idea. But it's not just the NASB, it's also the NIV, the *Amplified Bible*, the RSV and the NRSV, the *New English Bible*, the *Jerusalem Bible*, the NAB, and, significantly, the NKJV, namely every Bible I looked at. And there is widespread agreement in the commentaries on the meaning "faith in the Son of God."

This would be an appropriate place to discuss Mark 11:22, which concludes with the words, "Have faith in God." The KJV even translates it this way, and rightly so. However, sometimes you hear it said that the Greek actually says, "Have the faith of God." It's true that the Greek *could* be translated this way, but the translation "Have faith in God" is no less a literal translation, and it communicates the intended meaning: God is the object of our faith, a worthy object indeed.

**Galatians 5:22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.** The NIV and the *Amplified Bible* both have "faithfulness" with the NASB, but the KJV has "faith." The Greek noun is normally translated faith. In fact the NASB translates this noun as *faith* 238 times, and *faithfulness* only 3 times. Fortunately, we don't have to be overly concerned about which translation is the best here because the Spirit of God will enable us to be strong in *faith* and *faithfulness*. These two words are obviously closely related. For one thing, those who are strong in faith (I'm speaking of faith in God/faith in the gospel) will also be faithful (by the grace of God in Christ).

The main point I want to make here is that this verse doesn't begin to show that God just gives us saving faith. The apostle Paul is dealing with the kind of fruit that is produced in the life of born-again believers as they walk in/by/after the Holy Spirit through faith in the gospel (see, e.g., Gal. 5:5, 6, 16-18, 25). (This good fruit of the Spirit is contrasted with the sinful works of the flesh of 5:19-21.

The apostle warns born-again Christians in 5:21 that “those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Christians obviously can still do works of the flesh, but they will not do them to the extent they walk in/by/after the Spirit. That’s why the apostle exhorts us to always walk after the Spirit. This is a requirement, not an option.)

Paul is not dealing with the source of the faith by which we became Christians here. Furthermore, he is not saying that the Spirit of God makes us be strong in faith (and faithfulness), or that He makes us continue in faith (and faithfulness) to the end; however, he would say that the Spirit enables us to be strong in faith (and faithfulness), and enables us to continue in faith (and faithfulness) to the end. I believe Paul’s writings make it very clear that we must continually cooperate with God’s saving grace and with His Spirit through humble, obedient, trustful, persistent faith.

**Ephesians 2:8.** This verse is often appealed to in an attempt to show that God just gives us saving faith. However, I’m quite convinced that the apostle Paul intended no such idea. See the detailed discussion of this verse in the Appendix of this paper, under Eph. 2:1-10.

**Hebrews 12:1-3.** [The discussions of Heb. 2:1-3a; 3:12-14, 17, 18; 4:1-3a, 14-16; 6:11, 12; 10:35-39; and 11:1-40 earlier in this paper will help us rightly interpret 12:2, which some see as a verse which shows that God just gives us saving faith. The KJV translation (“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith”) helped initiate this (what I consider to be) wrong interpretation. It should be noted that the word “our” is in italics in the KJV, showing that it was supplied (wrongly I believe) by the KJV. The Greek has the definite article, not the word for *our*. (Here, as is often the case, the English does not require the definite article in the translation from the Greek.) I don’t believe this verse says anything about God giving us faith; rather it is part of an exhortation for the readers to press on in faith until the end of the race. This interpretation fits the emphasis of the epistle.] **Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us** [He is referring to those believers spoken of throughout Hebrews chapter 11, who have already finished their race in faith, and who have entered their eternal rest. They (the witnesses) bear witness to the faithfulness of God and to the certainty of eternal glory for those who press on in faith to the end of the race.], **let us also lay aside every encumbrance** [or, weight; the NIV has “let us throw off everything that hinders.” He is speaking of those things, though not in themselves (necessarily) sinful, that are inappropriate for a person making it top priority to rightly run, and finish, the race. We should all prayerfully consider all such things before God.], **and the sin which so easily entangles us** [In other words, sin causes the runner to stumble and fall. We obviously need to make it top priority to do everything we can to avoid sin. It’s very dangerous for runners.], **and let us run with endurance** [or, perseverance] **the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Jesus** [We can learn from, and be encouraged by, those who have run the race before us, but we definitely need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. He is our Lord and our Savior, but also, as the following words show, He is the forerunner for us to follow.], **the author** [This word (author), which was also used in the NIV and KJV, has led some to the mistaken idea that

what is being taught here is that the Lord Jesus gives us faith. The Greek noun could be translated *author*, but there are other ways to translate this word that fit the context much better. For example, I could be satisfied with leader, pioneer, or champion. These three nouns are common in the commentaries, especially the first two. This same Greek noun is used in 2:10.

As verses 2, 3 show, Jesus is presented here with the emphasis on His having run the race before us (by faith), and having done it perfectly. It is significant that 6:20 speaks of Jesus “as a forerunner for us.” (In the context of 6:18-20, we see that where we are headed [as we run the race by faith] is “within the veil,” where Jesus is now [having finished His race]. In other words, we will be glorified and fully taken to be with God forever.) But there is more, much more; 6:20 also speaks of the fact that Jesus has become our “high priest.” He has earned the right (especially through His atoning death) to become our great high priest. And, in that capacity, He is able to enable all those who look to Him in faith to rightly run, and to finish, the race (see, e.g., Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 7:11-28).] **and perfecter of faith** [First, and foremost, He is the perfecter of faith in that He perfectly ran, and finished, the race by faith. I say this because that’s what the writer of Hebrews goes on to speak about in the rest of verse 2 and in verse 3. But also, He (our Savior and great high priest) is able to make us strong in faith and victorious in every area, as we draw near to the throne of grace in faith (Heb. 4:14-16). I’ll quote a sentence from F. F. Bruce (*Epistle to the Hebrews* [Eerdmans, 1964]): “Not only is Jesus the pioneer of faith; in Him faith has reached its perfection.”], **who for the joy set before Him** [This speaks of the joy set before Jesus that would result from His fully accomplishing the Father’s will, especially referring to His atoning death. First we should think of the joy of knowing that He had done the Father’s will. But also, He knew that by doing the Father’s will, He would be saving God’s people, and He knew that He was causing the overthrow of sin, of Satan and his followers, and of death (spiritual death and physical death).] **endured the cross, despising the shame** [I would translate “disregarding the shame.” (See the BAGD Greek Lexicon.) That is, even though the cross was, to say the least, a very difficult assignment for the Son of God, He considered it a small price to pay when compared to the results that would flow from the cross/when compared to the joy set before Him. We too must keep our heart fixed on the eternal glory reserved for us at the end of our race. The trials of this age are very small in comparison to the eternal glory reserved for us. To keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, and on the eternal glory reserved for us, is part of what it means to walk in faith. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:16-5:10.], **and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart** [fainting in your souls]. We don’t have to grow weary and faint in our souls. Sufficient grace is always provided for those who keep looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, our forerunner and our great High Priest IN FAITH! He doesn’t make us continue in faith (or just give us saving faith to begin with), but He will make us strong in faith and well able to finish the race that is set before us, as we keep looking to Him in faith.

SOME MORE VERSES THAT WILL HELP UP UNDERSTAND FAITH



**Luke 18:1-8.** Now **He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray** [*We must stay in faith, always looking to God in prayer and trusting Him for sufficient grace to stay faithful until the end. See verse 8.*] **and not to lose heart** [The NIV has, “and not give up.”], (2) **saying, “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. (3) And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’** [And we must keep looking to God in faith, praying and trusting that He will make everything right for us, even as He said He would.] (4) **And for a while he was unwilling** [God never is unwilling, but He is not always in a hurry to answer our prayers, and especially our prayers for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. As verse 8 shows, the return of Christ, “the Son of Man,” is in view here. (God may not always be in a hurry, but He never is late either. And He will make all things work together for our good as we continue to walk in faith before Him.) The return of Christ will mean full victory over all opposition for us, His people. But we must stay faithful until He comes, or until the time of our death, if that should come first.]; **but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, (5) yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection** [The NIV has, “I will see that she gets justice.”], **lest by continually coming she wear me out.’ ”** [Like the widow, we must continually look to God in faith and come before Him in prayer. Of course God’s motives for making things right for us are perfect, unlike the motives of this godless judge, who cared only for his (temporary) peace.] (6) **And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; (7) now shall not God [the Judge of the universe] bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night** [In other words, they faithfully do what the Lord Jesus exhorted them to do in this parable. If this ungodly judge makes things right for this widow he doesn’t care about, how much more shall God make things right for His chosen ones, who continue to look to Him in faith, even in difficult times.], **and will He delay long over them?** [Sometimes it may seem that He delays long, but He is always on time.] (8) **I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily.** [The Greek behind “speedily” is also used in Rev. 1:1 and 22:6.] **However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”** In other words, there is no need to be concerned whether the Father will do what He needs to do, and on time; but *the real question is whether God’s people will persist in faith until the end. Of course we can persist in faith until the end. That is the point of the exhortation given by the Lord Jesus here.* However, we must make it top priority to understand, and to do, what God requires of us. The victory isn’t automatic; we must continue to cooperate with God’s sufficient grace by faith, in accordance with His Word.

**Acts 26:18.** **to open their eyes** [We are dependent on God’s opening our eyes, drawing, convicting, revealing, etc., but that is quite different than His giving us repentance and faith or making sure that we stay in faith to the end. We must repent and respond to God’s grace with faith and press on by grace through faith to the end.] **so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness** [Greek

*aphesis*] of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. I have some important things to say regarding the translation and meaning of this important verse, but I'll refer the reader to the discussion of this verse on pages 153-155 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Here I just want to call attention to the underlined words at the end of this verse. Being transformed to a state of holiness is received by faith just as much as forgiveness (and everything else that is given to us in Christ Jesus) is received by faith. Or, you could say by grace through faith.

**Romans 4:16-21. For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace** [These words confirm the important relationship between the key words *faith* and *grace*. Everything we receive *by faith* (and that includes full salvation from its beginning to its consummation in eternal glory) is unearned/unmerited and is, therefore, in *accordance with grace*.], **in order that the promise** [The apostle is speaking of God's promise of full salvation in Christ Jesus. Romans 4:13 shows that the promise includes inheriting the world, and that includes inheriting the new heaven and new earth of Revelation chapters 21, 22. Our faith is in God and His word, which includes His promise(s).] **may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law** [referring to Jewish Christians], **but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham**, [referring to Gentile Christians (cf. 4:11). The NASB has a parenthesis starting at the beginning of verse 17. I believe a parenthesis is the right idea, but I believe it should start right here in verse 16, instead of this comma. This is the viewpoint expressed, for example, in the *UBS Greek New Testament*, third edition (corrected).] **who is the father of us all** [That is, Abraham is the father of all true Christians (cf. 4:11-13; Gal. 3:7-29).], **(17)** ([As I mentioned, I would move the beginning of this parenthesis back into verse 16.] **as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU"**) [Paul quotes from Gen. 17:5 to back up the idea that Abraham is the father of all Christians (believers) from all nations, including Israel.] **in the sight of** [I would translate this Greek preposition "before" with the KJV and the BAGD Greek Lexicon instead of "in the sight of." We'll discuss the meaning as we continue.] **Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.** [The last part of this verse could be translated, "and calls the things not being as being." It is to be understood, of course, that when God calls the things not being as being, then they must, in God's time, become what He says. This applies to any of the things that God promised would come to pass, including the miraculous birth of Isaac, and ultimately the full salvation of all the descendants of Abraham (the people of God's true Israel, which includes all true Christians).

Now let's skip the parenthesis for a minute and discuss what Paul meant by the words, "faith of Abraham [in God and His promise(s)] before Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls the things not being as being." Abraham was before the God "who gives life to the dead," and he knew that he was. Being before such a God, it was not difficult for Abraham to believe Him when He said Abraham and Sarah were going to have a son, even though, as Paul says in verse 19, Abraham's body was as good as dead and Sarah's womb was dead. No problem for such a God, who gives life to the dead. Such a God can

also impart spiritual life to those dead in sin and spiritual death, and He can, at the right time, give His people and His creation the transformation to eternal glory by the impartation of the fullness of His eternal life.

Whatever God says/promises will come to pass because He is a God who means what He says, and who is well able to back up His Word. Abraham knew these things, and we, his descendants, must know them too. This is a big part of what faith is all about. I have heard Christians say that we, like God, have a right to call the things not being as being. Unless we limit ourselves to say things in line with what God has already said, we are looking for big trouble. We're not God! It is very important, however, for us to believe and confess what God says about us, and that it must be manifested/come to pass. For example, God has said that Christians are called, and enabled, to be holy and blameless, by His grace/Spirit.] **(18) In hope against hope** [Looking at things from a strictly human point of view, there was no hope, but Abraham was not limited to what man could do (and neither are we).] **he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken** [in Gen. 15:5], **“SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.”** **(19) And without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb** [If this is the correct reading (in other words, if this is the way Paul originally wrote these words in Greek), then the idea is that Abraham, while contemplating his body and the deadness of Sarah’s womb, did not consider these things to be very significant in that the word/promise and ability of God were so much more significant. It is also possible that the reading reflected in the KJV is the original and correct reading: “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead....”]; **(20) yet** [or, and], **with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief** [And we, Abraham’s descendants, are not to doubt and waver in unbelief.], **but grew strong in faith** [I believe the KJV communicates the intended meaning here: “was strong in faith.”], **giving glory to God** [This is important! We don’t ever have a valid reason to doubt God and His word/promises; as we press on in faith, no matter what things look like, we are glorifying God. This fact should strongly motivate us! We were created to glorify God and to enjoy communion with Him forever!], **(21) and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able to perform.** [Every Christian can and should have this same assurance. These verses (Rom. 4:16-21) teach us a lot about faith. We can, and we must, follow Abraham in this walk of faith. Of course there is opposition (from the world, the flesh, and the devil), and it’s not always fun; but no person/thing can keep us from receiving, and walking in, everything God has promised—by grace through faith.]

**1 Corinthians 2:5. that your faith should not rest [be] on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.** It is absolutely necessary for our faith to have its proper object, namely God and His Word. (In context Paul is speaking of the Word of the gospel.) The apostle Paul went out of his way to not give the Corinthians anything in himself (in the flesh) to cling to, or to have faith in, like “superiority of speech or wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1) or “persuasive words of wisdom” (2:4). He knew, for example, that the Greeks (Corinth was a Greek city) tended to be proud of their rhetorical and philosophical skills. (In 2 Cor. 10:10 he mentions that some criticized him, saying, “His letters are weighty and strong,

but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.”) Paul wanted to be received as a faithful messenger of God, anointed by the Spirit of God (cf. 2:4, 5), sent to call men to repent and submit to God through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul knew that for those who receive the gospel in faith, it is the power of God sent to save men from spiritual death and bondage to sin, to make them righteous and holy new creations, and to take them to heaven. (On the gospel as the power of God to save, see 1 Cor. 1:18-25, 29-31.) He knew that man can be attracted to the messenger more than to the message, and for the wrong reasons (things like the eloquence of the speaker, his beautiful philosophical presentation, or his personality). If a minister builds his ministry mostly on the things of the flesh (on worldly things), he may get a following because men in the flesh appreciate the things of the flesh. (Even born-again Christians have the potential to live mostly in the flesh; however, this clearly is an unacceptable, and dangerous, place to be.) To the extent that a minister builds his ministry on the flesh, his work is “wood, hay, straw” (1 Cor. 3:12), and the results will not stand either for the minister or for those he ministered to. In 1 Cor. 3:10-17 Paul issues a strong warning for every minister at Corinth (and everywhere else) to check up on their ministry and make sure they are not ministering in the flesh. This is serious business! The glory of God and the lives of others are at stake. Now is the time to make any necessary adjustments—judgment day will be too late.

**2 Corinthians 5:7; 4:13. for we walk by faith, not by sight.** [Cf. 2 Cor. 4:18 (quoted below); Rom 8:24, 25; Heb. 11:1, 13. If the apostle Paul had kept his attention fixed on many of the things that were happening to him, and around him, he would have gotten discouraged and given up, or at least been far less effective in his Christian life and ministry. (See, for example, 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 4:8-12; 11:23-33.) But, by grace through faith, the great apostle kept his heart fixed on God (and on his eternal home with God), and he made it his top priority to always be in the will of God, being what God wanted him to be, and doing what God wanted him to do. (After we have been caught up into eternal glory, our true home, we will be able to fully see what we can now see only with the eyes of faith. Cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 13:12. As someone has said, our faith will then become sight.)

