


SIMPLE  
FAITH  
(A Misnomer)



W. E. BEST

# **SIMPLE FAITH (A MISNOMER)**

**By  
W. E. Best**

**WEBBMT  
P. O. Box 34904  
Houston, Texas 77234-4904 USA**

Copyright © 1993  
W. E. Best

Scripture quotations in this book designated “NASB” are from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, and 1977 by the Lockman Foundation, and are used by permission. Those designated “translation” are by the author and taken from the Greek Text. All others are from the King James Bible.

**This book is distributed by the  
W. E. Best Book Missionary Trust  
P. O. Box 34904  
Houston, Texas 77234-4904 USA**

---

# **CONTENTS**

## 1. Introduction

## 2. Description Of Faith

## 3. God-Given Faith Examined Theologically

- God-Given Faith And God's Eternal Covenant Connected
- The Eternal Covenant Established By The Godhead
- God-Given Faith A Reality In Jesus Christ
- Divine Election Guarantees Faith

## 4. God-Given Faith Examined Textually

- Theological Order In Soteriology
- Disorder In Soteriology
- Faith Called Into Action
- Assurance Of Faith

## 5. God-Given Faith Examined Experientially

- Positive Blessings On Those With God-Given Faith
- Negative Reactions Expected By Those With God-Given Faith

## INTRODUCTION

God-given faith should be examined theologically, textually, and experientially. The person possessing God-given faith will always be investigating what the Scriptures say about faith in order to obtain a better understanding of that faith. Since the faith of God's elect transcends the natural faith of the unregenerate, it can never be referred to as "simple faith." Although the word "simple" is archaic, some synonyms for it are clear, plain, natural, uncomplicated, and readily understood. Anytime the sovereign God is associated with faith it is not simple but complex.

People who think simple faith saves are destitute of God-given faith. Some are confused about verses which declare that unless one has faith as a little child he cannot enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 18:3; Mark 10:15). They object to saving faith being God-given, sustained, and consummated because it is complex. Their explanation is that simple faith, although ignorant, is as that of a little child. Through studying the Scriptures one will discover that our Lord was not appealing to simple or ignorant trust by little children. Instead, He was appealing to their conscious helplessness and their willingness to trust without any mixture of self-trust. A little child learns to trust his father. The child who jumps into his father's arms is not demonstrating ignorant trust. He knows his own inability to prevent his falling, but he jumps with full assurance that his father will catch him. Those who have God-given faith know that apart from the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we are helpless: "The eyes of your understanding having been enlightened, for you to have known what is the hope of His calling, and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the excelling greatness of His power to us the ones believing according to the working of His mighty strength, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies" (Eph. 1:18-20 — translation). The very power that raised Jesus Christ out from the dead is the power used by God to give us faith, sustain us, and work in and through us.

Scripture speaks of the faith of God's elect in Titus 1:1. God gave the faith; therefore, the Godhead is involved. The Father's work, the Son's work, and the Holy Spirit's work are included in carrying out God's purpose. God-given faith is perfect, because the infinite God is its Author. Without God-given faith, it is impossible to approach God.

The following things are true concerning God-given faith:

1. God-given faith is united with God's eternal covenant of grace.
2. God-given faith is guaranteed in eternal election.
3. Christ's Person and Work make God-given faith a living reality.

4. God-given faith was purposed by the Father, assured by the death of the Son, and becomes a reality by the Holy Spirit.
5. God-given faith is called into exercise by the effectual call of the gospel.
6. God-given faith involves the whole man — mind, heart, and will.
7. God-given faith produces fruit.
8. God-given faith is tested.
9. God-given faith is a shield that protects against the darts of the evil one.
10. God-given faith perseveres, because God preserves to the end.

Jude spoke of “your most holy faith” (Jude 20). In this instance, faith (*pistis*) refers to the system of truth or the teaching believed rather than the act of believing. The believer is built up in the sphere of Biblical teaching. This, however, does not divert from the truth that God-given faith alone can receive and profit from the Holy Scripture. The two are inseparable. How can such faith be uncomplicated, natural, or readily understood when the Godhead is involved? This is why we are continually coming to God who exists, and we are continually finding Him out. The infinite God is unknowably known by the regenerated (Eph. 3:19). We know Him, but we do not know Him as we want to know Him or shall know Him.

Faith is God’s gift (Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 1:29; Heb. 12:2). Many professing Christians believe Christianity is a good infection. They think a Christian not contagious is not genuine, and the faith of anyone who fails to share his contagious faith is questionable. However, that which is imparted by the sovereign God does not become contagious in its recipients. The word “contagious” signifies a condition which one has that can be transmitted from one person to another. When God gives a person faith that one does not become a medium through whom his faith can be transmitted to another person.

God-given faith is beyond that which is natural. Since God-given faith is supernatural with relation to its origin, it must be contrasted with natural faith:

1. Supernatural faith is not infected with depravity. Natural faith is infected with depravity. The whole man was infected with depravity in the fall in the garden of Eden. Therefore, every person who comes into this world is depraved. He is dead in trespasses and sins and inoperative in spiritual things.
2. Supernatural faith looks to the will of God. Natural faith looks to the will of depraved man.
3. Supernatural faith looks to the ability of God to draw the sinner (John 6:44). Natural faith looks to the ability of the sinner to come to Christ.
4. Supernatural faith makes the will of the sinner contingent on the will of God. Natural faith makes the will of God dependent on the sinner.

5. Supernatural faith rests on the infallible truth of God's promises. Natural faith rests on what it is able to understand.
6. Supernatural faith raises the soul above physical sight. Natural faith is restricted to the sight of the eyes.
7. Supernatural faith is capable of calling the things not existing as existing (Rom. 4:17). Natural faith is incapable of bringing things not existing as existing into the mind- set.
8. Supernatural faith cannot habitually hear and follow a false teacher (John 10:5). Natural faith cannot habitually hear and follow a true teacher (I John 2:19).
9. Supernatural faith indwells imperfect Christians who can be deceived. Natural faith indwells unregenerate persons who continually live in a state of deception. Although Christians can be deceived, their deception is not fatal. On the other hand, the nonelect live and die in a state of deception by the Devil.
10. Supernatural faith finds satisfaction in its orientation to God, eternity, the assembly, etc., as the recipient prepares for eternity. Natural faith finds satisfaction only in the things of time.

Religionists talk about faith, but few know anything about the subject of faith. Most assembly members do not have a God-given faith. If a man says he has faith and does not have good works, his faith is not genuine; therefore, it is inoperative: "What profit is it, my brothers, if anyone may give expression to be possessing faith and he may not possess works? Is such faith being able to save him? If a brother or sister may be poorly clothed and lacking the daily food, and one of you may say to them: You go away in peace, you warm yourselves and satisfy yourselves, but may not give them the necessities of the body, what benefit is that? So also faith, if it may not possess works, faith by itself is dead" (James 2:14-17 — translation). James was not teaching salvation by works but salvation by faith that will manifest itself in works. We have been regenerated for the purpose of good works (Eph. 2:8-10); therefore, we are to maintain good works (Titus 3:8). We are not justified before God by our works, but we are justified by works before others. There is a justification before God by the finished work of Jesus Christ at Calvary, a justification by faith before our own consciousness, and a justification by works before men.

The record of the faith of the patriarchs in Hebrews 11 proves that faith is the characteristic feature of God's people in every age. The operation of faith is seen in those who lived before the flood including Abel, Enoch, and Noah (Heb. 11:4-7), those who lived from the flood to the law (vv. 8-29), those who lived from Israel's deliverance to the captivity (vv. 30-34), and those who lived from the captivity to Christ (vv. 35-40). Faith is important. (1) It is God's gift to the elect, called "the faith of God's elect" (Titus 1:1). (2) Faith is the fruit of regeneration. It does not produce regeneration. (3) It is possessed from the very first with certainty, conviction, and an insight which transcends the certainties of the natural mind. The insight one with God-given faith has is an intuitive understanding. Like a little bird intuitively opening its beak upon its mother's return to the nest, the regenerated person's intuitive understanding enables him to comprehend the truth of God. God's sheep hear His voice and follow Him, but they refuse to follow the voice of a stranger (John 10:27). This is insight that transcends the thoughts of the natural mind. The natural mind does not understand the things of the Spirit of God for the reason that they are foolishness to him. They can

be only spiritually discerned (I Cor. 2:14). In contrast, the spiritual mind knows Jesus Christ who he has believed and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which he has committed to Him (II Tim. 1:12).

## DESCRIPTION OF FAITH

Faith is a Biblical subject with many facets. It is referred to as (1) an act of believing, (2) the message which faith believes, and (3) faithfulness in reference to the faith of God or the faith of Christ.

Nothing makes a person more unpopular than his insisting on a definition of faith. The world, secular or religious, knows nothing of the significance of the Greek word for faith (*pistis*) in the New Testament teaching. The noun *pistis* is found 243 times in the New Testament. It means ability to believe or conviction of the truth of something. When related to God, *pistis* means conviction that what Scripture says about God is true. The verb form *pisteuo* is found 249 times. It means to be persuaded of something, place confidence in, put trust in, or commit oneself to. The adjective *pistos* is found 69 times. It means faithful, worthy of trust, or can be relied on. Sometimes it is used as a noun, and sometimes, as an adverb.

There are many beliefs concerning faith. Grace, faith, and salvation are all the gifts of God. Arminians assume that believers may fall away from faith and salvation; therefore, faith is not peculiar to the elect. Contrary to this belief, justifying faith is peculiar to the elect, and believers cannot fall away from God-given faith. The person to whom God gave faith is in a permanent state of believing, and he will never cease believing. Some assume that God has made every person competent, and each must act for himself. They add that since faith is the gift of God, the reason one is not saved is that he has not used his faith correctly. There are others who claim to believe in total depravity but negate their claim by stating that total depravity does not mean total inability. Certainly, a sinner can do a lot of things. He can think, work, receive a good education, etc.; but he has total spiritual inability. It has been said that since there is a remnant of freedom left in man, the sinner can (1) avoid the sin against the Holy Spirit, (2) choose the lesser sin, (3) refuse to yield to certain temptations, (4) do outwardly good acts with imperfect motives, (5) seek God from motives of self-interest, and (6) give attention to Divine truth. The thought that God wills to work faith in all His creatures and will do so if they do not resist His Holy Spirit is heretical.

One without God-given faith does not have saving faith. Saving faith is not historical, temporary, contingent on one's feelings, or based on so-called miracles. Do you know that you have God-given faith? Do you have a doubt in your mind that you have it? If you are honest with yourself and Scripture, you will know exactly where you stand before God. Your discovery will not be according to feelings or opinions, whether they are your own or those of others, including theologians.

We (Christians) are exhorted to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (II Cor. 13:5). Jesus Christ answered the religious Jews, who had from Old Testament Scripture a natural knowledge of spiritual things, by saying, "You search the Scriptures, because you are thinking that in them to be having eternal life; and these are the ones witnessing concerning Me; and you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. I do not receive praise from men, but I have known you that you do not have the love of God in yourselves" (John 5:39-42 — translation). He had already told them that His witness in itself, however true, was insufficient as a matter of legal evidence. One's



personal testimony must be substantiated. Therefore, in John 5, Christ gave a five-point testimony: (1) His personal defense (vv. 30, 31); (2) the testimony of John the Baptist (vv. 32-35); (3) the works of Christ Himself (v. 36); (4) the testimony of the Father (vv. 37, 38); and (5) the testimony of Scripture (vv. 39-47).

The Jews were content with a mere human understanding of Divine truth (v. 39). How could the Jews to whom Christ made the statement in John 5:39 form a true estimate of Jesus Christ, His Person and Work? (1) They would not come to Him (v. 40). (2) They did not have the love of God in them (v. 42). (3) They received only him who came in his own name and refused to receive Jesus Christ (v. 43). (4) They did not seek the honor that comes from God (v. 44). (5) They would not believe the writings of the One they claimed to trust (vv. 46, 47). They were unwilling to come to Christ, because the will of the natural man is in bondage to Satan. The natural man is dead to the things of God; therefore he is not self-determining. If the will could determine itself, the action would be both cause and effect, which is contrary to Scripture. A person who thinks he must exercise his will to give God permission to exercise His will is lost.