I’ll quote several verses from the immediate context that help explain what motivated Paul (including 2 Cor. 4:13, a verse we should discuss): 2 Cor. 4:7-18 say, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves [that way God gets the glory]; (8) we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; (9) persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; (10) always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. (11) For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (12) So death works in us [Paul and his companions], but life in you [the Christians at Corinth]. (13) **But having the same spirit of faith** [He means that he has “the same spirit of faith” as the person speaking in Psalm 116:10 that he goes on to quote, a person speaking of his former difficult circumstances (before he was delivered), when he was close to death.], **according to what is written, “I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE,” we also believe, therefore**

**also we speak** [Apparently (in this context) Paul is using the verb *believe*, when applying it to himself, in the sense of trusting God to deliver him from death by resurrection into His eternal kingdom (whether he literally dies, or not, before the Lord returns). It is also true, of course, that God brought Paul through trial after trial that could have resulted in his death.]; (14) knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. (15) For all things are for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. (16) Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. [God renews us as we keep looking to Him in faith.] (17) For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, (18) while we look [BY FAITH] not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” And 2 Cor. 5:9, 10 say, “Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent [That is, whether we die and are “at home with the Lord” (5:8) or continue to live for a while in this world, being “absent from the Lord” (5:6). It’s not very important here, but I should mention that many understand the words “whether at home” in the sense at home in the body, still living in this world.], to be pleasing to Him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” [Paul was motivated, in part, by a strong desire to be fully ready to stand before God on that day, having nothing to be ashamed of. He didn’t want to ever bring a reproach on the One who had sent him or hurt any people by being unfaithful to his calling. Also, he didn’t want to lose any of the rewards that would come to him for living in the will of God and fully accomplishing his assigned ministry. The same things that motivated Paul should motivate us, and especially if we have been called to be ministers.]

**Ephesians 3:14-21.** [Ephesians 3:14-19 are one sentence in the Greek and in this translation.] **For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family** [I would translate “the whole family,” with the KJV and the reading in the margin of the NASB. The NIV has, “his whole family.” At a minimum, the family includes all the members of God’s true Israel.] **in heaven and on earth derives its name, (16) that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power [dunamis] through His Spirit in the inner man** [Starting with the new birth, the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians to enable them to be righteous and holy and to accomplish the will of God for their lives. Here it seems that Paul is speaking (at least for the most part) of the Spirit’s making us strong in faith. I say this mostly because of the next verse. (See the discussion there.) If this viewpoint is correct, it is to be understood that we, being strong in faith, will put God first, living for Him in truth, humility, righteousness, and holiness. It is Biblical to think in terms of the Spirit’s enabling us to be strong in faith (Gal. 5:22 KJV; cf. 1 Cor. 12:9); however (as this paper shows), we must continually do our part in order to be strong in faith (cooperating with and appropriating His sufficient grace). We must keep seeking God first, and the things of His kingdom (like the balanced truth of His Word, and His righteousness, and holiness).]; **(17) so that Christ may dwell in**

**your hearts** [I understand these words in the sense may fully dwell. Christ dwells in every born-again Christian (if Christ does not dwell in us by the Spirit, we are not born-again Christians, cf. Rom. 8:9), but He cannot *fully* dwell in us to the extent we allow fleshiness, worldliness, unbelief/doubt, darkness, unforgiveness, or other sin to remain in our hearts and lives. We are called, enabled, and required to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God by grace through faith.] **through faith** [The definite article is included before the word faith in the Greek. I understand these words to speak of the faith we have as those being strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.]; *and* [The NASB has “and” in italics; I would skip this word.] **that you being rooted** [or, perhaps better, “having been rooted.” This participle and the following participle are both perfect tense in the Greek.] **and grounded in love** [In the Greek, “in love” comes first, before these two participles. Apparently the idea is that we become rooted and grounded in love when Christ begins to fully dwell in our hearts. First, and foremost, we become rooted and grounded in a love relationship with Christ Himself (and God the Father and the Holy Spirit), with the emphasis on His love for us. But also, the Christian’s love for God, for one another, and for those outside the family of God (being enabled by the Spirit of God) is probably included here in what Paul means by having been rooted and grounded in love. It is important to know that the condition of our heart and life very much affects our relationship with God; it affects our present relationship, and it could affect our eternal relationship. See, e.g., John 14:15-24; 15:9-14; Matt. 7:21-23; Psalm 5:4-7; 11:4-7; James 4:8; Rev. 2:5; 3:1-6; 15-22. On the important relationship between our being holy and blameless and our abiding in a love relationship with God, see on Eph. 1:4 in my paper titled, “Verse-by-Verse Studies of Ephesians Chapters 1 and 4; and Romans 8:16-39.” At the end of this age, we will experience God’s eternal love, or His eternal wrath.

Lastly, I’ll quote part of what Chrysostom (AD 347-407) said under Eph. 3:16-19 (Vol. 13 of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by P. Schaff): “But how does Christ dwell in the hearts? Hear what Christ Himself saith, ‘I and my Father will come unto him, and make our abode with him,’ (John 15:23). He dwelleth in those hearts that are faithful, in those that are rooted in His love, those that remain firm and unshaken.”] **(18) may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth** [Paul includes in this prayer for believers the request that we would be able to understand all relevant information regarding the things of God and His kingdom.], **(19) and to know** [with the emphasis on an experiential knowledge] **the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge** [Apparently the idea is that this experiential knowledge of the love of Christ surpasses the knowledge of the things of God and His kingdom just spoken of in verse 18, as important as that knowledge is. Anyway, both forms of knowledge are available, and we need both of them. As in 3:17, first, and foremost, we should think of Christ’s love for us, but our walk in love (being enabled by the Spirit) could be included here. It is clear that we are required to walk in love.], **that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.** [In other words, that we would receive, and walk in, everything that God the Father has made available to us in Christ by faith.] **(20) Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power** [*dunamis*, cf. 3:16] **that works within us** [Ephesians

1:19 speaks of “the surpassing greatness of His power [*dunamis*] toward us who believe....”, (21) **to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.**

**Ephesians 6:10-20. Finally, be strong** [This verb was derived from *dunamis*.] **in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.** [See under Eph. 3:16 (which was just discussed). For one thing, *dunamis* is used in 3:16.] **(11) Put on the full armor of God** [The background for Paul’s illustration is the Roman soldier fully prepared for battle. It is assumed that the soldier (and we are all called to be soldiers in one sense, whether we like it or not) will be victorious if he rightly uses all the equipment provided for him. We must put the armor on, and keep it on, by grace through faith. The armor is explained as we continue. The warfare in which we are engaged by the power of God is really rather simple in one sense. By faith we receive, and walk in, the truth of God, and His righteousness, salvation, etc. The evil one and his hosts are trying to get us out of God’s truth, righteousness, salvation, etc.], **that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.** [God’s grace, when appropriated by faith, is always sufficient for us to live in His will and stay faithful to Him. However, we will always be defeated if we try to fight the devil in the flesh (cf. 2 Cor. 10:3, 4).] **(12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.** [As Eph. 1:20-22 show, the Lord Jesus Christ has already defeated the devil and all his hosts, and He has authority over them. Because of this we never need be (never should be) defeated by them; however, the warfare isn’t over for us, and we must make it top priority to walk in faith, appropriating all the grace made available to us in Christ Jesus.] **(13) Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day** [The evil day refers to times of special trials and temptations.], **and having done everything, to stand firm.** [It is necessary for us to get ready, and stay ready, to stand firm in the will of God. For us to not have all our armor on is to be defeated to one degree or another.] **(14) Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH** [By faith we submit to, and walk in, the *truth* of God, as it is found in His Word. Based on verses like Eph. 4:25 and 5:9, we can understand the truth here to include living in truthfulness and integrity (including speaking the truth).], **AND HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** [By faith we receive, and walk in, the *righteousness* of God, with the emphasis on righteous living. See, e.g., the discussion of Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21, 22 on pages 76-79 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin.*], **(15) and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE** [I believe these words should be understood in the sense that we are prepared to live victoriously in the will of God because we have submitted to the gospel in faith. Having submitted to the gospel, we have peace with God. And having peace with God, we can begin to have inner peace, peace in the Body of Christ, etc.]; **(16) in addition to all** [I prefer a translation like “with all of these” of the NRSV. As I have indicated in the preceding comments on these verses (and throughout this paper), faith plays a very prominent role in our salvation from its beginning to its culmination in glory. We receive, and walk in, the truth of God, the righteousness of God, the gospel of

God, the peace of God, and the salvation of God (cf. 6:17), and we use the word of God (cf. 6:17) and pray (cf. 6:18, 19) BY/IN FAITH.], **taking up** [I prefer the translation, “having taken up.” The Greek has an aorist participle, as it does with “having girded,” “having put on,” and “having shod” of 6:14, 15. In the Greek 6:14-20 are all one sentence.] **the shield of faith** [The Greek has the definite article before the word for faith. Rather than thinking of faith in God in a general sense, we should probably think here of faith in the gospel of the new covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have faith that we can be, and that we can do, all that the new covenant says we can (by God’s grace), and that God will watch over us and do everything the new covenant says He will do. Also, in the light of what I said above under 3:16, 17, I would include the idea here that God makes us strong in faith, as we look to Him (and His Word). This Roman shield was large (four feet by two and one-half feet) and would help protect/cover the entire body, including the other pieces of armor.] **with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.** [The attacks of the devil are designed to try to get us out of the truth of God, the righteousness of God, the gospel of God, the peace of God, the salvation of God, the use of the word of God, and prayer, but by faith we can win against all the attacks. (For example, by faith we resist temptation to sin against God and thereby maintain our [breastplate of] righteousness.) To describe the warfare in different words, you could say that all the attacks are aimed at getting us out of faith and into unbelief and sin; but God’s grace is always sufficient for us to stay strong in faith.] **(17) And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION** [Cf. 1 Thess. 5:8. For one thing, we must know that we have received salvation and that (assuming we don’t turn our backs on God; we are going to press on by faith, aren’t we?) we have eternal salvation.], **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** [The Spirit enables us to rightly use the Word of God in our daily lives. The Lord Jesus provides a good illustration of the use of this sword (see Matt. 4:4, 7, 10); He defeated the devil and maintained His perfect walk before the Father by using the Word of God.] **(18) With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit** [Cf. Jude 1:19-21. All our praying should be in the Spirit, who enables us to pray right; otherwise we will be limited to the flesh. The Spirit is here to help us in every area. Of course we need to pray in faith, and in line with the Word of God. At all times we should be looking to God from our hearts (in faith).], **and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints** [An important part of our warfare is doing all we can to help one another.], **(19) and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, (20) for which I am an ambassador in chains** [Paul was literally in prison when he wrote this epistle.]; **that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

**James 1:2-8.** **Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials** [Trials typically aren’t enjoyable, but as we press on in faith, we can rejoice (rather than doubting, getting discouraged, complaining, and such), knowing that they will work together for good (cf. Rom. 8:28). During times of trial (assuming we rightly respond to them), we glorify God (e.g., Rom. 4:20 KJV); our faith is proved genuine (e.g., 1 Peter 1:6, 7); we grow and become



stronger through spiritual exercise (e.g., James 1:3, 4; Rom. 5:3, 4); and there will be heavenly rewards (e.g., James 1:12; Matt. 5:10-12). It is possible, of course, for Christians to be defeated and go backwards, to one degree or another, by not rightly responding to trials. For us to rightly respond to trials, for one thing, we must know that we are in the will of God. If, for example, we have brought a trial upon ourselves through sin, then what is needed is repentance, not perseverance in faith. God's people are often slow to see their need to repent, but surely God will enable us to see where we need to repent if we seek Him first, and His righteousness and holiness. Also, we are not to seek for trials (cf. Matt. 6:13).], **(3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance** [or, steadfastness]. **(4) And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.** **(5) But if any of you lacks wisdom** [In this context James is speaking (for the most part at least) of the *wisdom* that will enable us to know God's will and to live in His will, wisdom that will enable us to blast through every trial and to live for Him in His truth, righteousness, and holiness. It is true, of course, that God's Word is the primary source for wisdom. If we're neglecting the Scriptures, we can hardly ask God for wisdom.], **let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach** [God doesn't reproach us for asking Him for wisdom and everything else we need to be victorious in the center of His will. He knows that we are dependent on Him for these things, and He has told us to ask.], **and it will be given to him.** [If we don't know such things about God, we can't ask in faith. It's no wonder the devil spends a lot of time trying to convince men that God isn't like this.] **(6) But let him ask in faith without any doubting** [Cf. Mark 11:22-24. What a blessing to know that we don't have to doubt God in our hearts. Doubting is a major problem for Christians, and we all have warfare in this area. But (thanks be to God!) as these verses (and much other Scripture) show, we are able (by God's grace) to be strong in faith and victorious over doubt. We must be convinced that God wants us to ask Him for what we need; and we must know, of course, that we are asking for things that are His will, solidly based on the Bible (e.g., 1 John 5:14, 15). Especially when it comes to asking for Christian basics like our need for God's *wisdom* and grace, so we can be victorious, righteous, and holy, we should have the utmost confidence that He will grant our requests. However, it seems that in these basic areas many Christians do doubt, and are not solid in faith. As I mentioned, the devil is very active here, but that is no excuse for us to allow doubt to remain in our hearts. A major problem is that many Christians have been taught that the Bible teaches that we Christians cannot live in the will of God on a consistent basis, that we cannot have faith to live in a state of holiness with the victory over all sin. Lastly, asking God (in faith) for wisdom includes having a true desire (heart commitment) to use that wisdom to live in the will of God. He knows our hearts.], **for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.** **(7) For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,** **(8) being a double-minded** [The Greek more literally means "double/two-souled." (Our primary thinking is done in the heart, not the head.) The soul/heart of such a person is not fixed on God and His Word (we're speaking of priorities, attitudes, motives, and such), is not established in love for God (cf. Matt. 22:37). Knowing the problem, we can begin to get our heart fixed by God's sufficient grace. The only other place this Greek adjective "double-

minded/two-souled” is used in the New Testament is James 4:8, where it has, “purify your hearts, you double-minded.” We purify our hearts from a lack of total (whole-hearted) commitment (from a divided loyalty to God) by His grace. These words (1:6-8; 4:8) certainly make it clear that we don’t have to doubt/be divided in our hearts. This is good news; is it not?] **man, unstable in all his ways.**

**James 2:14-26.** [I might mention that James 1:12-15, 21, 22; and 5:19, 20 are discussed in my paper, *Once Saved, Always Saved?* Many believe that James (here in 2:14-26) differs from the apostle Paul. It is true that Paul and James use the words faith, works, and justification somewhat differently; however, I believe Paul would agree in principle with what James says in these verses. For one thing, James and Paul had to deal with different problems. Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles, received much direct revelation regarding the fulness of God’s new covenant plans (including the important fact that Gentiles were not required to submit to the ceremonial works of the Mosaic Law in order to become Christians), and he had to frequently deal with distortions of the gospel coming from those trying to force the new covenant into an old covenant mode. In these verses James is dealing with the need for righteous living by those claiming to have faith in Christ.] **What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?** [Many Christians are confused on this issue, but I believe Paul would agree with the teaching of James here. Although it is true that Paul frequently said it’s faith, not works, he also taught that Christians must have works, the works wrought by God’s grace/Spirit. (See Note 7 on pages 129, 130 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for a discussion of what Paul taught regarding works.)] **(15) If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?** [Cf. Gal. 6:10; 1 John 3:17, 18.] **(17) Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead** [That is, it is not really faith at all.], **being by itself** [faith is by itself, without the necessary works]. **(18) But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”** [The works (those produced by the grace/Spirit of God) help demonstrate that the faith is real; it is saving faith.] **(19) You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.** [It is important to see that James isn’t saying that the demons are *believers*, that they have faith; he is only saying that they believe/know that God is one. To have faith in God includes submitting to Him, loving Him, trusting Him, and obeying Him (by His grace). The demons shudder because they know judgment day is coming for them (cf. Matt. 8:29). James’ point is that if you have faith without works, your faith isn’t worth more than the demons’ faith, and you, like them, aren’t prepared to stand before God in judgment.] **(20) But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?** [There isn’t much difference between saying such faith is dead (2:17) and saying it is useless. It isn’t real faith; it doesn’t make you a new creation in Christ Jesus.] **(21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar. (22) You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected**

[completed]; (23) and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM **BELIEVED** GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God [Cf. 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8]. (24) You see that a man is justified by works, and not by **faith alone**. [Christians are not justified by a dead, useless faith, a faith that is alone, a faith that doesn’t yield works of righteousness (a righteous life) by the grace of God in Christ.] (25) And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? [This work of Rahab reflected the faith in her heart; see the discussion of Heb. 11:31 under Heb. 11:1-40 in this paper. Apparently James just makes the point that Abraham was justified because of his true faith and the work(s) that flowed from that faith, and then he says the same thing regarding Rahab. It is a valid OT concept to speak of works being reckoned as righteousness (cf. Deut. 24:13; Psalm 106:31). It is also Biblical to speak of Christians being justified/found righteous at the final judgment based on works (cf. Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:13; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 22:11, 12).

Although what James says here is Biblical, he doesn’t really present the new covenant gospel, the gospel which is so well presented by the apostle Paul. For one thing, Paul uses the verb *justify* of Christians being declared righteous when they submit to God and His Son and His gospel. And Paul frequently uses the verb *justify* in a very full sense that includes our being born again and made righteous with the imputed AND imparted righteousness of God. (See, e.g., the discussion of Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21, 22 on pages 76-79 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* and the entire chapter on the meaning of justification in the new covenant.) It’s clear that James isn’t using the verb *justify* the way Paul does when he speaks of Rahab being justified by her works. Rahab’s ultimate righteousness and her place in God’s heavenly kingdom come through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ; her name is recorded in the LAMB’S BOOK OF LIFE (cf. Rev. 21:27).] (26) For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also **faith without works is dead**. [James again tells us that faith without works isn’t real faith (it won’t save us).]