Every human being has some kind of faith. It may be natural, temporary, historical, or the result of his having seen miracles performed. Many, like the Pharisees who were attracted by Christ's works, profess faith; but Jesus Christ has not committed Himself to them (John 2:23, 24). Every person criticizes what does not harmonize with his particular kind of faith. Only those with God-given faith are willing to test their faith by the Holy Scriptures. Those who are unwilling to test their faith by the word of God become angry when one suggests they do so. They test their respective kinds of faith by their opinions, feelings, and denominational teachings. Apart from God-given faith no one can please God (Heb. 11:6). Anything that is not motivated by God-given faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). One with natural faith cannot continue to listen and try to follow the objective truth of God.

Distinction must be made between the act of believing and what is believed. God's gift of faith is not another organ added to the five organs. It is the ability to hear, receive, and embrace what God gives. Faith must be given by God in order to be genuine. God-given faith is subjective. It cannot be separated in description from objective faith, because subjective faith is the channel through which objective faith flows to the mind, heart, and will. In this manner, the whole of man is included. Although subjective and objective faith are not the same, they are inseparable. The first concern of one who has been given the ability to believe is what to believe. Only the elect can experience God-given faith, which is the result of regeneration.

God-given faith is required in order to embrace the objective faith concerning the sovereignty of God, Divine election, the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, regeneration, conversion, the holy life for which the person with God-given faith strives every day he lives, etc. Although there is a close connection between God-given faith and objective faith, faith alone does not give assurance. "Now faith is the assurance of things being hoped for, the certainty of things not being seen" (Heb. 11:1 — translation). What one believes by his God-given faith gives assurance. The faith in which one has assurance is insufficient, because he has assurance in his faith. Assurance is not in faith but in what faith believes, embraces, and understands because subjective faith is the channel through which objective faith flows to the mind, affections (heart), and will. When all three are involved, there is saving faith.

Natural faith gives no one assurance. The kind of assurance natural faith gives will result in no assurance at all. Like the hope many claim to have, it will make one ashamed (Rom. 5:5). False faith may for a time smooth the rugged journey of life, but it cannot fill the deep void which the fall of man left to the depraved soul. A Biblical example is the book of Ecclesiastes. Nothing under the sun satisfied the man who was not in the Son. Subjective faith alone does not save, justify, or perform good works in the eyes of God. Paul spoke of good works as a result of the motivation of the God-given subjective faith and love for the cause of Christ to which one is committed. God-given faith must not be confused with confidence based on statistical data.

Our Lord illustrated subjective faith in the widow of the parable of the unjust judge in Luke 18:1-8. But the widow had assurance by the objective truth she heard. This parable and the parable of the Pharisee and the publican are interjected between our Lord's answer to the Pharisees' demand to know when the kingdom of God shall come (Luke 17:20-37) and the parable of the nobleman who has gone into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and return (Luke 19:12-27). Hence, they are recorded between two prophetic portions of Scripture. Christians in this age are being prepared by grace for the kingdom which Jesus Christ shall establish when He returns to the earth.

Between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ, God's chosen ones who are referred to in Luke 18:7 are represented in the parables of the widow and the publican. Like the widow, the chosen ones are denied justice between the advents of Jesus Christ. Christians do not and will not get justice in this dispensation. The widow did not get justice for the reason that the judge wanted to give it, but the judge gave her justice to shut her up so that she would not worry him. He had no reverence for God and no respect for man. "And He was telling a parable to them that they must always be praying and not to be losing courage, saying: There was a certain judge in a certain city who is not fearing God and is not respecting man. And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him saying: Get me justice from my opponent at law. And for a time he was not willing; but afterward he said in himself: Even though I am not fearing God nor respecting man, yet because this widow causes me trouble I will do her justice, lest by her continual coming she may wear me out. And the Lord said: Hear what the unjust judge is saying" (Luke 18:1-6 — translation).

The widow was so persistent that she was about to wear out the unjust judge. Since he had no respect for God or people, he would do her justice but not because he wanted to. He must grant her request in order to save his own political hide.

The publican, the one who went away justified before God, was despised by the religionist. The Lord "spoke this parable to certain ones who had trusted in themselves that they are righteous and counting the rest as nothing" (Luke 18:9 — translation). Both the Pharisee and the publican in the parable went up to the temple to pray. The first thing the child of God does when he has been born of the Spirit is to cry, "Abba, Father." We can call on the Father through the work of the Son by the agency of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Hence, the Godhead is involved in prayer. We have intimacy with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Intimacy with the Godhead is important to us during times of our being treated unjustly and being despised.

The Pharisee is contrasted with the publican: (1) The Pharisee stood. There was nothing wrong with his posture. (2) He prayed to himself. He did not have subjective faith. Every unsaved person prays to himself, because God does not hear sinners (John 9:31). (3) He began by using God's name. All the heretics in the world want to use the name of God to take away their reproach. (4) He boasted

that he was not like the rest of men. Instead of looking to Christ he looked to himself. (5) He was negative; however, righteousness is both positive and negative. What he said did not prove personal righteousness. While pretending mercy he intended merit. Like the Pharisee, persons who have no fear of God have no respect for man. One of the fourteen horrible indictments against every unregenerate person is that there is no fear of God before his eyes (Rom. 3:18).

The publican is contrasted with the Pharisee: (1) He stood at a distance. Recognizing God's sovereignty, he knew that he was what he was by the grace of God. (2) He was unwilling to lift up his eyes. Shame for sin is a virtue. (3) He smote on his breast, signifying sorrow and a token of a quarrel with the heart. (4) He confessed by speaking against himself, which requires the Spirit of regeneration.

In spite of being treated unjustly and being despised, children of God should not be discouraged, because the God of justice whom we love, serve, and follow will have the last word. We should not expect justice now. Neither should we expect love from the world. We are not part of it; therefore, the world hates us. People today who cry for justice should realize that the Christian will never get it here. We cannot expect justice from people who are unjust by nature.

Justice for God's chosen ones awaits the kingdom. In the meantime, we must always be in the spirit of prayer. "And shall not God bring about the justice of His elect who are crying to Him day and night, and is being patient in their behalf" (Luke 18:7 — translation). A double negative is usually translated "by no means"; but in this instance, the two Greek adverbs, *ou me*, give to us what is known as a rhetorical question, which expects an affirmative answer. The affirmative answer is, "and is being patient in their behalf." The antecedent of "their" is "His elect." The simple answer to this is found in Peter's statement that God's patience is salvation to all the elected ones: "The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some regard negligence, but is patient toward you, not purposing any to perish but all to come to repentance" (II Pet. 3:9 — translation). God is patient on behalf of His people in order that those who have been given to Jesus Christ in the covenant of redemption will all, without the loss of one, come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Since God will bring about justice, we cannot expect justice from unjust judges, politicians, the people of the world, or religionists. The justice to which we are committed is that which will be executed when Jesus Christ comes as King of kings and Lord of lords. This is our hope.

The parable of the unjust judge concluded with the Lord's statement, "I am saying to you that He will bring about justice on their behalf. Nevertheless the Son of man having come shall He find the faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8 — translation). In the last part of this verse, there is a Greek interrogative particle which is expecting a negative answer. The question is, will Christ find the faith on the earth when He comes? A negative answer is true. When Jesus Christ came in His first advent, He looked for faith in Israel. He was born of the Jews, came to the Jews, and preached to the Jews; but He did not find faith in Israel at His first advent. Will Jesus Christ find the completed kingdom when He comes to occupy the throne that some think the assembly has brought into existence by her spiritual work? What will be the condition when He comes? We are already seeing an escalation of apostasy rapidly increasing toward the great apostasy before the coming of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. Since we must look at this in the light of its context, the persistent widow represents the chosen ones of this passage of Scripture. Her perseverance was manifested. Her faith was subjective faith, but she had assurance by the objective faith which she heard. Iniquity is abounding, and the love of many is growing cold. Jesus Christ will not find a

kingdom or a converted world but chaos, confusion, and an apostate condition. His judgment will come on the world, and then He will establish His kingdom.

## GOD-GIVEN FAITH EXAMINED THEOLOGICALLY

God who requires faith of the elect works faith in the elect. Saving faith is of God, and it is wrought in our hearts by the sovereign God. God-given faith is not only the ability to see and understand Jesus Christ, but it is also the ability to appropriate Jesus Christ. Faith is God's gift. It is given by God to the intelligent and the illiterate in the same way. The highly intelligent person is in no better position to accept God's gift than the illiterate person. But the illiterate person who has been regenerated and converted will not remain illiterate. He will study and improve so that he might gain a better understanding of the word of God.

### God-Given Faith And God's Eternal Covenant Connected

God-given faith is united with God's eternal covenant of grace: "Now the God of peace, the One who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep in the blood of an eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, to make you complete in every good thing to do His will, producing in us that which is acceptable in His presence through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever: Amen" (Heb. 13:20, 21 — translation). "And the nations hearing were rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as have been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48 — translation). "And when he desired to pass through into Achaia, the brethren wrote having encouraged the disciples to welcome him; who, having come, assisted much the ones who have believed by means of grace" (Acts 18:27 — translation).

God is the covenant God, and this is apart from any relation to man. He is the triune God. In that trinity, there is exclusive unity. No fourth person could have a place in that union of equals. That possibility would negate grace. In this union of equals are the plan, purpose, price, and application of redemption.

The expression, "eternal covenant," militates against the idea that it is a means to an end. A means is not eternal. When that which is effected by a means is realized, it has served its purpose. In contrast, the eternal covenant is abiding. It is pretemporal, cotemporal, and posttemporal. No wonder the Scripture speaks of Jesus Christ and His death being of God. Since the eternal covenant is unilateral, it is not a way but the consummation itself. To make a covenant effective, the persons involved must be able to fulfill the conditions undertaken. Such fulfillment is impossible with man. In the eternal covenant, the contracting Persons in the Godhead are able to fulfill the conditions, and the elect are the beneficiaries of God's marvelous grace.

Some Greek students explain the Greek word for covenant (*diatheke*) as a contract, covenant, or testament. Others believe it is a disposition, arrangement of any sort which one wishes to be valid, a compact, or a covenant. They declare that the word covenant is used to denote the close relationship which God entered into, whether it was the covenant with Abraham, Moses, David, etc. They add that in the New Testament distinct covenants are mentioned, Mosaic and Christian. Others say that

it denotes a testamentary disposition, will, or covenant. We must call attention to the fact that the word *diatheke* generally means covenant, but in contemporary Hellenistic Greek, it expressed a juristic sense and meant will. In classical Greek, *suntheke* is a word for covenant. The prepositional prefix, *sun*, would render it a covenant between two parties coming together on equal terms. Therefore, those who gave us the New Testament did not use that word, because it incorrectly describes the eternal covenant. Religionists should use that word because they place man on a superior level to God. Their heretical opinion is that God cannot do anything until man lets Him. The word *diatheke* is used because it is a unilateral covenant between the Persons in the Godhead.

In Hebrews 9:16-17, *diatheke* is used in the sense of a will. A will is an arrangement of possessions and has force only when the person who has made the will has died and the death is established. However, Christ is the only Testator to make a will, survive death, and live to be the executor of His own will. There are some important features about a will: (1) A will must name the heirs (John 10:3; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8). (2) A will must describe the inheritance (Eph. 1:1-14). (3) A will should be probated (Ps. 119:89). (4) A will is of no force until the death of the author of the will (Heb. 9:16, 17). (5) A will must provide for an executor. Jesus Christ rose from the dead to be the executor of His own will. In Hebrews 9:16-17, the Testator is Jesus Christ; saints are the heirs; the legacies are the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and the witnesses are the apostles.

Acts 13:48 proves that God-given faith is connected with God's eternal covenant of grace: "And the nations hearing were rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as have been appointed to eternal life believed" (translation). The word "appointed" (perfect passive participle of *tasso*) is used in the sense of designate, order, or determine. Arminians argue that if Acts 13:48 refers to God's election of certain ones to be saved, it contradicts verse 46, which speaks of God's allowing the Jews freedom of choice to reject the gospel. "And Paul and Barnabas having become bold said: It was necessary for the word of God to be spoken first to you; since you reject it and are judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we are turning to the nations" (v. 46 — translation). They teach that verse 48 simply means that all who were capable of believing were "disposed" to believe, did believe, and by the gospel and Spirit, they were set in order.