Some Verses that Exhort Us to Pray/Ask/Look to God in Faith and Not Doubt in Our Hearts. [James 1:2-8, discussed above, is an important passage in this category.]

**Mark 11:20-25.** And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. (21) And being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which you cursed has withered.” (22) And Jesus answered saying to them, “**Have faith in God**. [I’ve often heard it said that the Greek would more literally be translated another way, for example, “Have the faith of God.” The Greek could be translated that way (though I should mention that the definite article is not included with the word for faith in the Greek), or other ways, but I believe the NASB, KJV, NIV, and every other translation I have looked at are correct with in God. There is no more literal way to translate the Greek. These words of the Lord Jesus Christ contained in Mark 11:22-24 constitute a very significant call for us to pray in faith, not doubting in our hearts.

Thank God for it! We have to guard against allowing doubt in our hearts as we live our daily lives before God, and as we minister in His name. We also have to guard against presumption, by staying in the will of God, which includes not going beyond what is written in the Scriptures.] **(23) Truly [Amen] I say to you, whoever says to this mountain** [Jesus was probably looking at (and perhaps pointing at) a literal mountain when He spoke these words, but the mountain represents those things that need to be removed from our lives, and such, by the power of God (cf. Zech. 4:6, 7).], **‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart** [For one thing, we must know in our hearts that this is a mountain that God wants moved. It is important to note that Jesus said “and does not doubt in his heart.” We can’t have faith in God in our hearts regarding any issue (like the moving of a particular mountain) and doubt in our hearts at the same time regarding that particular issue. (We discussed doubting above under James 1:6-8, and we’ll discuss it further below.) We can’t always keep thoughts of doubt out of our heads (but we must reject them and resist them); however, we can, and must, keep doubt out of our hearts, and especially when it comes to doubting the basics of the Christian gospel.], **but believes** [in his heart, not doubting in his heart] **that what he says is going to happen** [These words build on the fact that Jesus spoke to the fig tree (Mark 11:14).], **it shall be granted him.** [It will be granted by God. We’re not dealing with impersonal forces here. We must be careful that we don’t approach faith as an occult, impersonal power. Some Christians have made this serious mistake. One sure sign that we’re missing the truth is if we understand faith in a way that essentially leaves God out of the loop. He must be right in the center of what we’re doing. Faith isn’t a force, and it certainly isn’t an impersonal force. Our faith must be in God, and the desire of our hearts must be to please Him and to do His will. God moves the mountains, and He must receive all the glory!] **(24) Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you** [by God]. [These words by the Lord Jesus Christ certainly encourage us to ask for everything we need (cf., e.g., Matt. 7:7-11); they also emphasize the need to ask *in faith*. Thank God for such words! When are we to believe we have received the things we have asked for? When we pray/ask. Here “believe you have received them” means that we know God has heard our prayer and the answer is on the way—the timing, and the details, are left with God. Clearly, we cannot pray this way (and stand in faith until the answer comes, if need be) unless we know God has invited us to (as He does in these verses, and other verses), unless we know we are praying in His will (e.g., 1 John 5:14, 15), and unless we know that we are not violating our covenant with God through disobedience (cf., e.g., Mark 11:25; 1 John 3:21, 22). (I’m not saying that God never will answer our prayers if we have sin that has not been dealt with by repentance and asking for forgiveness, but our basis for heart assurance, for praying and standing in faith, is violated by disobedience). One last point, a very important one: We need to pray with Scriptural priorities. For example, we must make it a higher priority to learn the will of God and to walk in righteousness and holiness than to receive things like physical or financial healings (cf. Matt. 6:33). This is not to say that these latter needs aren’t important to God or that our lives have to be perfect before we can ask for such things, but we need the right priorities.] **(25) And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have**

**anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.** Before we ask for things in prayer (as in 11:24), we must take care of any necessary matters, like forgiving others, as spelled out in this verse. What a blessing to be able to forgive and cast our care(s) upon the Lord. He is the Judge, and He is well able to deal with the other person(s) as required (cf., e.g., Rom. 12:17-21, especially 12:19). As mentioned above, there could be areas where we need to repent and ask God to forgive us. It should be obvious that we must be forgiven (as required) before we are going to pray effectively.

**Matthew 21:21, 22. And Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it shall happen. (23) And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.”**

**Matthew 14:25-31. And in the fourth watch of the night [between 3 and 6 in the morning] He came to them, walking on the sea. (26) And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. (27) But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” (28) And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You [The Greek fits the idea that Peter assumed it was the Lord; the “if” here doesn’t demonstrate doubt.], command me to come to You on the water.” (29) And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. [It is clear that Peter actually walked on the water, being enabled by the power of God. He wasn’t into presumption (doing his own thing) since the Lord Jesus had called him. We could say that Peter was walking on the Word of the Lord Jesus. We’re not into presumption as long as we stay in the will of God for our lives. All of us must continue to walk in the will of God for our lives, by grace through faith, in spite of the trials and opposition from the world, the flesh (the old man), and the devil.] (30) But seeing the wind [With the wind there were waves, cf. 14:24.], he became afraid [We can learn a lot about faith, fear, and doubt from these verses. For one thing, fear and doubt often walk hand in hand. Peter became afraid, and began to doubt in his heart (that is he began to doubt regarding his present circumstances, not that he began to doubt the basics regarding God the Father and Jesus Christ) when his attention got fixed (at least to some extent) on the wind and waves instead of remaining fixed on the Lord Jesus and His Word. In our daily lives, and especially in difficult places, we must keep our attention and heart fixed on God and His Word, or we will begin to doubt too.], and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!” [Peter knew where to look for help when he began to sink. Thank God that He doesn’t just abandon us when we miss it, and especially as we cry out to Him for help.] (31) And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” [The fact that the Lord Jesus somewhat rebuked Peter for doubting should encourage us that we don’t have to doubt in our hearts. The words “O you of little faith” are translated from one word in the**

Greek, an adjective (*oligopistos*) meaning “of little faith.” The only other places this adjective is used in the New Testament are Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 16:8; and Luke 12:28. The closely related Greek noun (*oligopistia*), meaning “littleness of faith,” is only used in one New Testament verse, Matt. 17:20. I have heard some confusing things said regarding the meaning of “little faith.” In my opinion we can simplify and say that in all these verses little faith means he/they doubted, as it clearly does here in Matt. 14:31, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And, by definition, if we are doubting God in some area, we are not having faith in that area at that time. It is a matter of no faith (in that area, at that time) rather than a matter of little faith. Matthew 8:26 (with Mark 4:40) serves as a strong confirmation of this viewpoint: “And He said to them, ‘Why are you timid, you men of little faith?’ ” But Mark 4:40, which refers to the same incident, says: “And He said to them, ‘Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?’ ” So Matt. 14:31, and Matt. 8:26 with Mark 4:40, show that little faith sometimes means doubting/no faith. This same concept works well in all the other verses listed above that speak of little faith (Matt. 6:30; 16:8; Luke 12:28; and Matt. 17:20). Matt. 6:30 and 17:20 are quoted after Matt. 14:25-31. Luke 12:28 is the equivalent of Matt. 6:30. R. T. France (*Matthew* [Eerdmans, 1985] under Matt. 14:28-31) says: “...Peter’s loss of faith (of little faith is *oligopistos*, a favorite word of Matthew used elsewhere in 6:30; 8:26; 16:8; 17:20 [Actually, as I mentioned above, 17:20 uses a closely related word.], in all of which it denotes rather unbelief than inadequate belief) consists in allowing the material facts (the wind) to weigh more heavily than the power of Jesus. Doubt is literally ‘be divided in two’; true faith is single-mindedly focused on Jesus.”]

**Matthew 6:30-33. But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith** [As discussed under Matt. 14:31, I believe Jesus is accusing them of doubting in their hearts. Matthew 6:28 confirms they were doubting that God would meet their daily needs: “And why are you anxious about clothing?” Anxiety/worry goes with doubt.] **(31) Do not be anxious then, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “With what shall we clothe ourselves?” (32) For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (33) But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.** [Speaking in the full new covenant sense, God’s righteousness comes to us through the atoning death of the Lamb of God. Forgiveness is included, but there is some emphasis on the transformation to righteous living wrought by the Holy Spirit, and appropriated by faith. See on Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21, 22 on pages 76-79 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. This verse (and many other verses) shows that we have a Scriptural right—even a Scriptural necessity—to trust God to meet our daily needs as we make Him and His righteousness top priority in our hearts and lives.]

**Matthew 17:14-21.** [Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43.] **And when they came to the multitude, a man came up to Him, falling on his knees before Him, and saying, (15) “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic, and is very ill; for he often falls into the fire, and often into the water. (16) And I brought**

**him to your disciples** [Peter, James, and John had not been there since they were with the Lord Jesus when He was transfigured on the mountain (17:1-13).], **and they could not cure him.** (17) **And Jesus answered and said, “O unbelieving** [The Greek adjective used here (*apistos*) could also be translated “unfaithful.”] **and perverted generation** [Cf. Deut. 32:5, 20. See Luke 13:1-5. These words were aimed at the entire nation of Israel including, at least to some extent, His disciples (cf. 17:20).], **how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.** (18) **And Jesus rebuked him** [the demon], **and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once. (19) Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”** [I should point out that Jesus had given authority to the twelve to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1, 8). Some demons are more persistent than others (cf. “this kind” of Mark 9:29).] **(20) And He said to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith** [Most agree that “littleness of faith” is the correct reading here, and I assume it is, but it is possible that KJV’s “unbelief,” which is based on a reading found in many Greek manuscripts, is correct. As discussed above under Matt. 14:31, I believe “littleness of faith” here means that they doubted in their hearts; in other words, they got into unbelief. The following words of 17:20 fit perfectly with this viewpoint. Also note “unbelieving” in 17:17.]; **for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed** [The problem was that they didn’t manifest faith as a mustard seed (which was noted for its small size) when they were trying to cast out that demon—they doubted in their hearts; they got into unbelief in that situation, even though Jesus had commissioned them to cast out demons. Along with rebuking His disciples (in love), Jesus was encouraging them (and us) with the fact that they certainly could and should have faith as a mustard seed, with which they could move mountains and “nothing shall be impossible,” but they need not, and must not, doubt in their hearts.], **you shall say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you.** (21) [**“But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”**] The NASB put this verse in brackets, which indicates (from the editorial board’s point of view) that this verse probably wasn’t in the original writing. In the margin it says, “Many manuscripts do not contain this verse.” The NIV does not include this verse in their text, just in a footnote. The editors of the *Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, third edition, corrected) do not include this verse; they give a B rating to this decision. (This rating means “there is some degree of doubt.”) In *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by B. M. Metzger, which is a companion volume to the *Greek New Testament* (UBS), it says regarding the omission of verse 21: “Since there is no good reason why the passage, if originally present in Matthew, should have been omitted, and since copyists frequently inserted material derived from another Gospel, it appears that most manuscripts have been assimilated to the parallel in Mark 9:29.”

Even though the words of Matt. 17:21 probably were not included in Matthew’s original writing, we’ll go ahead and discuss the meaning of these words since it is clear these words are scriptural, coming from the parallel account in Mark 9:29. First I should point out that these added words are not needed in Matthew’s account since Jesus has already answered their question regarding why they could not cast out the demon. Mark’s account only includes the words of Mark 9:29 in answer to their question: “This kind cannot come out but by anything but prayer.”

Then in the margin (at Mark 9:29) the NASB has, “Many manuscripts add ‘and fasting.’ “ The *Greek New Testament* (UBS) does not include the words “and fasting” in its text, and it gives an A rating for its decision not to include these words. (This rating, which is the highest rating, means they believe the “text is virtually certain.”) The *Textual Commentary* (mentioned above) says the following regarding the decision not to include the words “and fasting”: “In light of the increasing stress in the early church on the necessity of fasting, it is understandable that [and fasting] is a gloss which found its way into most witnesses. Among the witnesses that resisted such an accretion are important representatives of the Alexandrian, the Western, and the Caesarean types of text.” I assume these scholars are right in saying that the words “and fasting” were not part of Mark’s original writing. For one thing, with verses like Matt. 9:14, 15; Mark 2:18-20, it is improbable that Jesus would tell His disciples that their problem was that they hadn’t fasted enough. I’m not saying that God never would lead Christians to fast in preparation for dealing with demon spirits. The verses I just listed show that there is a place for fasting in the Christian church.

We still need to discuss the meaning of the words of Mark 9:29. In this context (including Matt. 17:20 as a cross-reference), the prayer of Mark 9:29 probably includes the idea of continuing to look to God (in total dependence on Him) in faith (without doubting); they would look to Him for wisdom (regarding what to do in this particular situation) and for strength. There is a very close relationship between faith (Matt. 17:20) and prayer (Mark 9:29); for one thing, both include looking to God in trustful dependence. And, we must pray in faith.

**Luke 17:5-10. And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” (6) And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and be planted in the sea’; and it would obey you.** [Jesus’ response to their request for an increase in faith fits well with what we have been seeing, starting back at James 1:2-8. Matthew 17:20 (just discussed), which also speaks of having faith as a mustard seed, helps us understand Luke 17:6. In response to the apostles’ request for Jesus to increase their faith, He exhorted (and encouraged) them with the fact that they only need faith like a mustard seed to accomplish great things. For one thing, our faith is in a Big God, who has unlimited authority and power. He is the One who moves mountains, uproots trees and plants them in the sea, etc., as He responds to (and backs up) our words (and answers our prayers) that are spoken in faith that line up with His will. Jesus encouraged them with the idea that of course they can have faith like a mustard seed, but (as we have seen) having faith like a mustard seed includes not stopping to doubt in our hearts. The apostles (but not limited to the apostles) went on to move a lot of “trees,” and especially after Pentecost. (It is also true that our faith can be increased; it will grow as we learn more of God’s Word and will, as our faith is exercised through ministering and in trials, as we walk closer to God and become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit, etc.)] (7) **But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’? [It’s beside the point here, but a master like the Lord Jesus Christ might well do something like this.] (8) But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me until I have eaten and**



**drunk; and afterward you will eat and drink’? (9) He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? (10) So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’ ”**

When we live right (by faith), and move all the trees that need to be moved (by faith), we have nothing to boast about. For one thing, we only did what we were required to do. For another thing, we did it all by God’s sufficient grace. He must receive all the glory. However, we will be rewarded for our faith/faithfulness with eternal rewards/glory; this is quite different from trying to earn (merit) eternal rewards. We always have to stay humble and guard against pride, and all the more so when God is using us.

Before concluding this sub-section, I’ll list several passages that exhort/encourage us to pray in faith: Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13; John 16:26, 27; 1 John 3:16-23; and 5:14, 15. None of these passages use the words faith or believe. These passages are all easy to understand, with one exception, and they don’t require any explanation. The exception is 1 John 3:16-23, which we’ll quote and discuss next. We can learn a lot about faith from these verses.

**1 John 3:16-23. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.** [The apostle John is speaking of the “brethren” in Christ Jesus (cf., e.g., Gal. 6:10). In 3:13 he mentioned that the world hates God’s people. This fact often led to financial problems for the Christians in the early church (and not just the early church), who were persecuted for their faith.] **(17) But whoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?** [The love of God abides in us by His Spirit; He enables us to walk in love (cf., e.g., 1 John 2:5; 4:7, 12; Gal. 5:22).] **(18) Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.** [Cf. James 2:14-17.] **(19) We shall know [Greek verb *ginosko*] by this that we are of the truth [the truth of the gospel], and shall assure our heart before Him** [When we know the truth of the gospel, and we know that we have submitted to the gospel in faith and that we are living in line with it (including walking in love), we will have assurance in our hearts before God of our right relationship with Him through salvation in Christ Jesus. But if we know in our hearts that we are violating our covenant with God, we cannot have assurance in our hearts that all is well and that He will answer our prayers. The only remedy for this dilemma is for us to repent and receive forgiveness through Christ Jesus and His blood. It is important to see that we cannot have a solid faith in our hearts when we know in our hearts that we are in sin. In our day many try to solve the problem by emphasizing the love of God (and He is a God of love, but there is more that must be said) and by emphasizing forgiveness and the Christian’s right standing before God. However, there is no substitute for repentance (when repentance is required) and for making it a top priority to live in righteousness and holiness by the grace of God.], **(20) in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.** [The KJV has, “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” I would translate the first part of the verse, “For if our heart condemns [or, knows something against; Greek

*kataginosko*] us,” and the rest of the verse, “for God is greater than our heart and knows [*ginosko*] all things,” or, “[it (our heart) knows/we know/it is evident] that God is greater than our heart and knows [*ginosko*] all things.” It seems evident that the apostle John expected his readers to see the connection between the Greek verbs *ginosko* (used in this verse and in verse 19) and *kataginosko* (used in this verse and in the following verse). *Kataginosko* was derived from *kata* (a preposition meaning “against” [and it has other meanings]) and the verb *ginosko* (which means “know”). As A. T. Robertson (Vol. 6 of *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, under 1 John 3:20) says, “It means to know something against one, to condemn.” So, the meaning of 3:20 is that if our heart condemns us (it knows against us that we are doing something wrong), it also knows that God (we live before Him) also knows we are doing wrong. There is, therefore, no basis for us to have an assured heart (a heart full of faith) before Him. The only satisfactory answer is for us to repent if we know that we have a need to repent. Although John doesn’t deal with this topic here, I should mention that sometimes Christians feel guilty and have an unassured heart because of listening to false accusations of the devil, or their own reasonings, when they are not actually guilty before God. The answer to this problem is to reject these false accusations.] (21) **Beloved, if our heart does not condemn** [know something against; *kataginosko*] **us, we have confidence before God** [We can have an assured heart, a heart full of faith.]; (22) **and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.** [As we live in the will of God (by His grace), we are able to have an assured heart (full of faith) before Him, and our conformity to His will enables Him to fully bless us and to answer our prayers. It is assumed, of course, that we are praying in the will of God (cf., e.g., 1 John 5:14, 15), and that we are praying in faith, without doubting. We do not merit/earn the right to have our prayers answered through faith and faithfulness—the answers come by the grace of God—but doubt or unfaithfulness can hinder our receiving from Him.] (23) **And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ** [To believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ includes believing all the Bible reveals about Him, including His deity and His being the Son of God. This was especially relevant for the recipients of this epistle, because the heretics John wrote against in this epistle were in error on some of these basics (e.g., 2:22-26; 4:1-6; 5:9-13).], **and love one another, just as He commanded us.**

### Some Verses that Speak of Healing Coming Through Faith in God.

This section builds on and supplements that which was said regarding healing and health in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. See pages 55-67 in that book, and the other references mentioned in the first paragraph on page 55. This present section directly builds on and supplements #2 on pages 64, 65; the reader shouldn’t skip that #2.