Contrary to the Arminian argument, in the eternal covenant of grace, God appointed all the chosen ones to believe; and everyone in God's covenant of grace will believe. The chosen one will be preserved by God's providence until he does believe. He is appointed to believe, not disposed to believe. One believes by means of grace; therefore, subjective grace must be within before he can believe. The word "disposed" is an incorrect translation of *tetagmenoi* (perfect passive participle nominative masculine plural of the verb *tasso*), used with the preposition *eis* (accusative of relationship) in verse 48. The word "disposed" means to put in a particular order or arrangement. One who translates *tasso* thus should ask himself, Who disposed them? Is deliverance from sin's penalty a matter of man's resolution or God's ordination? The answer to these questions solves the whole man-made problem. Although one translates the word as disposed, he will not prove that the disposition is one's own. The elect are disposed by the decree and providence of God. There is no direct mention of God's election here, but it is implied. How can persons who are at enmity against God have any inward disposition or inclination toward God? "THE plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD" (Prov. 16:1 NASB). It is not in man to set in order his own heart. This is wholly wrought by God.

The verb *tasso* is found 8 times in the New Testament: (1) In Matthew 28:16, it is translated “appointed” (KJB) and “designated” (NASB). (2) In Luke 7:8, it is translated “set” (KJB) and “under authority” (NASB). (3) In Acts 13:48, it is translated “ordained” (KJB) and “appointed” (NASB). (4) In Acts 15:2, it is translated “determined” (KJB and NASB). (5) In Acts 22:10, it is translated “appointed” (KJB and NASB). (6) In Acts 28:23, it is translated “appointed” (KJB) and “set” (NASB). (7) In Romans 13:1, it is translated “ordained” (KJB) and “established” (NASB). (8) In I Corinthians 16:15, it is translated “addicted” (KJB) and “devoted” (NASB). These eight references can be placed into five categories — to command, to appoint, to determine, to subject to authority, and to devote to.

The verb *tasso* is never used to denote an internal inclination or disposition arising from one’s own depraved heart. The Jews did not believe. They rejected the message Paul and Barnabas were preaching. Therefore, their hearts had not been touched by grace. They had no inclination for the gospel. They were not thirsty for righteousness. Like every depraved person, the preached gospel of Christ meant nothing to them. However, some of the Gentiles were glorying in the God of salvation and rejoicing in the message they were hearing, because their inclination did not come from something originating within themselves.

We do not receive grace by our faith: “And when he desired to pass through into Achaia, the brethren wrote having encouraged the disciples to welcome him; who, having come, assisted much the ones who have believed by means of grace” (Acts 18:27 — translation). Since we believe by means of grace, we do not believe in order to get grace. Salvation is of God by God-given faith. It is connected with God’s eternal covenant of grace. All those God has appointed to believe shall believe, and they shall believe by means of grace. Our believing is above the natural. It comes from God Himself.

### **The Eternal Covenant Established By The Godhead**

The eternal covenant is unilateral between the Persons in the one Godhead. It is not bilateral between God and man. The Godhead established the covenant; but those who say the covenant is unilateral in origin and bilateral in execution say that God established the covenant, but man becomes a part in its execution. This would make deliverance from the penalty and condemnation of sin conditional. But this deliverance is not conditioned on a person’s repentance and faith. If it were conditional, grace would be nullified. Man cannot be a copartner in relation to the living God. God can make a covenant only between equals. This is descriptive of the unilateral covenant between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Man is always the dependent and needy creature who must drink from God’s fountain. How can such a creature assume the position of a participant in the covenant of grace.

There are two parts, not two participants, in the covenant of grace. Our part is to love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, but our part is not a condition to the fulfillment of God’s part. Our part is the fruit of God’s part. Because the sovereign God unconditionally works grace in our hearts, we are enabled to love the Lord with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Election is an eternal act of God’s will; therefore, it was consummated before the duty of man. Hence, every cause must precede its effect.

The traditional view is that the covenant God made with Adam in the garden of Eden consisted of a promise, a condition, and a penalty. Those who hold this view declare that the promise was eternal life; the condition was perfect obedience; and the penalty was death. However, their statements are not Scriptural. God is the One who created, planted, placed Adam in the garden of Eden, and gave the command. God did not promise Adam eternal life on the basis of the condition that he be perfectly obedient. Had Adam been faithful, he would not have suffered death, but that is not the same as reaching a higher state of uncreated righteousness. What kind of uprightness did Adam have in the garden of Eden? He did not have an uncreated righteousness; he had a created uprightness from which he fell. He did not fall from an uncreated righteousness. All the elect of God have an uncreated righteousness that Jesus Christ worked out for us at Calvary, and it is imputed and imparted to us. From that we can never fall.

Eternal life required the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ. In God's purpose Adam fell, because uncreated righteousness comes to the elect of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not come by a work performed by an individual, whether it is Adam in the garden of Eden or anyone subsequent to the fall. Eternal life has its realization in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The unilateral covenant between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit took place in eternity before the creation of man, before the garden of Eden, and before the fall of Adam in the garden of Eden. The covenant of grace is not a mutual agreement between God and man. It is established by God alone.

### **God-Given Faith A Reality In Jesus Christ**

The book of Hebrews, which declares that Jesus Christ is inseparably connected with the eternal covenant, has much to say about the subject of faith. Near the conclusion of the Epistle reference is made to "the God of peace, the One who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20 — translation). When we think about the great Shepherd of the sheep, our minds go to John 10 where the Shepherd and the sheep are vividly portrayed. (1) The true Shepherd entered the sheepfold (Judaism) by the door. Hence, His entrance was in a lawful manner (John 10:2). (2) To this Shepherd the porter opened the door (v. 3). (3) The Shepherd calls the sheep by name (v. 3). (4) The Shepherd distinguishes sheep from goats (vv. 4, 5). He even distinguishes sheep who have been quickened and saved in a conversion experience from those who are sheep but have not yet been called. The elect are lost sheep before they become saved sheep. (5) The Shepherd leads His sheep out of the fold (v. 3). Christ did not come to save His sheep in Judaism, but to save them from Judaism. In the same manner, He did not come to save us in our sins; He came to save us from our sins. (6) The Shepherd goes before His sheep (v. 4). He is the Captain of our salvation leading many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10). (7) He gives the sheep eternal life (John 10:28). The recipient of grace is between the hand of the sovereign God and the crucified hand of Jesus Christ. (8) The Shepherd gives abundant life (v. 10). (9) He laid down His life for the sheep (v. 11). (10) He marks His sheep (v. 14). When one of God's elect is regenerated, he is sealed until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). (11) He watches over His sheep (John 17:6). (12) The Shepherd of the sheep gave His life for the sheep, and He has been brought out from death (Ps. 23). The sheep are characteristically meek or humble. We recognize that we are what we are by the grace of God. We are harmless. God's sheep are not natural-born trouble-makers. We are patient, like sheep led to the slaughter. We are totally dependent. Sheep are obedient. We are contented wherever the Shepherd leads. We are sociable (Acts 2:41, 42).