**Matthew 8:5-13, espec. 8:10, 13 (Luke 7:1-10).** (10) **Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.”** (13) **And Jesus said**

**to the centurion, “Go your way; let it be done to you as you have believed.”  
And the servant was healed that very hour.**

**Matthew 9:27-31. And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, and saying, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” [The title “Son of David” fits the Messiah, not that all who used the title for Jesus understood that He was the Messiah.] (28) **And after He had come into the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” (29) Then He touched their eyes, saying, “Be it done to you according to your faith.” (30) And their eyes were opened. ....****

**Matthew 15:21-28 (Mark 7:24-30). And Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. [Mark 7:24 adds that “when He entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice.” It was frequently difficult for Jesus to find time to spend with His disciples, not to mention time for prayer, or even time for rest.] (22) **And behold, a Caananite woman [It is clear she was a Gentile (cf. Mark 7:26).] came out from that region, and began to cry out, saying, “Have mercy on me [We all need God’s mercy.], O Lord, Son of David [This woman clearly knew something about Jesus, but she did not necessarily know that He was the Messiah.]; my daughter is cruelly demon possessed.” (23) But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came to Him and kept asking Him, saying, “Send her away, for she is shouting out after us.” (24) But He answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel [that is, Gentiles (like her) were excluded].” (25) But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, “Lord, help me!” (26) And He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” [The bread represents the blessings (like healing and deliverance from demon spirits) that He was sent to give to the children, the people of Israel, which excludes the Gentiles who are pictured as dogs. Jesus insulted this woman, but I assume He knew what was in her heart and was giving her an opportunity to manifest her faith. She was desperate; she was persistent; she was humble; and I believe we can safely say that she knew more about what God the Father and the Lord Jesus were really like than most of the sons of Israel. She didn’t let anything dissuade her, and she glorified God by her faith. I assume that this woman went on to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.] (27) **But she said, “Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” (28) Then Jesus answered and said to her, “O woman, your faith is great; be it done for you as you wish.” And her daughter was healed at once.******

**Mark 5:25-34 (Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48). And a woman who had had a hemorrhage [flow of blood] for twelve years, (26) and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse, (27) after hearing about Jesus [She had to hear about Jesus before she could have faith in Him.], came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak [outer garment]. (28) For she thought [was saying], “If I just touch His garments, I shall get well.” [She was**

speaking and acting in faith. She had at least heard that Jesus was a mighty prophet of God who had been anointed by God to heal the sick (cf., e.g., Acts 10:38). On touching His garment, cf. Mark 6:53-56; Acts 19:11, 12. I assume that a woman with faith like this eventually received Jesus as Savior and Lord as she learned more of Him.] **(29) And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. (30) And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My garments?” (31) And His disciples said to Him, “You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” [But the woman touched Him *in faith*.] (32) And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. (33) But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what happened to her, came and told Him all the truth. [She was overwhelmed by the miraculous healing she had just experienced, but it should also be pointed out that her physical condition rendered her ceremonially unclean, and she was not permitted to come in contact with others (cf. Lev. 15:25-27).] (34) And He said to her, “Daughter, Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”**

**Luke 5:17-26 (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12).** And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there [These teachers of the law are usually called scribes (see 5:21). Most of the scribes of the Jews were Pharisees.], **who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. (18) And behold, some men [Mark 2:3 shows that there were four men.] were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in, and to set him down in front of Him. (19) And not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, right in the center, in front of Jesus. (20) And seeing their faith [These men demonstrated a persistent faith. We should probably think of the faith of all five men. Hopefully they had a faith that went deeper than a faith for miracles; I assume they did.], **He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”** [Apparently no one was expecting Jesus to say words like these; however, John the Baptist and then Jesus Himself (e.g., Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14, 15) called on their hearers to repent and receive forgiveness of sins. Those who received physical healings but didn’t (at least eventually) receive forgiveness and then (after Calvary and Pentecost) the new birth missed the much-more-important healing that all men need.] **(21) And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”** [The forgiveness that Jesus gave this man (and men in general) came from God the Father. But it should also be pointed out that Jesus was God, God the Son.] **(22) But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? (23) Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’?** [As I understand these words, Jesus was speaking from the viewpoint that both of these things were impossible for men.] **(24) But in order that you may know****

**that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—He said to the paralytic—“I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home.”** [The fact that the man will rise and begin to walk (which is impossible) on the authority of the word of Jesus helps demonstrate that He also has the authority to forgive sins (which is also impossible). It was easy to verify that the man was healed, whereas it would not be easy to verify that he was forgiven.] **(25) And at once he rose up before them, and took up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. (26) And they were all** [I believe we must qualify this word “all” here. It is doubtful, based on what we know from the rest of the New Testament, that all the scribes and Pharisees present glorified God for what happened. The fact that they were convinced that He worked miracles was not sufficient to convince them that He was of God. They accused Him of doing such things by the power of the evil one (e.g., Matt. 12:24). It is true that Satan does sometimes work miracles through men, but what a charge to bring against the sinless, perfect Son of God.] **seized with astonishment and began glorifying God** [The man who was healed and “the multitudes” (Matt. 9:8) gave God glory for the things He had done. They ascribed glory to Him for who He was and for what He had done; His glory had been manifested in their presence. God manifested His compassion for men and His desire to save them.]; **and they were all filled with fear** [This was the right kind of fear, a reverent fear of God, a fear that can, and should, lead to repentance, humility, and righteousness.], **saying, “We have seen remarkable things today.”**

**Luke 17:11-19. And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem** [This was to be Jesus’ last trip to Jerusalem; He was headed toward the cross.], **that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. (12) And as He entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him** [Because of their leprous condition they were not permitted to come into contact with those non leprous (e.g., Lev. 13:45, 46). Apparently most of them (probably nine of them) were Jewish, but at least one of them was a Samaritan (cf. 17:14, 16, 18).]; **(13) and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”** **(14) And when He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.”** [In their crying out to Him for mercy and in their going on their way to show themselves to the priests (in accordance with His instructions) before they were cleansed, we can see some faith. Leviticus 14:1-32 gave instructions for leprosy who had been cleansed from their leprosy to go to the priests to be pronounced clean, etc. Cf. Luke 5:14.] **And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. (15) Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, (16) and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. (17) And Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? (18) Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?”** [We aren’t given the answer here to this important question as to why the other nine, probably all Jewish, didn’t return to give thanks and glorify God. We can probably say that their hearts were less open to God. For one thing, the nine may have thought of themselves as deserving the miraculous cleansing because they were Jewish. (If you think you deserve something, there is little basis for gratitude; however, everything we receive from

God comes through His grace/mercy, and we must be grateful.) The fact that Jesus was controversial in Israel and rejected by most of the leadership of the nation may have been a factor in their not returning to Jesus. It could cost you something to be too closely associated with Him (cf., e.g., John 9:13-34, espec. 9:22). Anyway, the one who returned probably ended up receiving far more than the nine. For one thing, with the attitude of his heart being what it was, he probably went on to receive Jesus as His Savior and His Lord, whereas it seems far less likely with the others. We all need to be careful to maintain an attitude of thankfulness and gratitude for all the things we have received from God. Even when things aren't going exactly like we would have them, and God hasn't answered some of our prayers yet, we have so much to be thankful for, and especially the salvation of our eternal souls. Thankfulness and gratitude for God's grace/mercy toward us must accompany a walk of faith.] **(19) And He said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."** [Perhaps these words *could* have been spoken to all ten lepers, but (as discussed above) it seems clear that this Samaritan ended up receiving much more than the others.]

**Luke 18:35-43 (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52). And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho** [The Lord Jesus is still on His way to Jerusalem, where the cross (but also the resurrection and ascension) awaits Him. He knew this and informed His disciples, but they didn't (at that time) understand much of what He said to them (e.g., Luke 18:31-34),] **a certain blind man** [In Mark 10:46 his name is given: "Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus." ("Bar" is Aramaic for "son.")] **was sitting by the road, begging. (36) Now hearing a multitude going by, he began to inquire what this might be. (37) And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. (38) And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"** [Bartimaeus may have understood that Jesus was the Messiah since he called Him the "Son of David." He at least knew that he could receive mercy from/through Him. We see his faith, and as the next verse shows, it was a persistent faith. Verse 42 confirms that he had faith for his healing, and verse 43 shows his thankful heart. I assume that he eventually went on to become a Christian; however, the fact that he had faith for his healing and was thankful didn't prove that he would necessarily receive Jesus as his Savior and his Lord. Many receive miracles from God and go on their way, or even if they become Christians, they have very little commitment and fall away.] **(39) And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (40) And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he had come near, He questioned him, (41) "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" (42) And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." (43) And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.**

**Acts 14:8-10. And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, without strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked. (9) This man was listening to Paul as he spoke** [The apostle Paul was preaching the gospel of new covenant salvation. The gospel centers in the atoning death of

Christ Jesus and offers mankind the only solution to the all-pervasive sin problem. Through faith in Christ men are offered forgiveness and the transformation to righteousness and holiness. The gospel that Paul preached included healing, also based on the atoning death of Christ Jesus. (See pages 55-57 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, including the references to Extended Notes B and D.) That's why this man could have faith for his healing—he believed what Paul was saying. There is every reason to believe that this man believed everything that Paul was saying, including the more-important need to be forgiven and sanctified in preparation for the coming day of judgment.], **who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, (10) said with a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he leaped up and began to walk.** We are not told how Paul could see that the man had faith to be healed. It could have been a revelation by the Holy Spirit to Paul, but it is possible that in this case no special revelation was needed.

**James 5:14-16. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord** [This is only one of several Biblical ways to pray for the sick. Mark 6:13 is the only other verse that mentions anointing with oil in connection with praying for healing. Praying for the sick isn't limited to the elders. All Christians can pray for the sick, and some Christians (not limited to elders) have been especially gifted in this area (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 12:8-10, especially “gifts of healings.”); (15) and **the prayer offered in faith** [The need to pray with faith is emphasized in James (cf. James 1:5-8); we cannot pray with faith for healing unless we know that healing is the will of God (cf. 1 John 5:14, 15). The faith of those praying for the sick is apparently emphasized here; however, in most cases the faith of the one prayed for is important too. (There is a definite limit to what we can do for other Christians, and all the more so if they have been Christians for some time.) Note that the one being sick calls for the elders.] **will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up** [It is God who heals, not some power contained in faith, and He must receive the glory.], **and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.** [James doesn't express any doubt as to whether God will heal the sick. (Very often healings aren't instantaneous; when they aren't, we must stand in faith.) But he includes two necessary conditions. One is the need to pray in faith, without doubting. This doesn't mean that God never answers prayers for Christians who aren't praying in faith (without doubting in their hearts), and especially for those young in the faith; however, it is very important for us to learn to pray in faith and to resist doubt. A second condition is that the one who is sick repents and asks for forgiveness “if he has committed sins.” Sometimes sickness is caused by sin. (See #1 on page 63 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.)] **(16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.** [These words are tied (at least to some extent) to 5:14, 15; note that this verse starts with “therefore.” For example, the one who is sick and calls for the elders of the church might confess his sin to the elders (if there is a need to repent and confess sin) before they pray for healing. Whether he confesses his sin before the elders or not, he would, of course, need to repent and confess any sin before God. This is true whether we are sick, or not. Some wisdom is required in confessing sins before men.] **The**

**effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.** [We can/should all be righteous and effective in prayer.]

Mark 6:1-6a (Matthew 13:54-58). [These verses are different in that they speak of miracles not coming to pass because of unbelief. Luke 4:16-30 apparently speak of this same visit to Nazareth.] **And He went out from there, and He came into His home town; and His disciples followed Him. (2) And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, “Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?”** [First we should discuss what is meant by “such miracles.” In the light of 6:5, 6a, we probably should understand “such miracles” to refer to the miracles they heard He had been doing (see Luke 4:23-27). It is clear that Jesus was rejected at Nazareth; they could not deny the wisdom and the miracles, but things like claiming to fulfill the prophecy of Isa. 61:1, 2 regarding the Anointed One (Luke 4:17-21) went too far for them. Some were undoubtedly thinking that the source of Jesus’ wisdom and miracles must be the evil one. Luke 4:28, 29 even shows they attempted to kill Him.] **(3) Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?” And they took offense at Him. (4) And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household.” (5) And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them. (6) And He wondered at their unbelief.** [As we saw above, it wasn’t that they didn’t believe He could work miracles. Their primary problem was their unbelief regarding Jesus being sent by God, and being anointed by God. We need not say, however, that there weren’t any people at Nazareth who believed in Him. For one thing, those “few sick people” who were healed probably believed in Him.]

## Appendix

**Romans 12:1-8.** [This passage contains some very important teaching. Verses 1, 2 constitute a powerful call for Christians to walk in a state of holiness, and verses 3-8 constitute an important teaching on the proper functioning of the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians chapter 12 is an important cross-reference for verses 3-8.) The word *faith* is used in verses 3 and 6. In my opinion, Paul’s use of this word in these verses is very often misunderstood. For one primary thing, there is no idea here of God’s giving us faith.] **I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable [or, well-pleasing] to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.** [The apostle Paul exhorts the Christians at Rome (and all Christians) to once-for-all present themselves, including their bodies, to God as a sacrifice. This new covenant form of sacrificial worship is obviously much more glorious than the literal animal sacrifices offered under the old covenant.] **(2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind** [I would translate renewal with the



BAGD Greek Lexicon rather than renewing. The apostle is not speaking of a gradual process of withdrawal from the sinful/unholy ways of the world, but of a once-for-all transformation to an abiding state of holiness by the renewal of the mind (of the way we think). He said, “do not be conformed to this world.” It is also true that we should continue to grow throughout our lives as born-again Christians (including growing in wisdom and knowledge of God’s Word and growing more like the Lord Jesus Christ), but in the ideal case we will think right in our hearts and have the victory over sin and live in a state of holiness from the time we become Christians. See Romans chapter 6 and 8:1-17, for example. See my book, “Holiness and Victory Over Sin” on this super-important topic.