## Divine Election Guarantees Faith

Faith is guaranteed in Divine election. Election is an eternal act of God's will; therefore, it was consummated prior to the duty of man. Hence, every cause must precede its effect. God chose us in Himself before the foundation of the world: "Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One having blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, just as He chose us in Himself before the foundation of the world, to be being holy and without blemish before Him..." (Eph. 1:3, 4 — translation). We have many blessings in Christ, but the noun for blessed (*eulogetos*) used here by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is a singular noun. It is used as a blessing given by God the Father through His Son's finished work at Calvary and by the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration. The aorist middle indicative of the verb for chose (*eklegomai*) emphasizes that God in past time chose us for Himself.

The prime mover in Ephesians 1:1-14 is the triune God: (1) God the Father (vv. 3-6), (2) God the Son (vv. 7-12), and (3) God the Holy Spirit (vv. 13, 14). Therefore, God-given faith is based on the nature and purpose of God. Faith which is purposed by the Father (vv. 4-6) and assured by the Son and His redemptive work at Calvary (vv. 7-12) becomes a reality by the Spirit (vv. 13, 14). The elect were appointed by God the Father to believe (Acts 13:48). The Son provided grace for the elect by which we could believe (Acts 18:27). The Spirit of regeneration makes grace a reality to the elect, then we are in a position to believe.

On the surface, the statement that the soul is the life of the body, faith is the life of the soul, and Christ is the life of faith sounds good. However, it would be better to say that the Spirit is the life of the soul, because the Spirit gives life to the soul. In His entrance in regeneration, the Holy Spirit also gives the ability to believe. The Spirit is the life of the soul, because the Spirit of faith embraces Jesus Christ in a conversion experience.

Repentance and faith are neither the foundation nor the capstone in the spiritual building. Although both are inseparably connected with election, they are neither the cause nor the consummation. Grace is the foundation, and glory is the consummation. If salvation may not be given as God pleases, it is not of God. If all sinners have equal claim on salvation, how can God give that to which all sinners have equal claim? Why should objectors be so concerned about the honor of Divine justice in regard to Divine election? Is God not showing more regard for fallen mankind than He is for fallen angels? God is righteous to execute justice on all who are guilty.

## **GOD-GIVEN FAITH EXAMINED TEXTUALLY**

The faith of those regenerated by the sovereign Spirit is unto the correct knowledge of the truth which is according to true piety (Titus 1:1). We understand the first page of Holy Scripture only through faith. “IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1 NASB). Through faith Abel saw the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world; Enoch saw the Divine companionship; Noah saw the coming flood; and Abraham saw the future city of God. The present effects prove the cause to be the uncaused cause (Heb. 11:6). Who would be so foolish as to say things came from nothing without a cause. The faith that pleases God is greatly misunderstood. Faith is not a muscle which the unsaved person can make spiritual by intently desiring it. That would be make-believe faith. Faith that pleases God is not a matter of insisting that God will do what one asks, but it is a humble admission that God will do what He desires.

### **Theological Order In Soteriology**

Textually, order in theology is grammatically expressed. Faith is given by God in regeneration before it is called into action by the effectual call:

1. Saving faith lays hold of that for which one was laid hold of by Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:12). A person cannot lay hold of anything until he has first been laid hold of by the Lord and His grace. That is order grammatically expressed.
2. Will and power are joined in Ephesians 1:15-23. God’s power executes what He purposed. There will be no external change until God works an internal change in the individual, because God works in us to will (internal) and to do (external) His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). God’s willing and doing is the truth of God set forth in order in the Scriptures. Ministers of God preach to people, but God alone works in them to will and to do His good pleasure. One may reason himself into reforming his life and joining an assembly, but he cannot reason himself into union with Christ.
3. The mighty power of God gives, sustains, and consummates faith. We are delivered by faith. We walk by faith. Whatever we do that is not out of this God-given faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). But everything the person without God-given faith does is sinful.
4. Saving faith which is the gift of God brings into captivity all rebellious thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God and will bring us into obedience to Christ (II Cor. 10:5). Words are the expression of our thoughts, but actions are the embodiments of our thoughts. The absolute secrecy of thoughts is one prerogative with which man does not want to depart in life. However, the time will come when he will part from that concealment (I Cor. 4:5). The secret thoughts of Christians will be made known when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
5. God’s order in the deliverance of His chosen ones in Romans 8:29-30 is as follows: (1) God knew beforehand. (2) God decided beforehand. (3) God called. (4) God justified. (5) God glorified. In the Greek, all of these five verbs are aorist active indicative, signifying past completed action.

The first two — God knew beforehand and God decided beforehand — are eminent acts of the eternal God. The last three — called, justified, and glorified — take place in the elect in time. As calling presupposes faith (Rom. 10:14), faith presupposes regeneration, because the believing person has eternal life. Among theologians, there are two views of John 5:24 — “Truly truly I am saying to you. The one hearing my word and believing the One who sent me has eternal life, and is not coming into judgment but has passed out of death into life” (translation). The first view is that one hears and believes because he has life. The second view is that one hears and believes in order to have life. The former is the truth of Scripture. To illustrate, one who gets up and walks has life. He does not get life by getting up and walking. One cannot believe without spiritual life.

6. Union with God does not begin with faith. Other unions precede our being united with God when we believe. There are five ways one has union with God: (1) God’s choice — Divine election, (2) redemption which took place at Calvary, (3) regeneration, (4) faith which is understanding the actuality of regeneration, and (5) glory. The first two are legal acts. The second two are actual acts. The fifth is a future act. The last, though presently unrealized, is just as sure as the others.

### **Disorder In Soteriology**

There is disagreement among theologians on the subject of soteriology:

1. Some who believe that grace, faith, and salvation are the gifts of God state that faith is the gift of God, and you have it; but you are not saved, because you have not correctly used it.
2. Other theologians assume that each person must act in his own sovereign power of choice, which is a Divinely bestowed right based on the mercy of God.
3. Some declare that the only ones who may seek to enter the science of systematic theology are those whose faith has guaranteed their regeneration.
4. Certain others affirm that regeneration is to be understood from natural generation. They say that in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit was the communicative Agent, and Mary’s faith supplied the receptive instrument.
5. Other theologians believe that faith is the spiritual means by which we are united with Christ, live from Him, and receive all His benefits. They assert that the power of faith may be achieved in the hearts of either infants or adults. They assume that God usually gives this power of faith to the elect of the covenant in their infancy.
6. Theologians who teach universal redemption teach that it is absurd to wonder whether the blood of Jesus Christ was efficacious to save all men without exception. They explain that redemption would not be universal if His blood was not shed for all without exception. Furthermore, salvation could not be authentically offered if Christ’s blood was efficacious for only some.

All who preach that Jesus Christ is impotent to save unless the sinner first wills and gives Him his consent are salvation peddlers. They refute the meaning of redemption. Redemption is satisfaction, and satisfaction is actual payment of the sin debt for all for whom Christ died. If Christ died for all,

then all will be saved. Salvation peddlers, like politicians, know what appeals to depraved human nature; therefore, they give only that which produces results.

### **Faith Called Into Action**

The faith given by God in regeneration is called into action by the effectual call of the gospel. The first act of God-given faith is faith acting as the result of having been effectually called by the gospel. It is embracing Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior thus experiencing a true conversion. The person with the ability to believe does not act until the call of the gospel comes, and the effectual call of the gospel brings the God-given faith into action. This God-given faith, which is subjective, reaches out to trust what the gospel message has to say about Jesus Christ, His Person, and Work. The last act of faith is the Christian's realization that the time has come for him to step out of time into eternity, and he readily submits himself to the Lord's will.

The first act of faith has been called a great venture, but the word venture is a poor choice of words. Venture is an undertaking involving risk, uncertainty, or a business enterprise in which loss is risked in hope of gain. This is not a good term to use to refer to embracing Jesus Christ as Savior. The only way the word venture could be Scripturally used to refer to faith would be in connection with the last act of faith in reference to venturing into a strange place. All we know about eternity is what the word of God reveals to us, and the word has not revealed all that we shall experience. When we step out of time into eternity, we will step into a place strange to us because we have not been there before. We are not running a risk by embracing Jesus Christ. Arminians in their theology would be taking a risk, because they make human faith a contribution to their salvation experience. On the contrary, God-given faith gives the ability to believe. By this God-given faith we embrace Jesus Christ, but it is not a human contribution to our deliverance.

The writer of Hebrews wrote of a living faith that does not draw back or avoid responsibility to God. This faith has been approved because of the truth it embraces. Hebrews 11 records the path of faith (vv. 1-7), the perseverance of faith (vv. 8-22), and the power of faith (vv. 23-40). In the prologue of this chapter, the writer described faith as "the assurance of things being hoped for, the certainty of things not being seen. For by this [faith] the elders were approved" (vv. 1, 2 — translation). The writer then said, "Now without faith it is impossible to please Him; for the one coming to God must believe that He exists and He becomes [*ginomai*] a rewarder to the ones diligently seeking Him out" (v. 6 — translation). Believing that God exists is an absolute necessity for one who approaches God. The person who approaches God is a recipient of God-given faith. For that reason, he is continually approaching the God of his salvation. He believes not only that God exists but that He also becomes a rewarder of the ones who diligently examine Him. Those without God-given faith make such statements as these: "if there is a God"; "Now, God if you are really up there, do thus and so"; "If you are who you claim to be"; and "I talked to the man upstairs." In contrast, one who has God-given faith will believe the Scriptures.

God-given faith has been approved because of the truth it embraces. The truth of God (objective faith) gives assurance (I Thess. 1:5), power (I Thess. 1:5), and victory (I John 5:5) to subjective faith. Such faith is anchored in Jesus Christ who gives assurance of things hoped for and persuasion of things not being seen. Although distinction must be made between the act of believing and that which is believed, there is harmony between objective truth and subjective faith. Hence, the reality of subjective faith depends on the objective truth that subjective faith embraces. When a person

expresses what he believes, Christians can determine whether the faith he claims to have is God-given or human.

We can know from the context whether Hebrews 11:1 is a definition of faith or a description of faith. Hebrews 11 gives a declaration of faith's action. Faith makes promises present realities and unseen things visible. How can faith make something unreal a reality? Faith can make God's promise a reality to the mind based on what God said, because it is a reality to God who made the promise before the foundation of the world. If we have the faith of Abraham, calling those things existing that are nonexistent, we can see what the Hebrew writer had in mind. We are hoping for something which is not yet a reality, but it becomes a reality to the Christian based on God's promise of it.

If subjective faith alone gave assurance, power, and victory, what a person believes would not matter. The faith of God's elect makes all of life meaningful by drawing us out of ourselves and causing us to rely on the promises of God. The Old Testament saints' belief in the promises of Isaiah 53 was based on the sacrifices of the Old Testament, which were shadows of the reality of those sacrifices in the Lord Jesus. Their faith could go out into the future. As Abraham saw a city that was afar off and the Old Testament saints believed Jesus Christ would come to fulfill all the shadows and promises of the Old Testament, our faith takes the promises of God that are not yet fulfilled, and they become realities to our minds. They are realities because God who knows the end from the beginning gave them. As far as God is concerned they are already accomplished.

No person is regenerated by believing that he is regenerated. Furthermore, no one has assurance because he believes he has assurance. A person is regenerated before he believes, and he has assurance because objective truth has given him the reality of the things for which he has hoped. Only subjective faith, which is the fruit of regeneration, is the channel through which objective faith flows in an assuring salvation experience. This subjective conversion experience cannot come from what neoliberals call an inerrant message coming through an errant objective revelation that shares the perfection of God and the imperfections of man. Any doubt as to what part is perfect and what is imperfect destroys assurance. The neoliberal says we have a perfect message, but it has come to us through the writings of imperfect men. Their manner of expression destroys their assurance of salvation. Those who advocate an errant Bible have a false view of Holy Scripture and the Holy God. The writer was not merely stating in Hebrews 11:6 that men should be urged to believe that there is a god. He was declaring the true God. Thinking of some kind of god would be of no avail to those who do not discern who is the true God.