It is necessary to see that the “mind” is not at all limited to the head. We do our most important thinking in our hearts. This thinking includes our ideas about God, and our priorities, attitudes, and motives. Thinking right isn’t all that complicated. If you just heard the apostle Paul for a few hours, you could know enough to live right. I am speaking of born-again Christians; we have been redeemed, born again, made new creations, and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who enables us to think right and live right. We cannot live right until we think right in our hearts. I’m not suggesting that once you have a renewed mind you will never have another wrong thought or desire, but I am saying that if we walk in line with the Word of God and by the Holy Spirit by faith, we will be able to prevent wrong thoughts and desires from becoming sin. Thanks be to God! For more information on this renewal of the mind by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, see Rom. 8:5-8 and Eph. 4:23 (with the translation, “be renewed BY THE SPIRIT IN YOUR MIND”, or, IN YOUR WAY OF THINKING”); these verses are discussed in my book, “Holiness and Victory Over Sin” (on Rom. 8:5-8, pages 118-120; on Eph. 4:23, pages 138, 139).], **that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable** [or, well-pleasing] **and perfect**. [I would translate “approve” with the BAGD Greek Lexicon instead of “prove.” With a renewed mind (in the ideal case), we will *approve* the things that line up with God’s Word, and we will *do* them, thereby maintaining a state of holiness.] **(3) For** [This word shows the connection between verses 1, 2 and verses 3-8. The apostle Paul’s teaching in verses 3-8 shows something of what he means by having a renewed mind.] **through the grace given to me** [The apostle ministered by the grace of God. Because of this his work was done right; God got the glory; and Paul was able to stay humble. (We all must fulfill our assignments in the Body of Christ by the grace of God; the only alternative is to try to do them by the flesh, which is guaranteed to make a mess.) Since Paul was speaking with apostolic authority, he expected his readers to submit to the Word of God spoken through him.] **I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think** [Note the tie to the renewal of the mind (of the way we think) of Rom. 12:2. To the extent that we are thinking the ways of the world/flesh, we probably will think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think.]; **but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted** [or, measured] **to each a measure** [For the time being I’ll skip the last two words of the sentence. We won’t begin to understand these verses, including Paul’s use of the word *faith* in verses 3 and 6, until we understand his use of the word *measure* here in verse 3 and the word *proportion* in verse 6. Let’s look at several other verses where Paul uses this same Greek noun for measure (*metron*). Ephesians 4:7 says: But to each one of us grace was given according to the

measure [metron] of Christ's gift. In other words, every Christian is given assignments to fulfill in the Body of Christ and the grace to fulfill those assignments, and it is Christ Himself (the Head of the Body) who determines what these assignments are and distributes the appropriate grace to fulfill these assignments. The grace spoken of here goes beyond the all-important foundational grace given to each Christian which enables them to be born again, to live in holiness, to walk in love, etc. Ephesians 4:16 says: from whom [Christ] the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies [I believe the literal translation given in the margin is to be preferred: through every joint of the supply. Apparently the "joint(s)" of the body represent those in the ministry. This viewpoint fits the context in that Paul speaks of the five-fold ministry in verses 11, 12. They are the joints of the supply, in that the body is supplied by God with much of what it needs through the ministry.], according to the proper working of each individual part [Here the literal translation given in the margin is strongly to be preferred, especially since we are studying Paul's use of the word *measure*: according to the working in [the] measure [metron] of each individual part. In other words, the Body of Christ cannot fully function and grow as it should without each Christian fulfilling their measure by the grace measured to them.], causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. In 2 Cor. 10:13 the apostle uses *metron* referring to the measure of his assigned ministry: But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure [metron] of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure [metron], to reach even as far as you. Paul's *measure* included, for one thing, being the primary minister of God to bring the gospel to Corinth (see 2 Cor. 10:15). Let's look at one last verse that uses *metron* in a way that will help us understand Paul's use of this word in Rom. 12:3. John 3:34 says: For He [the Lord Jesus] whom God [the Father] has sent speaks the words of God; for He [God the Father] gives the Spirit [to the Lord Jesus] without measure [metron]. Jesus was the only man (He was much more than just a man; He was the God-man) who was given the Spirit *without measure*. Each Christian is given the Spirit (including the gifts of the Spirit) *by measure*. So then, the word *measure* here in Rom. 12:3 speaks of the place assigned to each Christian in the Body of Christ. It includes their special assignments and the grace required to fulfill those assignments.] **of faith.** [If we translate the Greek this way ("of faith"), it makes it almost impossible to understand what the apostle is saying here. A translation like in (the) faith is required. It is common for the New Testament to speak of the faith, and sometimes it is necessary to supply the definite article (the) in the English translation when it is not included in the Greek. (This is not surprising in that the use of the definite article in Greek is not fully equivalent to its use in English.) I'll quote several verses that use the words the faith in a way that will help us understand Rom. 12:3. 2 Corinthians 13:5 says: Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? Galatians 6:10 says: So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. 1 Timothy 1:2 says: to Timothy, my true child in the faith.... Titus 3:15 says: All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. The last two references are doubly relevant in that the word "the" was supplied (rightly I believe) before the word faith. (The NASB has "the" in italics, showing that the definite article was not

included in the Greek.) And 1 Tim. 3:13 says: For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high [good] standing [or, rank, position] and great confidence [or, boldness] in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. The Greek of 1 Tim. 3:13 does not have the definite article before the word faith, but the English translation requires the definite article before the word faith. The word faith is clearly made definite (specific) by the added words, “that is in Christ Jesus.”

To further justify the translation in the faith here in Rom. 12:3, I should point out that in the Greek of 12:3 there is no word for “of.” (It just has *metron* followed by the word for faith in the genitive case.) I believe we should supply the word “in” instead of “of.” (The translation “in” fits the Greek well.) Every true Christian has been allotted (measured) a measure in the faith. That is, they have been given a place in the Body of Christ, with each Christian having assignments to fulfill (functions to perform) and the grace necessary to fulfill those assignments. (Instead of saying they have been given a place in the Body of Christ, you could say they have been given a place in the Christian faith/religion. True Christianity embraces all those who have faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.) This understanding of the last part of Rom. 12:3 fits perfectly with the rest of the verse, and, more significantly, it is confirmed by Rom. 12:4-8. (Note that 12:4-8 is tied to 12:3 by the word “For” at the beginning of 12:4.)

How then should a Christian think of himself so as not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think (Rom. 12:3)? He should think of himself exactly in line with the *measure* God has given him. Also, he has no right to boast of himself in regard to anything he has received from God (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 1:26-31; 3:5-7; 4:7). A major point here, which the apostle will amplify in Rom. 12:4-8, is that *Christians must be very careful to stay within their measure*. It causes serious strife and confusion in the Body of Christ when, for example, a prophet or a teacher at Rome starts thinking of himself as having equal authority with the apostle Paul (or, even greater authority). For one thing, ministers are not called to compete with one another. That is a manifestation of the flesh. It is very important that every apostle, every prophet, every teacher, every evangelist, every pastor, every elder, every deacon, every Christian, stay within their *measure*. Otherwise the church will be out of divine order. I believe this is a major problem in the church today. It is rather easy for born-again Christians to think and walk in the flesh, instead on in the Holy Spirit. I should emphasize the point that when we try to minister outside of the MEASURE assigned to us by God, we won’t have the grace required to properly fulfill the ministry, and we are sure to make a mess to one degree or another.] **(4) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.** [In the human body there are many different members, with each member fulfilling their important, God-ordained functions. So it is in the Body of Christ. The *measure* we have received from God determines what our assignments (functions) are.] **(6) And since we have gifts** [“Gifts” is the plural of *charisma*, which is closely related to *charis* (the Greek word for grace). A gift is a manifestation of God’s grace.] **that differ according to the grace [charis] given to us** [The differing grace/gifts goes with the differing *measures*.], *let each exercise them accordingly* [I don’t believe these five words added by the NASB in italics are fully adequate. Something like the following addition must be understood: *let us exercise them accordingly, being*

*very careful to stay within our measure.* The dominant message of 12:3-8 is that we shouldn't think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (as we will do to the extent that we are conformed to this world/to the extent that we are walking according to the old man); but (with a renewed mind, as we think in agreement with the Word of God and by the Spirit of God, we are to think of ourselves in line with the *measure* God has measured to us, and act accordingly.]: **if prophecy** [Prophesying often goes with the ministry of the prophet, and I believe Paul is thinking of the prophet here. He has already referred to the grace given to him in verse 3, the grace to be an apostle (a very special apostle). In 1 Cor. 12:28 Paul says: "And God has appointed [set] in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...." Every ministry (every *measure*) is important, but clearly some are more important than others. It is reasonable for Paul to mention the prophet first out of respect for the prophets at Rome, but it is also true that a prophet at Rome could be one of the most likely persons to think more highly of himself than he ought to think and reject Paul's apostolic ministry. Cf. 1 Cor. 14:37. Anyway, whatever measure (including *prophecy*) a person has received, they must be very careful to stay within their *measure*, as the apostle goes on to say with the following words.], **according to the proportion of his faith** [As I said regarding the translation at the end of verse 3, so here; I don't believe we could possibly get Paul's intended meaning from this translation. (The KJV and NIV translations are not any more helpful.) In the first place, the Greek word translated "his" is the definite article, and if we translate it the most literal way, it communicates the right idea: the faith. Next we need to see that the word proportion here in verse 6 is equivalent in meaning to the word measure in verse 3. Here's part of the definition of *proportion* from *Webster's New World Dictionary*: "a part, share, or portion, especially in its relation to the whole." Lastly, it is probably better to translate "in" instead of "of," as in verse 3, but the translation "of" will probably suffice here in verse 6. So I would translate the last part of verse 6 as according to the proportion in the faith. If *prophecy* is your part/share/portion/measure (or whatever else your *measure* is in the faith/in the Body of Christ), then you must faithfully perform your function(s) by grace, being very careful to stay within your part/share/portion/measure. If one with a gift of prophecy (even if he has a powerful and effective ministry as a prophet) decides he wants to function as an apostle, teacher, etc., we are headed for confusion and trouble. Of course it is possible for God to give to one person the *measure* to be a prophet and a teacher, or a prophet and a pastor, etc.]; **(7) if service** [I would translate ministry with the KJV instead of "service." "Ministry" is the way the NASB most often translates this Greek noun.], **in his serving** [I would translate in the ministering. As at the end of verse 6, the word translated "his" is the definite article in Greek and is typically translated "the." The meaning then (in full agreement with everything the apostle says in 12:3-8) is that whatever ministry constitutes your measure, faithfully fulfill your measure by grace, being very careful to stay within your measure.]; **or he who teaches, in his teaching** [I would translate or he who teaches, in the teaching, or the equivalent. As above, the word translated "his" by the NASB is the definite article in the Greek. The *measure* of being a teacher in the Body of Christ (along with the following *measure* of being an exhorter) is probably listed here as a prime example of ministering. There are, of course, different types of teaching ministries, depending on the measure given by God. The one teaching must faithfully fulfill

his ministry by the grace of God and remain within the measure assigned him by God. It is true, of course, that as we are faithful, God can increase our measure.]; **(8) or he who exhorts, in his [the] exhortation; he who gives, with liberality** [or, simplicity]; **he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.** [It is interesting that the apostle includes the grace of giving. (You could think of this as a charismatic gift.) Some have special abilities to support the Body of Christ in financial ways. Whatever our *measure*, it is necessary for us to do our part, and to do it right by the grace of God, being very careful to stay within our *measure*. We must be careful “not to think more highly of [ourselves] than we ought to think” (Rom. 12:3). If, for example, those with wealth think they have a right to try to force Paul (or any other minister) to preach the gospel according to their will (instead of God’s), we’re headed for big trouble.]

It’s good news to know that we—and especially ministers—are not called to compete with one another, but rather to respect and bless one another, in the Body of Christ. We need one another, according to God’s plan. If another Christian fails to fulfill their *measure*, it is not to our advantage, but to our disadvantage. We are called to put God first and do His will. This includes limiting ourselves to stay within our *measure*. I have found over the years that many ministers don’t understand the concept of limiting ourselves to our *measure*. It is true, of course, that we must make sure that we do everything that God calls us to do. When we do things God’s way, it will always work for good!

**Ephesians 2:1-10.** [This important passage deals with the glorious transformation from a state of spiritual death and bondage to sin and Satan to spiritual life (in union with the Lord Jesus Christ) and a walk in righteousness and holiness. This transformation, in its entirety, is all of grace; it is totally unearned/unmerited. But it is received by faith, based on God’s salvation plan, which is spelled out in the gospel. In this study, we are especially interested in verse 8 because of its use of the word *faith*.] **And you were dead** [spiritually dead] **in your trespasses and sins** [Spiritual death came as a penalty for sin. All mankind (apart from born-again Christians) is in spiritual death because of Adam’s sin, but the death (the separation from God) is intensified by the sins of our forefathers and our own sins. (See note 20 on page 132 in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.)], **(2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power [or, authority] of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.** **(3) Among them we too** [That is, “we” who are now Christians, whether we came from a Jewish or a Gentile background.] **all formerly lived** [to one degree or another] **in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.** [Being saved from the guilt of sin is an important part of our salvation, but being saved from the state described in these three verses is even more significant. Whereas we were “sons of disobedience,” being characterized by disobedience; now we are enabled (and required) to be sons of obedience. Formerly Satan (with his demonic hosts) was the spirit working in us; now it is the very Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. And formerly, when we were living in sin, we were “children of wrath.” That is, we were headed for the wrath of God, which is

destined to ultimately confront all who persist in rebellion against Him. Cf., e.g., Eph. 5:5-7; Col. 3:6. It is also true that the wrath of God is manifested in a limited, preliminary sense during this present age. Cf., e.g., Rom. 1:18-31. But now we are headed for eternal blessings and glory.] **(4) But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our transgressions** [cf. Eph. 1:3-14], **made us alive together with Christ** [This partaking of the life of God in union with Christ, which starts with the new birth, is a big part of what salvation is all about. And it must be understood that this life, which flows from the indwelling Spirit of God, includes the enablement to live in righteousness and holiness. We are literally united with the Lord Jesus Christ (by the Spirit of God) from the time we appropriate His atoning death by faith. He died in our place, bearing our sins (back to Adam) with the guilt and the penalties, very much including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin. Then, having become united with Him in His death, we are also united with Him in His resurrection and ascension. We have already been resurrected in a preliminary, spiritual sense, and in the near future we will be resurrected in the full and final glorious sense.] **(by grace you have been saved), (6) and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus** [Those united with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places are no longer under (but have been raised above) the authority of the sin, Satan, and spiritual death spoken of in 2:1-3. See 1:19-23. We have been saved (and we are now experiencing salvation) by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean that there is no more spiritual warfare, but we need not, and should not, be defeated. Cf., e.g., 6:10-20.], **(7) in order that in the ages to come** [The “ages to come” will begin at the end of this age, after the Lord Jesus returns and judges the world (cf. Eph. 1:21).] **He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace** [It is very important for us to understand that our salvation, from beginning to end, is all of grace. It is totally unearned/unmerited, and therefore God receives all the glory.] **you have been saved** [As verses 1-7 show, this salvation includes being saved from the state of spiritual death and bondage to sin and Satan, and the transformation to the state of spiritual life and righteousness and holiness in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Without minimizing the awesome significance of our present salvation, we can also say that most of the glory of our eternal salvation is reserved for “the ages to come.”] **through faith** [*Faith* (along with the closely related word *believing*) is undoubtedly the key word used in the New Testament to describe *our* part in the outworking of God’s salvation plan. We don’t earn God’s saving grace through faith, but we receive (and cooperate) with His grace through faith.]; **and that** [I prefer the more literal translation this (instead of “that”), as translated by the NIV and the *Amplified Bible*. It is important to see that the word this refers back to the salvation spoken of earlier in the verse. This is the viewpoint of the marginal note of the NASB, of the translation in the *Amplified Bible* (“For it is by free grace (God’s unmerited favor) that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ’s salvation) through [your] faith. And this [salvation] is not of yourselves—of your own doing, it came not through your own striving—but it is the gift of God.” I should point out that the *Amplified Bible* supplied the words “your” and “salvation” in brackets.), and of the majority of the many commentaries on Ephesians that I have looked at. The fact that Paul chose to use a word in the

neuter gender for this (in the Greek), when the masculine and feminine genders were also available, helps confirm that he did not intend for the word this to refer back to the word for faith. The word for *faith* is of feminine gender in Greek, and if Paul had intended for the word this to refer back to the word translated *faith*, he would typically have chosen the feminine gender for the word translated this. I should mention, however, that the gender of this is only a small part of the reason why I believe the word this does not refer back to the word faith. See the discussion that follows, including the comments at the end of this discussion of Eph. 2:1-10. It is quite significant that the words faith and believe (as these words are typically used in the Bible) are used of something we do in response to God's saving grace, not something God gives us, as I demonstrate throughout this paper.] **not of yourselves** [The idea is that the salvation does not come from (out of the source of) man; it comes, in its entirety, from (out of the source of) God (as a gift).], **it is the gift of God** [The Greek would more literally be translated "from (out of the source of) God is the gift."]; **(9) not as a result of works** [The Greek here is exactly the same as the Greek behind "not of (from/out of the source of) yourselves," but here the word for "works" replaces the word for "yourselves." We do not (cannot) earn salvation by our works. Rather, as the apostle just stated, salvation comes from (out of the source of) God *as a gift*. By definition, anything that is earned does not come as a gift/by grace.], **that no one should boast**. [To the extent that we earned salvation by our works, we could boast in ourselves instead of God. But since we are saved totally by the grace of God, He must receive all the glory forever.] **(10) For we are His workmanship** [Whenever I consider these words, I have the same thought: As God's workmanship, we certainly ought to live in a way that glorifies Him, in righteousness, holiness, humility, and truth. But to the extent we are living in the flesh (in the old man), we certainly are not manifesting God's workmanship, and He is being robbed of glory. These words in 2:10, like 2:1-7, emphasize the fact that a big part of what salvation is all about is the transformation to righteous and holy living. We are called to walk by the Spirit of God on a continuous basis by faith, in accordance with the covenant God has made with us (cf. Gal. 5:16).], **created in Christ Jesus** [We are new creations (cf. Eph. 2:15; 4:24; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) through what God has done for us in the incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, resurrection, and the exaltation of Christ Jesus, who, for one thing, poured out the promised new-covenant gift of the Holy Spirit. But then, we really are *not* new creations to the extent the old man is still manifesting itself in fleshiness, worldliness, and sin/to the extent that we are not walking by the Spirit of God on a continuous basis, in accordance with the Word of God by grace through faith.] **for good works** [As new creations we are to live in the will of God, doing the good (righteous) works that He requires of us, not sinful works. As Paul stated in 2:9, we have not been saved "as a result of works"; however, it is also true that Christians are required to do good works (that is, they are required to live right, doing works of righteousness). These good works are not the works of man in the flesh but the works of God, since we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, and since they are produced by the indwelling Spirit of God (by the grace of God). The following words of 2:10 also show that our good works are truly part of God's new creation. The New Testament makes it equally clear that God's will won't be accomplished in our lives to the extent that we don't do our part. Our part is pretty well covered by the word faith (repentance and faith).],

**which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** [This walk is not automatic for Christians. It is not optional either.]

A few more comments on the interpretation of Eph. 2:8, 9. I believe the following understanding of these verses is clearly wrong: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this [faith] is not of yourselves, from God is the gift [of faith]; [faith is] not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” The apostle is speaking about the source of salvation (salvation is the primary topic of 2:1-10), not the source of faith. It isn’t necessary (or reasonable) to say that faith is not a result of works, but it is important to say that salvation is not of works. We receive salvation by faith, in response to God’s grace.

**Romans 14:1-23. Now accept the one who is weak in faith** [What the apostle Paul means here by weak in faith is established by the context. The one who is weak in faith is the one who (typically because of his background) doesn’t believe that he is free (before God) to eat meat (see 14:2), or who believes he must observe certain days (see 14:5, 6), etc. We’re not talking here about doing things truly sinful, but about things that those weak in faith (to use Paul’s terminology) believe to be sinful. This is an important teaching by the apostle that has much application for us today.], **but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.** [It’s very clear that the apostle knows that the one weak in faith is wrong in what he believes, and he wants to rectify the situation. This chapter in Romans will help toward that end. But here in 14:1, and often in this chapter, Paul is giving instruction to those who are *not* weak in faith, at least not weak regarding the issues discussed here. (We all have the potential to be weak in faith in some areas.) Paul says that the ones weak in faith must be fully accepted by the strong during the time interval before the weak (hopefully) become strong in faith. We must do everything we can to promote unity in the Body of Christ. We can’t afford to divide the Body over secondary issues that don’t involve sin. Such dividing of the Body is sinful, whether from the side of the weak, or the strong.] **(2) One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. (3) Let not him who eats** [Paul is speaking of the one who eats meat (for example), knowing that it is OK before God for him to eat meat.] **regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge** [or, condemn] **him who eats, for God has accepted him.** [In context with 14:4, it seems better to limit the last him to the one who eats. It’s all too easy to judge/condemn someone for doing something you’re sure is wrong. But it’s a very serious matter, and we need to be very careful. We could be wrong in our judgment/condemnation, as those weak in faith would be here. It should be noted that the same two verbs regard with contempt and judge/condemn are used in verse 10.] **(4) Who are you to judge** [or, condemn] **the servant of another?** [He is speaking to the weak, who would be judging/condemning the one doing things he (wrongly) considers sinful. This is another place where we need the balanced truth. I have often heard it said that Christians are never to judge other Christians. However, the Body of Christ is required to deal with Christians who are living in obvious sin. (When we deal with sin in accordance with God’s Word, God and His Word is the Judge, not us.) See, e.g., Matt. 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15. However, this is a serious matter and must be done with caution, humility, and with God’s guidance.] **To his**



own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (5) One man regards one day above another [cf. Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16], another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. [Again, Paul's point isn't that it doesn't make any difference what you believe on such secondary issues. It makes a rather big difference, and there is a right way to believe. But his point is that during the time interval before we all come to agreement on such issues, we must not "regard with contempt" or "judge/condemn" one another. I should mention that the mind here (and typically in the Bible) is not at all limited to the head. To be fully convinced in your mind includes being convinced in your heart. And to be fully convinced in your mind is essentially the equivalent of having faith that it is so.] (6) He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord [The NIV has, "He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord."], and he who eats [meat, for example], does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God [for what he eats]; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat [because he doesn't believe God would have him eat meat, for example], and gives thanks to God [for that which he does eat]. (7) For not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us dies for himself; (8) for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. [When a believer dies they are with the Lord in a fuller sense (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6-9; Phil. 1:21, 23).] (9) For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (10) But you [speaking to the weak in faith], why do you judge [or, condemn] your brother? Or you again [speaking to the strong], why do you regard your brother with contempt? [See 14:3, 4.] For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. (11) For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE [CONFESS] TO GOD." (12) So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. [In the light of this fact, each of us need to make it a top priority to live in righteousness and holiness before God. We must continually judge ourselves (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 11:28, 31; 2 Cor. 13:5); but we must be very careful about judging others.] (13) Therefore let us not judge one another anymore [These words apply to the strong and the weak. See under verse 4 for a qualification regarding not judging.], rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. [These last words, as the following verses demonstrate, are spoken, at least for the most part, to the strong. See under verse 14 on the "stumbling block."] (14) I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself [Paul is speaking of things like what we eat; all sin is unclean and defiling.]; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. [These last words are important, and if we don't understand them, we won't understand the following verses, including 14:23, a verse often misunderstood. The apostle is saying that if we believe in our heart that something is unclean and would be sinful for us to do (for example, eating meat, or a certain type of meat), it would be sinful for us to do it, even though, in itself, it is not sinful. In the light of this truth, Paul exhorts the strong to be careful they don't put pressure on the weak to go ahead and do such things before they are fully convinced in their hearts (have faith in their hearts) that it is OK with God. We must do everything we can to avoid sin. The "stumbling block" of verse 13 could apply to anything we did that could cause our brother to stumble and fall, but in

this context it applies, at least for the most part, to anything the strong would do that would put pressure on the weak to go ahead and do something before they were convinced it was OK with God.] **(15) For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.** [In the worst-case scenario, the weaker brother would be destroyed if he became fully cut off from Christ and salvation, starting with (or due in part to) the sin of eating food before he had faith it was OK to do so. The apostle is speaking in rather strong terms; he wants to make it clear that this is a serious matter for the strong to consider. Without such exhortations, the strong might not think much about the possibility of their “helping” the weaker brother get into sin.] **(16) Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing** [speaking of a good thing like eating meat] **be spoken of as evil** [If, for example, the strong insisted that whenever the church ate together, they must have meat, the weak might well speak evil of this. This is not to say that they would be justified in their speaking evil, but here Paul is exhorting the strong to consider waiving some of their rights for the sake of the weak brethren. There is a limit to how far God would want the strong to go in waiving their rights; however, most are not in danger of going too far here. We must be open to God, and be led by Him in such matters.]; **(17) for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness** [It must be top priority for the weak and the strong to live in righteousness, in the will of God. Cf. Matt. 6:33.] **and peace** [We need to do what we can to promote peace in the Body of Christ.] **and joy** [We aren’t going to have joy in the Body of Christ without righteousness and peace.] **in the Holy Spirit.** [As we walk in the Holy Spirit through faith (faith in God and His gospel), we will have righteousness, holiness, peace, joy, and the rest of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).] **(18) For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. (19) So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (20) Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense** [or, perhaps better, “who eats and causes [the weak] to stumble.” The NIV has, “that causes someone else to stumble.”]. **(21) It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. (22) The faith which you have** [He is speaking of the faith of the strong that it’s OK to eat meat, etc.], **have as your own conviction before God.** [This certainly does not mean that they have to keep their views a secret. They are, after all, correct in their views, and the sooner the weak become convinced of the truth, the better. But in the meantime, the strong must do everything they can to prevent the weak from stumbling. There are times when we must waive our rights, for the good of others.] **Happy** [Blessed] **is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.** [In other words, blessed is the strong who truly believes in his heart that it is OK to eat meat, etc. when he (at an appropriate time) approves of it by word or by doing it. The weak, by contrast, may speak the words that it is OK, or go ahead and eat the meat, etc., but his heart doesn’t say amen; it rather condemns him. And as the apostle informed us in 14:14, 15, it would be sin for the weak to do such things before he is convinced in his heart/before he has faith in his heart that it is OK with God.] **(23) But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from** [or, of/out of/by (Greek ek)] **faith; and whatever is not of** [or, out of/by/from (Greek ek)] **faith is sin.** [The *Amplified Bible* has, “But the man

who has doubts—misgivings, an uneasy conscience—about eating, and then eats [perhaps because of you], stands condemned [before God], because he is not true to his convictions and he does not act from faith. For whatever does not originate and proceed from faith is sin—that is, whatever is done without a conviction of its approval by God is sinful.”

The second half of this verse is often taken out of context and misinterpreted. When read in context with all of chapter 14, these words mean that if the weak Christian goes ahead and eats the meat, etc. before he is convinced in his heart/before he has faith in his heart that it is OK with God, it is sin, and therefore a serious matter. These words have (wrongly I believe) been taken to show that everything a non-Christian does is sinful (since they don't have faith in God). And I have often heard them used with respect to Christians in a condemning way, far from what Paul (who ministered by the Spirit of God) intended. (It is not enough to sincerely believe that we understand God's Word; we need to stay humble before Him and realize that our understanding of His Word could be wrong, and seek Him for the balanced truth.) For example, a Christian is sick, and if they take medicine, or go to a doctor, or fail to be healed, this proves that they didn't have faith for healing, which, according to Rom. 14:23 (they say), is sin. In some cases God may consider it to be sin, for example in the case of a mature believer that He has been dealing with in this area (or some other area like finances, or being overweight), but we need to be very careful about passing judgment that another Christian is in sin. And we certainly don't want to take unnecessary condemnation upon ourselves, when we didn't even sin. The devil does a lot of work in this area.

Sin is a serious word, and it's a serious error to say something is sin when it isn't. Of course it's true that we want to grow in faith and trust God to the fullest possible extent, and it's true that the Bible is full of examples where God's people got into big trouble and sin because they doubted and didn't trust Him. However, we must not take Rom. 14:23 out of its context (or any other verse) and make it say things God never intended. This is good news! God is generous with His people, but we must not presume upon His generosity/grace.]

**Luke 8:4-18.** [Also see Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-25. This passage contains the Parable of the Sower. These verses strongly exhort us to be very careful how we listen to God's Word. If we don't listen properly, with the right priorities (putting God and His Word in first place), right attitudes (like being humble before God and having a reverent fear of Him), and right motives (like wanting to please God by understanding, and then living in line with, His Word), the Word (though good seed) will not produce any lasting good fruit in our lives. In other words, we must listen to and submit to God's Word with solid faith.] **And when a great multitude were coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: (5) “The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road; and it was trampled under foot, and the birds of the air ate it up. (6) And other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. (7) And other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it, and choked it out. (8) And other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.” As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”** [The Lord Jesus frequently exhorted those He

was speaking to with the need to pay very close attention to what He was saying because of its awesome importance. For example, each of the messages to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 include the words, “He who has an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” A big part of the message of the passage we are discussing is the need to be very careful how we listen, and how we respond, to the Word of God (with solid faith, or...)] **(9) And His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable might be. (10) And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, in order that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.** [Matthew 13:10-17 give a much fuller account of what Jesus said here. Why would God not want “the rest” to understand “the mysteries of the kingdom of God”? We have already answered this question in this paper under the discussions of John 6:44, 65; 12:37-41; and Isa. 6:8-13. The brief answer, which Matt. 13:15 confirms to some extent, is that many of the Israelites were so far from God that they wouldn’t take His word seriously, and any repentance from such people would be extremely superficial.] **(11) Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.** [The seed is good and well able to bring forth good fruit. This parable deals with the soil in which the seed is planted. Although Jesus doesn’t directly make this point here, the good news is that God can change the condition of our hearts if we begin to respond to His Word and His saving grace in Christ.] **(12) And those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved.** [Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. Matthew 13:19 has, “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it...” If such people had been seeking God yesterday and had been making an attempt to understand the things of God and to live for God, they wouldn’t be in such a state today. Even now such people could begin to wake up after hearing this parable (and other such teaching) and repent and begin to get their hearts fixed up by the great physician. However, for those who continue in willful ignorance of God and unbelief, God will certainly permit the devil to snatch away what they have heard. There is no way that people like this can have a valid conversion experience and begin to live for God, that is, not before they begin to truly repent and open their hearts to God and His Word. As I understand it, the faith/believing of such people wouldn’t really be (what the Bible means by) saving faith. Without major adjustments, they won’t be seeking first God’s kingdom and His righteousness (cf. Matt. 6:33.) There won’t be any true submission to Him as Savior and Lord.

I’ll quote a few sentences from W. Hendriksen on this verse (*Gospel of Luke* [Baker, 1978]): “The people that are represented by seed sown along the path (see verse 5) are the kind that allow the devil, the great adversary, to snatch away the message that has been sown in them. By no means does Jesus excuse these people, as if only the devil and not they themselves were responsible for what happened to the divine message that had been spoken to them. Verse 12 does not cancel verse 8b or verse 18a! But here in verse 12 these frivolous hearers are being told that in treating the word of God so lightly they are co-operating with the prince of evil, whose purpose is to prevent them from believing and being saved!”] **(13) And those on the rocky soil** [Matthew 13:5 adds, “where they did not have much soil.” Cf. Mark 4:5.] **are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall**

away. [Matthew 13:21 has, “when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.” Cf. Mark 4:17. These people become “believers,” but their faith in God and the gospel is too shallow to persevere through the difficult times, through the times of temptation. For one thing, they didn’t count the cost before they signed up (cf. Luke 14:25-35). They didn’t walk with God sufficiently close to learn how to appropriate His sufficient grace.] **(14) And the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.** [Mark 4:19 has, “and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” These people have much in common with those in verse 13: Their heart commitment to God (and love for God) and His gospel is too shallow to keep them from living for the world and the things of the world. God consistently demands that He be given first place in the heart. Faith in God includes putting Him, His Word, His righteousness and His salvation first place in our hearts. The fact that they bring no fruit to maturity shows that they will not have a place in God’s eternal kingdom. There is more at stake here than a loss of rewards. As I mentioned, the good news is that if we begin to submit to God, to His Word, and to His saving grace in Christ, He will change our hearts.] **(15) And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart** [All the sons of Israel needed to repent, but many of them had “an honest and good heart.” And even among the Gentiles, who didn’t have much light (if any light) from the Old Testament, some did have a heart that was open to God and willing to repent and make Him top priority, as they submitted to His plan of salvation in faith and appropriated His saving grace.], **and hold it fast** [They made it a top priority to understand, and to live in line with, God’s Word.], **and bear fruit with perseverance.** [Unlike those represented by the other soils, they persevered. When you make something top priority, you will be steadfast (being enabled by God’s sufficient grace). Matthew 13:23 has, “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.” Cf. Mark 4:20. I’ll quote part of what R. C. H. Lenski (*St. Luke’s Gospel* [Augsburg, 1946]) says under this verse: “What the parable and its exposition describe is the final fate of the Word in the hearts of men. When life is done, some show a harvest; all the rest show no harvest. ... This final fate of the Word is shown us now so that we may examine ourselves as to how we are treating the Word now, before life is done. And this is done because, though no man can change himself, God has means to change us all, trodden path, rocky places, briar patches into good soil for His Word. This means of God is the Word itself as it is exhibited in this parable. Like all the Scripture revelations of man’s sinful states, this one, too, aims at the conscience and at repentance which thus open the soul for the gospel. The more it is opened, the more fruit will there be in the end.”] **(16) Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, in order that those who come in may see the light. (17) For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light.** [The point is that the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are enabled, and are required, to manifest transformed lives in truth, righteousness,

holiness, and all the fruit of the Spirit. Any part of our lives that is not transformed will eventually become evident (on judgment day); now is the time to be transformed, coming into divine order by grace through faith. In Matt. 5:14-16 Jesus says, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. (16) Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” See Phil. 2:15.] **(18) Therefore take care how you listen** [We need to listen as those making it top priority to understand, and to live in line with, the Word of God by grace through faith.]; **for whoever has, to him shall more be given** [Just before these words, Matt. 13:11 adds, “To you [the disciples] it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.” It is not surprising that God reveals more of His Word to those making it top priority to understand, and to live in line with, His Word. They love it. They use it. They share it.]; **and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.**” [Matthew 13:12 has, “but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.” Those who don’t press on with God (by grace through faith) will eventually lose what seed has been planted in their hearts, if there was any.]

**A CHART THAT WILL HELP US UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE WORDS FAITH/BELIEVE AND OTHER KEY NEW TESTAMENT WORDS**

(Several key passages listed below are discussed in this paper, including Rom. 4:16-21; 9:30-10:18; Gal. 3:16-29; and Eph. 2:8-10. See my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:16-26; and Titus 3:4-7. Eph. 1:3-14; Rom. 8:28-30 are discussed in my paper that includes Ephesians chapter 1, 4 and Rom. 8:16-23. John chapters 1-20 are discussed in papers on my internet site. Most of my papers are on my internet site. Google to Karl Kemp Teaching)

**God’s Plan of Salvation**

**Man’s Attempt at Salvation**

**Plan/Purpose/Will of God**

**Not**

**Plan of Man**

(See, e.g., Acts 2:22-24; Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10.)

**Promise of Salvation**

**Not**

**Law**

(See, e.g., Acts 13:23-41; Rom. 4:13-21; Gal. 3:16-29; cf. Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8; 2:33.)

**Faith/Believe**

**Not**

**Works/Works of the Law**

(See, e.g., Rom. 3:27, 28; 4:5; 9:30-10:18; Gal. 2:16; 3:1-14; 5:2-6; Phil. 3:9.)

**Grace/Mercy**

**Not**

**Earn/Merit/What is due**

(See, e.g., Rom. 4:4; 9:15, 16; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:4-7.)



The word *promise(s)* is used nine times; *Spirit* four times; *flesh* once; *works* four times; and *Law* about fourteen times.] **You foolish Galatians, who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?** [The apostle Paul had brought the gospel to Galatia. He knows that they had understood and accepted the gospel that centers in the crucified Son of God. But now, under the influence of the Judaizers, some were beginning to accept a different gospel (not that there really could be a different gospel, cf. 1:6-9), one that included the need to submit to ceremonial works of the Law, like circumcision.] **(2) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?** [They received the Spirit (which includes the life-giving, sanctifying work of the Spirit and the charismatic gifts) by submitting (in faith) to the gospel that Paul brought to Galatia. Receiving the Spirit was part (a very important part) of the new covenant salvation package that Paul preached to them. He certainly did not preach a gospel that included doing ceremonial works of the Law, like circumcision.] **(3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected [or, made complete] by the flesh?** [At the beginning they were born again *by the Spirit* and were sanctified (at least to some extent) *by the Spirit*, and they experienced the charismatic dimension of the Spirit's work. Are they so foolish to think that now, if they submit to the gospel of the Judaizers, they will improve (perfect, complete) their state before God. To listen to the Judaizers and their works of the Law, which deal with things of the *flesh*, not the *Spirit*, requires rejecting (to one degree or another) the true gospel they had received from Paul.] **(4) Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?** [The affliction they had endured for the sake of the gospel would all be in vain if (in the worst-case scenario) they now rejected the true gospel for the gospel of the Judaizers.] **(5) Does He [God] then, who provides you with the Spirit [including the new birth and the sanctifying work of the Spirit] and works miracles among you [including the charismatic gifts], do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing with faith?** [Their experience proved that all of the all-important work of the Spirit had come to them *through faith* in the gospel, not through doing works of the Law.] **(6) Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.** [Paul quotes from Gen. 15:6 to substantiate the point that it's faith/believing, not works of the Law.] **(7) Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.** [Cf. Rom. 4:11-18.] **(8) And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles** [I would translate "the nations." The same Greek noun is translated "the nations" later in this verse, and I believe it should also be translated this way in verse 14. (The definite article is included with the noun in the Greek in all three uses.) The important difference is that if you translate "the nations," it includes the believers from the nation Israel. The only way for Jews or Gentiles to be justified is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The meaning of "justify" is of key importance here. Many think Paul only means forgiveness and right standing with God by this verb. I'm convinced that that is only part of what Paul means by this word here (and often). He includes, I believe, the all-important transformation to righteousness/righteous living. In other words, for God to justify [the believers from] all the nations means more than just declaring them righteous; He also actually makes them righteous. Or, as 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He Himself bore our sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the penalties of spiritual death



and bondage to sin, not that He died spiritually or became a sinner)] in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness....” It is significant that Gal. 3:14 shows that the promised blessings includes receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 3:2), who enables us to be born again and to live in the righteousness and holiness of God (cf., e.g., Gal. 3:21; 5:16, 22-24). A chapter of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* deals with this very important fuller meaning of justify/justification (see pages 69-139). And Gal. 3:8, 9, 13, 14 (including the meaning of justify) are discussed in some detail in that book on pages 24-26 and 31-33.] **by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU.”** [The blessing centers in being justified by faith (and thereby partaking of full, eternal salvation) in/through the seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 3:16).] **(9) So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.** **(10) For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”** [Paul is exhorting his readers not to submit to the gospel of the Judaizers, with its “works of the Law.” As the apostle shows in Gal. 3:21, for example, the old covenant did not have the authority to overthrow spiritual death and impart the life of God. And since they did not fully perform the works of the Law they were “cursed” (according to Deut. 27:26, which Paul quoted here). Those listening to the Judaizers are deviating from the new covenant gospel given by God. We cannot change the gospel.] **(11) Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”** [As in Rom. 1:17, where Paul also quotes from Hab. 2:4, I believe the translation in the margin of the NASB is what Paul intended: “he who is righteous by faith shall live.” The apostle quoted Hab. 2:4 to back up his all-important assertion that we become righteous (we are justified) by faith in Christ, not by the Mosaic Law, or anything else. Our “[receiving] the promise of the Spirit through faith” enables us to be born again and to begin to live in the righteousness and holiness of God, as we begin to walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis (see Gal. 5:16, for example). On the close relationship between the words “righteous” and “justify,” see under 3:21.] **(12) However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.”** [Paul quotes from Lev. 18:5 to show that if those under the Law could fully keep the Law (which they couldn’t), then they would gain eternal life by their works (by merit), not by faith/grace. They wouldn’t need new-covenant salvation if they could fully keep the Law under the old covenant. They would be righteous by their works.] **(13) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law** [Christ redeemed the Jews (those who were under the Law) from the curse that came from breaking the Law by bringing forth the new covenant in His blood. (They, of course, had to submit to the new covenant in faith.) The Gentiles also needed to be redeemed, but not from the curse of the Law.], **having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”** [Paul is referring to the atoning death of the Son of God on the cross. There He dethroned sin, Satan, and spiritual death, and earned full, eternal salvation for those who submit to the gospel in faith.]—**(14) in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham** [that is, the blessing promised to Abraham (see 3:8)] **might come to the Gentiles** [I would translate

“the nations.” See under 3:8. Paul is speaking of the believers of all nations being saved by Christ Jesus.], **so that we** [all believers, Jews and Gentiles] **might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.** [In 3:8 the blessing mentioned was justification by faith. Here the blessing mentioned is receiving the promise of the Spirit through/by faith. Justification, when understood in the full sense discussed above, includes the life-giving, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. This work of the Spirit was promised in Old Testament prophecies (cf., e.g., Isa. 32:15-18; Ezek. 36:26, 27; 37:14; John 7:37-39). We receive the Spirit through/by faith [faith in God and His Son and the gospel], not by our works. On receiving the Spirit, see 3:2, 3. And we are enabled, and required, to walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis by faith.] **(15) Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man’s covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no man sets it aside or adds conditions to it.** [That is, even covenants made by men are legally binding, and no man has a right to modify it.] **(16) Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as referring to many, but rather to one, “And to your seed,” that is Christ.** [The promised new-covenant salvation comes to fruition in Christ Jesus (the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Lamb of God), who is (in one sense) the seed (offspring) of Abraham.] **(17) What I am saying is this: the Law** [the Mosaic Law], **which came four hundred and thirty years later** [than the promise(s) to Abraham], **does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise.** [God meant what He promised to Abraham, and His subsequent giving of the Mosaic Law (and the old covenant established on that Law) did not abrogate His promised (new covenant) salvation. The old covenant was only temporary, until the times of the Lord Jesus Christ. The old covenant helped prepare the way for the new covenant (cf., e.g., Gal. 3:24).] **(18) For if the inheritance is based on law** [or, probably better, “the Law.” The KJV and NIV have “the law.”], **it is no longer based on a promise** [By faith in God’s promised salvation, we receive salvation (by grace). If salvation was based on the Law, we would receive the salvation by doing all that the Law required (by merit). Note, for one thing, that the Promise of Salvation and the Law are in different columns in the Chart just before the verses we are discussing.]; **but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise.** **(19) Why the Law then? It was added because of** [Instead of “because of,” I would translate “for the sake of” with the BAGD Greek Lexicon. BAGD goes on to say this means “to bring them about.” Paul several places mentions that one of God’s purposes in giving the Law was to intensify the sin problem, which (for one thing) would help us see that sin is the problem and our need for the Savior from sin (cf. Rom. 4:15; 5:13, 20, 21; 7:7-14; 1 Cor. 15:56).] **transgressions, having been ordained through angels** [Cf. Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2. The apostle is emphasizing the inferiority of the Law, compared to the new covenant. The Lord Jesus Christ is far above God’s angels and Moses; all beings and things were created through the Son of God. Paul’s readers must be convinced that the new covenant, which is far superior to the old covenant, is all they need, even as Paul had presented the gospel to them in the beginning. They must reject the modified gospel of the Judaizers.] **by the agency of a mediator** [Moses], **until the seed** [the Lord Jesus Christ] **should come to whom the promise had been made** [cf. 3:16]. **(20) Now a mediator is not for one party only** [Moses was a mediator between God and Israel]; **whereas God is *only*** [The NASB has the word *only* in italics. I

would skip this added word.] **one.** [The point is that you don't need a mediator between God the Father and God the Son, who is "the seed...to whom the promise had been made." In every way the new covenant is far superior to the old covenant.] **(21) Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be!** [The Mosaic Law came from the same God as the new covenant. The Law wasn't contrary to the promises of God, but it wasn't given to save people in itself, but was a temporary covenant designed to lead people to Christ (see 3:24). Of course more could be said about the Law and the old covenant.] **For if a law had been given which was able to impart life** [This is very important! The Mosaic Law, as significant as it was, found men in spiritual death and left them in spiritual death. For this reason it did not have the power to solve the spiritual death and sin problem and to make His people righteous with His imputed and imparted righteousness. In fact, as we briefly discussed under 3:19, the Law intensified the sin problem.], **then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.** [I would translate "the Law." The KJV and NIV have "the law." As I mentioned, this verse is very important! The apostle informs us that life must be imparted (and it is imparted, of course, by the Holy Spirit [see, e.g., 3:14; John 3:3-8; Rom. 8:1-10]) in order for us to have righteousness. This confirms that Paul is *not* speaking only of a forgiveness-and right-standing-type-of-righteousness, but of a transformation to righteousness/righteous living as we walk in/after/by the Holy Spirit by faith. This transformation to righteousness/righteous living is included in what *justify* means in 3:8. It is no surprise to find the word *righteousness* used of living in the will of God. This is the dominant use of the word throughout the Bible (cf., e.g., Deut. 6:25; Psalm 15:2; Isa. 56:1; Rom. 5:19; 6:13, 16, 18, 19, 20; 2 Cor. 6:14; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:16; Heb. 1:9; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Peter 2:5; 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rev. 22:11.) I should point out that the Greek words for *righteousness* and *justify* are closely related. *Righteousness* (*dikaiousune*) and *justify* (*dikaioo*) were both derived from the adjective for *righteous* (*dikaios*). Righteousness in its full, glorious sense could not be manifested until the Lord Jesus Christ had defeated sin, Satan, and spiritual death through His atoning death. Then the very righteousness of God could be imparted to His people. (See, e.g., the discussions of Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21, 22 on pages 76-79 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) **(22) But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin** [In other words, the Bible teaches that all men are spiritually dead and are, to one degree or another, in bondage to sin; we all therefore need the Savior, Jesus Christ.], **that the promise** [That is, the salvation which was promised is given to those who believe/have faith in Christ Jesus. The NIV has, "so that what was promised...might be given."] **by faith in Jesus Christ** [not by works of the Law] **might be given to those who believe.** [As we have seen, the promise includes receiving justification (3:8) and the life-giving, sanctifying Spirit (3:14).] **(23) But before faith came** [It would probably be better to translate "the faith." The definite article is included in the Greek. The NIV has "this faith." The apostle is referring to the time before the Lord Jesus had come and conquered sin and spiritual death by His death and resurrection. Certainly many had faith in God before this time (including Abraham); some even had faith in the gospel in an early form (including Abraham). However, at that time the promised salvation was not yet available to be received.], **we** [I believe "we" here and in 3:24, 25, and "our" and "us" in 3:24 refer to the Jews, those who were under the Law. This is like the "us" of 3:13 and "those who were under the Law" of 4:5.] **were kept in custody**

**under the law** [Law], **being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed** [manifested, unveiled]. **(24) Therefore the Law has become our tutor** [child-conductor] **to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith.** [We discussed this important word (justify) under 3:8. Also see under 3:21.] **(25) But now that faith** [As in verse 23, it would probably be better to translate “the faith.” The definite article is included in the Greek.] **has come** [and new-covenant salvation is now available], **we are no longer under a tutor** [child-conductor]. [The “child-conductor” refers to the Law, which has now been set aside (in some ways) now that new covenant salvation has come and is being proclaimed in the gospel. For one important result, Christians are not required to keep the ceremonial laws of the old covenant. The Judaizers were wrong.] **(26) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.** [The apostle wrote this letter to the Galatian Christians, who were Gentiles. All true Christians (whether from Jewish or Gentile backgrounds, have become born-again children of God through faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.)] **(27) For all of you who were baptized into Christ** [I believe Paul is referring to water baptism here (cf. Rom. 6:3, 4).] **have clothed yourselves with Christ.** [We have become new creations through becoming united with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.] **(28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.** **(29) And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring** [or, “seed”; cf. 3:7, “sons of Abraham”], **and heirs according to promise.** [We have already received the first fruits of our glorious salvation (including justification [3:8, 21] and the Spirit [3:14]), but a large part of our inheritance is reserved for the age to come.]

**Galatians 5:2-6.** [These important verses complement Gal. 3:1-29 (just discussed) and the Chart (located just before 3:1-29). Galatians 5:5 is a very important verse, a verse that is often misunderstood.] **Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision** [as required by the Judaizer’s “gospel”], **Christ will be of no benefit to you.** [Paul is speaking from the viewpoint that by turning from the true gospel and receiving a different gospel, they would be falling from God’s saving grace in Christ (cf., e.g., 1:6-9; 5:3, 4). This is obviously a very serious matter; we can’t afford to tamper with the gospel.] **(3) And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.** [See 3:10-13.] **(4) You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.** [As the Chart shows, we are saved by faith/promise/grace/Spirit, not works of the Law (like circumcision)/merit/flesh. To be severed from Christ/to fall from grace surely denotes losing one’s salvation. We discussed the meaning of *justify* back under Gal. 3:8, 11, 14, 21 (including references to my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*). I believe the verb is used in the same full sense here. To be justified here is essentially the equivalent of having the Christian’s *righteousness* mentioned in the next verse.] **(5) For we** [speaking of Paul and those who had faith in the gospel given to Paul by the Lord Jesus Christ (1:11, 12)] **through the Spirit** [We discussed the all-important coming of the Spirit under 3:2, 3, 5, 14, 21. The Spirit brings life (starting with the new birth) and the power to make us righteous/to impart the righteousness of God to us/to justify us. However you say it, the transformation to righteousness/righteous living is included. This is a very big part of what

Christianity is all about. For one thing, God hates sin and through the sacrifice of His Son and the Holy Spirit who dwells in every true Christian, He enables us to walk in His righteousness and holiness. He imputes and imparts His righteousness to us in new-covenant salvation.], **by faith** [Paul includes the idea here that it's faith, not works of the Law/man/the flesh. He is speaking of faith in the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.], **are waiting for the hope** [The hope here, as often, refers to the heavenly glory (the fulness of eternal life) reserved for the time that begins with the return of the Lord Jesus (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:17-25; Col. 1:5, 27; Titus 3:7).] **of righteousness.** [Many misunderstand the word righteousness here, as if Paul was putting righteousness in the future and saying we hope for it. The apostle Paul doesn't put our righteousness in the future, whether referring to the imputed or imparted righteousness of God. Admittedly, this translation (of the NASB) is easy to misunderstand, as is the KJV. The NIV makes it impossible to understand what Paul was saying here with its translation, "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope." The *Amplified Bible* gets it right, "For we [not relying on the Law], through the (Holy) Spirit's [help] by faith anticipate and wait for the blessing and good for which our righteousness and right standing with God—our conformity to His will in purpose, thought and action—causes us to hope."

One of Paul's most basic themes is that we have righteousness *now* (and if we don't, something is seriously wrong) through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus and by the work of the Holy Spirit. The fact that Paul mentions the Spirit in this verse helps confirm that he is speaking of our present righteousness. (See under Gal. 3:3, 8, 11, 14, 21.) One of the most powerful presentations of this truth in the Bible (that the Holy Spirit enables believers to live in righteousness and holiness) follows in this chapter of Galatians (5:16-25). (This very important passage is discussed on pages 195-200 in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) Romans is loaded with passages which show we are to have the righteousness of God *now*; some of these passages emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit. (See Rom. 1:16, 17; 2:26-29; 3:22-24; chapters 5 and 6; 8:1-17. All of these passages, and many more similar passages, are discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.)

The words *hope of righteousness* are ambiguous in English, but they can be understood in the sense Paul intended: Righteousness (that is, those who have righteousness) is doing the hoping/has the hope. To illustrate, we can say the *hope of Paul* was to always be in the will of God. In this illustration, Paul is doing the hoping. In a similar manner, we can say that righteousness (all those who have righteousness) is doing the hoping/has the hope of eternal glory. (And rightly so, for such people the sin problem truly has been solved.) Anyway, we don't have to limit ourselves to the English here. In the Greek the word righteousness, which follows the word for hope, is in the genitive or ablative case. The Greek fits perfectly with the idea that righteousness is doing the hoping (we would call this a subjective genitive), or, perhaps better, the Greek (if we understand the word righteousness to be in the ablative case) fits the idea that the hope comes from/out of/because of righteousness. Either way, we get the same end result: Christians walking in faith and by the Spirit (which is required of Christians by covenant), have righteousness now and, therefore, have the hope of glory.

I'll quote what Chrysostom (AD 347-407) said under this verse in his commentary on Galatians (Vol. 13 of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by P. Schaff):

“We need none of those legal observances, he says; faith suffices to obtain for us the Spirit, and by Him righteousness, and many and great benefits.”] **(6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything** [The Judaizers are, therefore, wrong.], **but faith working through love.** [That is, those who have faith in Christ *work* (being enabled by the Spirit), manifesting love (and righteousness, holiness, and all the fruit of the Spirit). Love is the first fruit of the Spirit mentioned in 5:22. Paul agrees with James (James 2:14-26) that faith without works is dead (not real faith). The works produced by the grace/Spirit of God must be there; they are not optional (cf., e.g., Matt. 16:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:4-6; 3:1-5, 8-10, 15-21; 22:12-15). In Gal. 6:15 the apostle says, For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation, yes, a born-again, righteous, holy, new creation. And in 1 Cor. 7:19 he says, Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God. Later in this chapter (Gal. 5:14) the apostle speaks of walking in love as the fulfillment of the Law (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Matt. 22:40). In Rom. 8:4 he speaks of the significant fact that Christians fulfill the requirement of the Law in their daily lives as they walk by the Spirit, which they are required to do by faith (cf. Rom. 2:26, 27). I’ll also quote Ezek. 36:27, “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” This fulfilling of the Law in our daily lives (by the grace/Spirit of God) is a big part of what the word righteousness means in Gal. 5:5 (and often).]

**Acts 15:1-11.** **And some men came down [to Antioch] from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”** [This clearly was an important issue. The early Christian church had to determine God’s will on this matter.] **(2) And when Paul and Barnabus had great dissension and debate with them** [The apostle Paul, who can be called the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-9), had already received revelation from God that answered this question (Gal. 1:6-12; 5:1-4). It took some time, however, for some Jewish Christians to be convinced that God did not require the Gentile Christians to be circumcised, etc., in order to be fully accepted into the Body of Christ.], **the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabus and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.** [The date of this council at Jerusalem is typically taken to be AD 49.] **(3) Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. (4) And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. (5) But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” (6) And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. (7) And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.** [See Acts 10:1-11:18. It is true, of course, that no Gentiles could have been saved if it weren’t part of God’s salvation plan, and if He hadn’t called them by the gospel, but believing the gospel was something that they did (as they responded to,

and cooperated with, the saving grace of God in Christ).] **(8) And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them** [I believe we can say that He *bore witness* to the fact that they, from the *heart*, truly repented and submitted to the gospel in faith, and that He accepted them into His family through Jesus Christ.], **giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us** [God’s giving them the Holy Spirit *bore witness* to the fact that they were accepted by Him. Acts 10:46 shows that they spoke with tongues, and we don’t want to minimize the charismatic gifts; however, it is important to understand that the Spirit was given to them (and all true Christians) to do a more basic, much greater work. That is, He was given to impart spiritual life to those who were spiritually dead, and to make them righteous and holy. See on 15:9. Other terminology can be used in place of “giving...the Holy Spirit.” Acts 10:44 says, “the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.” Acts 10:45 says, “the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also.” Acts 10:47 speaks of those “who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did...” Acts 11:15-17 says, “...the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us at the beginning [referring back to Pentecost. The next verse (Acts 11:16), along with six other verses, speaks of being baptized/immersed “in the Holy Spirit.” And note that 11:16 says that God gave these Gentiles “the same gift” he had given to the Jewish believers, starting on the Day of Pentecost.] (Acts 11:16) And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with [in] water, but you shall be baptized with [in] the Holy Spirit.’ (17) If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way [by not baptizing these Gentile believers and accepting them into the Body of Christ]?” See under Titus 3:3-8, pages 125-138 (including the Notes), in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, for a discussion of what the Bible means by the new covenant gift of the Spirit. The main point that I make there is that the gift of the Spirit (first poured out on the Day of Pentecost) includes the impartation of spiritual life and the transformation to a state of holiness, and is not to be limited to the charismatic dimension. At the end of this discussion of Acts 15:1-11, we’ll discuss the meaning of the words *baptism in the Holy Spirit.*]; **(9) and He made no distinction between us** [referring to those Jews, including Peter, who had already received the Spirit, starting at Pentecost] **and them, cleansing [or, purifying] their hearts by faith.** [These last words are very important, but often not adequately understood. For one thing, they include the common new-covenant theme that we are saved by faith/grace, not works. (Verses 10, 11 confirm that Peter makes this point here.) This theme is very relevant because it shows that the Gentile Christians were not required (by God) to submit to ceremonial works of the Mosaic Law, like circumcision, which was the point of contention (15:1-6). It is important to see that the *cleansing/purifying* spoken of here is the cleansing/purifying that comes to the *hearts* and lives of those who submit to the gospel in faith.

This cleansing/purifying work comes based on the atoning death of the Lamb of God (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:1-4; 8:1-4; 1 Peter 1:18-20; 2:24) and it comes in/by the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in all believers (e.g., Rom. 8:9). The giving of the Holy Spirit (mentioned in verse 8) includes the regenerating (life-giving) and sanctifying transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit. This work of the Spirit yields the *cleansing/purifying* of the heart mentioned in verse 9. A study of the Greek verb *katharizo*, which is the verb translated cleansing/purifying here, helps

confirm that it is correct to see a sanctifying, transforming type of cleansing/purifying here. This same Greek verb is also used of this type of cleansing in 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:26; Titus 2:14; Heb. 9:14; James 4:8; and 1 John 1:7, 9. Each of these important verses, with one exception, is discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. (See the listing of “Passages of Scripture” at the front of the book. See the listings in bold print.) The one verse not discussed there is James 4:8, a verse that is part of a powerful call to repentance, and a verse that is easy to understand: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse [*katharizo*] your hands, you sinners [In other words, *Stop sinning!* It’s clear in this context that James wasn’t just exhorting them to receive a cleansing that included only forgiveness.]; and purify [using a different Greek verb] your hearts, you double-minded.”] **(10) Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?** [The yoke refers to an attempt to be saved through trying to fully keep the Law, including the ceremonial parts of the Law.] **(11) But we** [Peter is speaking here of Jewish Christians.] **believe that we are saved** [I would translate “we believe [the gospel] in order to be saved.”] **through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.** [All new covenant believers (Jews and Gentiles) are saved by grace, not works/Law/merit. I recommend the following commentaries on these verses: *Book of Acts* (Eerdmans, 1988) by F. F. Bruce; *Acts* (Eerdmans, 1980) by I. H. Marshall.]

Meaning of the Words “Baptism [or, Immersion] in the Holy Spirit.” This discussion builds on what was said above under Acts 15:8 and 9, including the reference to my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. What is true regarding the expression baptism/immersion in the Spirit is also true regarding the many parallel expressions used in the Bible to speak of the same reality. Some of these other expressions are listed above under Acts 15:8. The main reason I wanted to include this discussion is because I believe this expression (and the parallel expressions) are often misunderstood. For one thing, these words should stir us up, and motivate us, to the privilege of (and necessity for) holiness; but many don’t even see holiness included here. As I said above, we don’t want to minimize the charismatic gifts, and they are included in what it means to be immersed in the Holy Spirit; but so is the even-more-important, life-giving/sanctifying work of the Spirit.

These significant words (baptism in the Spirit) are used (in some form) seven times in the New Testament: Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; and 1 Cor. 12:13. Some understand these words in the sense baptism *with* or *by* the Spirit, instead of *in*. I would translate *in* for all seven verses. For one thing, the same Greek preposition (*en*) is used in all of these verses, and *in* is the most basic way to translate this word. *In* seems to fit perfectly with the idea of baptism/immersion, whether immersion *in* water, or *in* the Holy Spirit. The meaning is essentially the same in all seven verses. What meaningful, glorious words! Those who are spiritually dead, separated from God, characterized by sin, and not ready to stand before God on judgment day are baptized (immersed) in the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ, based on His atoning death. (The most godly/righteous believers living under the old covenant still needed the new birth and sanctifying transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit. Cf., e.g., John 3:3-8; Rom. 8:1-14; Gal. 3:14, 21; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 11:13, 39, 40.) Being immersed in the



Spirit brings life (starting with the new birth), brings believers into union with God, and makes them righteous and holy (assuming they really walk after the Spirit by faith, which they are required to do by covenant), and therefore ready to stand before God on judgment day.

The first four verses (of the seven) all refer to the same incident, as reported by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew has the fullest account, so let's briefly consider Matt. 3:1-12. John the Baptist called the people to repent and submit to his baptism of repentance, and all the more so, he said, because the time for judgment was close at hand. A big part of his ministry was to point people to Christ Jesus (cf., e.g., John 1:6-8, 15, 19-42). As recorded in Matt. 3:11, John the Baptist said, "As for me, I baptize [immerse] you with [in] water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize [immerse] you with [in] the Holy Spirit and fire." John was speaking to people that had not been born again yet (the new birth wasn't available before Calvary and Pentecost), and as John the Baptist said, they needed to repent and get ready to stand before God. What they ultimately needed, therefore, was the new birth and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that only the Messiah could provide. (The Old Testament prophesied that the Spirit would do these things, and the New Testament emphasizes this work of the Spirit. See Note 30 on page 135 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin.*) In this context, it seems clear to me that the words baptism/immersion in the Holy Spirit include the new birth and the sanctifying work of the Spirit. The "fire" of Matt. 3:11 apparently also refers to (or at least includes) His sanctifying/purifying work (cf. Acts 2:3). It seems essentially impossible for John's words to be limited to the charismatic dimension in this context.

Then in Acts 1:5 Jesus said, "for John baptized with [in] water, but you shall be baptized with [in] the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Jesus spoke these words to His apostles after His resurrection, and not long before He was taken up in glory, which took place some ten days before Pentecost. The new birth and sanctifying transformation still were not available, and would not be available until Christ was taken up in glory and "[received] from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit," which He then poured forth, starting on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:33). Pentecost was "the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field" (Ex. 23:16). God chose this day to pour out His Spirit. On this day the Christian church began; no one was born again before this day. On this day God began to harvest first fruits (born-again believers) into His Messianic kingdom. The apostles, and others, had experienced charismatic gifts to some extent before Pentecost (e.g., Matt. 10:8; Mark 6:7, 13; Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-20), but there was a substantial increase in the gifts after Pentecost; this too was in accordance with prophecy (Acts 2:1-21). However, it should be noted that even this prophecy of Joel (quoted in Acts 2:16-21) puts the emphasis on getting ready for judgment day, and especially when read in context with all the book of Joel.

Acts 11:15-17 have already been quoted and discussed to some extent above. In this passage the apostle Peter speaks of the Gentiles who had gathered to the house of Cornelius being baptized in the Spirit, as were the Jews at Pentecost. The account of what happened, as reported in Acts 10:34-11:18; 15:7-11, strongly favors the viewpoint that their baptism in the Spirit included the new birth and sanctifying work of the Spirit, and not just charismatic gifts.

The seventh, and last, verse that uses this terminology is 1 Cor. 12:13. I believe the apostle Paul's use of these words also includes the new birth and sanctifying work of the Spirit, and not just the charismatic gifts. See note 31 on page 138 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on this verse.

In conclusion, I believe we can say that when the Bible uses the terminology baptism/immersion in the Holy Spirit (or one of several parallel expressions) it includes the all-important, new covenant new birth and sanctifying transformation wrought by the Spirit, and not just the charismatic gifts. At the same time, we don't want to minimize the importance of the charismatic dimension in God's plan for the Body of Christ, as has often happened. We very much need all the work of the Holy Spirit.

A discussion of Acts 19:1-7. [This passage uses the verb *believe* twice in a meaningful way, but the main reason I'm including this passage is because it speaks of receiving the Holy Spirit. As I mentioned above, I believe receiving the Spirit means the same thing as being baptized in the Spirit.] **And it came about that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country came to Ephesus, and found some disciples, (2) and he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"** [At first Paul apparently thought they were Christian disciples, but it didn't take long to find out that they had not yet believed in/into Jesus. The KJV has, "since ye believed?" The Greek could also be translated "having believed/after you believed." Paul's words include the idea that (repentance and) faith/believing precedes the reception of the promised life-giving, sanctifying Spirit. (Cf., e.g., John 3:14-16, 36; 5:24, 40; 20:31; Acts 1:4, 5 [The apostles and the others gathered in the upper room (Acts 1:13) were already believers, but they had not yet received the promised Spirit, and their lives hadn't been transformed yet either.]; Acts 2:33, 37-39; 8:14-18; 11:15-18; 15:7-9; 19:2-6; Gal. 3:2, 3, 5, 14, 21, 22, 26, 27; 4:5, 6; and Eph. 1:13. I'm not suggesting, of course, that the Spirit can't/doesn't do anything before being received by the believer. We can speak, for example, of His work of convicting, revealing, and drawing.) In the most common New Testament pattern, the Spirit is received by repentant believers immediately after water baptism. Note Acts 19:5, 6, and see pages 126, 127, including the notes, in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin.*] **And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."** [These words probably just mean that they didn't know that the Holy Spirit had been given, and could be received. Anyway, these words demonstrate that these disciples were not Christians yet (cf. Rom. 8:9). Many say that they were born-again Christians already and that Paul was only asking whether they had received the Spirit in a charismatic sense. I believe the words we have already read show this view to be wrong, and the following words of verses 3-5 confirm that this view is wrong. See the comments on verses 3-5.] **(3) And he said, "Into [Greek *eis*] what then were you baptized?"** [The Greek word behind "what" is neuter in gender and apparently refers to the *name* into which they were baptized. The word for name is neuter in Greek, and note verse 5, which says, "they were baptized into [*eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus." On the use of the name of Jesus in the book of Acts, see under Acts 3:16 earlier in this paper.] **And they said, "Into [*eis*] John's baptism."** [It took more than this baptism to make you a Christian.] **(4) And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance,**

**telling the people to believe in [or, into; *eis*] Him who was coming after him, that is in [or, into; *eis*] Jesus.” (5) And when they heard this [All that Paul told them to correct their very inadequate knowledge, as reported here by Luke, was that John the Baptist said the people were to believe in/into Jesus. Significantly, Paul wouldn’t have had to tell Christians that they needed to believe in/into Jesus. This to me is a very strong confirmation that these disciples were not yet Christians when Paul met them. By the way, I’m sure that Paul informed them more fully about what it means to become a Christian than what is recorded here.], they were baptized in [or, into; *eis*] the name of the Lord Jesus. [To be baptized in/into His name includes accepting all that the Father has revealed about the Lord Jesus (e.g., accepting that He is the eternal Son who was with the Father in the beginning (before creation began), that He was born of a virgin, that He lived a sinless life then died on a cross bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties, that He was raised from the dead and taken up in glory, that He is coming again, etc.). And it includes a commitment to be forever submitted to Jesus as Savior and Lord.] (6) And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. [I believe we can say that at this time they received the Spirit/they were baptized (immersed) in the Spirit. And as discussed above, this baptism (immersion) in the Spirit is not to be limited to the charismatic dimension. On receiving the Spirit *with the laying on of hands*, cf. Acts 8:17-19; 9:12, 17; 2 Tim. 1:6, 7; Heb. 6:2.] (7) And there were in all about twelve men. [As discussed on pages 137, 138, of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, I’m not saying that Christians cannot have second experiences (or third) in the Holy Spirit subsequent to the new birth. (Thank God for all such valid experiences! Let’s make sure that we receive, and walk in, everything God has made available to us.) You could even call such an experience a baptism in the Spirit. However, I would like to see the Body of Christ come to agreement that the New Testament’s use of the expression includes the all-important life-giving and sanctifying work of the Spirit. For Charismatics and Pentecostals to accept this viewpoint, they need not at all limit their insistence that the charismatic gifts are quite important and part of God’s plan for the church today. Furthermore, they need not deny that born-again Christians may (and in our day often do) enter the charismatic dimension subsequent to conversion. I believe we can say that typically when a Christian has a subsequent experience in the Spirit and enters into holiness, or enters the charismatic dimension, they are entering into something that had been available since conversion. Because of a lack of knowledge of what is available (and there has been much confusion over this in the Body of Christ for a long time), or because of doubt and/or a lack of consecration, many Christians receive things long after the time they were available, and some never do receive much that God has made available. This is a very serious matter!]**

A Brief Discussion of Acts 8:4-24. These verses don’t use the expression *baptism in the Spirit*, but they use parallel expressions: Verses 15, 17, 19 speak of *receiving the Holy Spirit*; verse 16 says *the Spirit had not yet fallen upon them* (cf. Acts 10:44; 11:15). The point I want to make here is that I believe these expressions are used in the same full sense we have been discussing. The delay (of a number of days) between the time these Samaritans (note “Samaria” in Acts 1:8) submitted to the gospel in faith and were baptized in water, and the time they received the Spirit

was untypical. We must see that the situation of the Samaritans, including their strained relationship with the Jews (cf. John 4:9, 20-26), made it necessary, or at least advantageous, for God to do things somewhat differently. It was a *special case*. For one thing, the salvation (for the first time) of a substantial number of non-Jews warranted the involvement of two key apostles, Peter and John. It was important to ensure that the Samaritans were solidly saved and that the Jewish Christians and Samaritan Christians be fully united in the one Body of Christ.