The neoliberals, like the Athenians, cover their heresies with religious forms. Modern day religion has more idols than Athens had during the time of Paul. That which caused Paul grief has been multiplied thousands of times. As Paul began where the Athenians concluded, servants of God today look beyond the philosophies of men and see in Jesus Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Like the apostle's reaction to the Athenians, servants of God are stirred up by what they see and hear from neoliberals (Acts 17:16, 17). In the midst of intellectual decay, people crave something new to satisfy their depraved appetites. The love of the new is gaining ascendancy over the ancient landmarks of Biblically established principles. Hence, men of God are following Paul's example by saying, "because He fixed a day in which He is about to be judging the inhabited earth in righteousness, by a Man whom He appointed, giving a guarantee to all having raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31 — translation).

The writer of Hebrews used a very strong word when he spoke of the impossibility of pleasing God apart from a God-given faith. The Greek word for impossible in Hebrews 11:6 is not *dunatos*, which means strong, able, or possible, but it is *adunatos* (the use of *a* negates the word), signifying impossible. The degree of subjective faith depends on how knowledgeable one is concerning the whole counsel of God and how faithful he is to apply the truth to which he has been subjected. Faith affords a higher degree of certitude in the spiritual realm than scientists furnish in the scientific community. The more we know about God and the Scriptures the greater our assurance. We correct our own proof by the greater knowledge we have gained as a result of additional study. We will always be proving ourselves and making changes from what we have believed. As a result of learning more of the word of God, faith increases. Christians who habitually seek God are rewarded in time, but the culmination of the reward must await eternity. The greater our knowledge of objective faith, or truth of God, becomes the stronger our subjective faith becomes in assurance, power, and victory. God-given faith alleviates doubt. While continually coming to God and diligently searching the things of God, we are correcting our proof and becoming stronger in our faith, witness, and assurance. Regeneration acquaints us with the holy writers who gave us the Holy Scriptures. On the basis of that acquaintance, we have an overpowering faith that they have told us the truth.

The facts of God's reality are not grounded on the abstract laws of human logic. What could the believer know about his subjective faith without the inerrant objective truth of God? It is necessary to formulate the objective in order to stabilize the subjective. Although the believer does not at first know why he is diligently investigating God, the subjective is confirmed when he formulates the objective. The subjective idea of God is less than the objective fact of God. The orderly arrangement of the world demands an uncaused cause. We must believe that God exists with no beginning or ending. Anyone who maintains that the world caused itself to exist asserts that it acted before it existed. If the principle of causality required that everything have a cause, it would also apply to God.

The principle of causality does not signify that existence demands a cause, but the emergence of that which is nonexistent demands a cause. Therefore, the orderly universe owes its existence to a cause outside of itself. It is a finite object; every finite object has been brought into being by the infinite God; and the infinite God is without a cause. God who arranged and purposed the ages is an omniscient Being. His arrangement shows design in every part of the universe. All the organs of the human body and all the species of life in the universe are for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. Thus, intelligence in the effect proves intelligence in the cause. All of man's knowledge has come either directly from God or from God's creation. The ability to comprehend spiritual things revealed in Scripture comes directly from God in regeneration, and the aptitude to know God as Creator is revealed in the orderly prepared universe. Absolute nonentity is unreasonable; therefore, the argument for existence has the approval of Scripture. The necessity for existence is denoted in the declaration, "I AM" (Ex. 3:14).

### **Assurance Of Faith**

God-given faith is a disposition of man's spiritual being by which he can become assured that the Christ of Scripture is his Savior. "Everyone believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born [perfect passive indicative of *gennaō*] of God, and everyone who loves the one who begot loves the one who has been born [perfect passive participle of *gennaō*] of Him.... Since we are receiving the witness of

men, the witness of God is greater, because this is the witness of God, since He has testified concerning His Son. The one believing because of the Son of God has the witness in himself. The one who has not believed God has made Him a liar, with the result that he has not believed the witness that God has affirmed concerning His Son. And this is the witness, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one having the Son has the life; the one not having the Son of God has not life. I wrote these things to you, the ones believing in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life” (I John 5:1, 9-13 — translation).

When the truth of Christ reaches the consciousness of the person who has been born of the Spirit, he says, “I believe.” This is not historical faith, temporary faith, or faith based on some miraculous work. It has been said that faith is not the working of a faculty inherent in the natural man, a new sense added to the five, a new soul function, nor a faculty first dormant and now active. It is a disposition implanted by the Holy Spirit in the consciousness of the regenerated person whereby he is enabled to accept Christ.

The following are things which God-given faith is not: (1) God-given faith is not a human contribution to salvation, being saved from the bondage and guilt of sin. (2) God-given faith is not a particular form of human faith. (3) God-given faith is not autonomous, on an equal standing with grace in the sense of being a partner with grace in deliverance. (4) God-given faith is not a new organ added to human nature, because that would make the unregenerate less human than the regenerate. (5) God-given faith is not blind trust. (6) God-given faith is not historical; it is not believing there is a god. (7) God-given faith is not temporary. (8) God-given faith is not built on the foundation of miraculous works. (9) God-given faith is not vain. Faith in the wrong person or thing would be vain faith. (10) God-given faith is not dead, unproductive. (11) God-given faith does not precede election in the Divine order. (12) God-given faith does not precede regeneration in the order of salvation.

The Roman Catholic view that faith is blind trust has penetrated into many denominations. Roman Catholics make a distinction between explicit and implicit faith. Explicit faith is faith in a known truth. Implicit faith is faith in truths not known. They affirm that only a few primary truths need be known, and faith without knowledge pertaining to all other truths is genuine and sufficient. The faith they require is a general intention to believe whatever the Roman Catholic Church believes. According to this doctrine taught by Roman Catholics, one may be a Christian if he simply submits to the Roman Catholic Church; although in his internal conviction, he may be a communist, pantheist, pagan, etc.

Scriptures are being withheld by those who fail to proclaim the whole counsel of God. This results in blind reverence and awe by those who hear such proclamations. Faith is not blind. How do we increase in faith if we do not grow in knowledge? God-given knowledge gives us assurance. It is not just the ability to believe (subjective faith), but believing what the Scriptures teach that gives us assurance. People in the average religious institution are not converted by truth, but by tradition. This also describes protestantism in general.

We agree that a distinction between implicit and explicit faith should be made, but it should be made in the sense of John 4:39, 41, and 42. Implicit faith, which means implied rather than expressly stated by the individual himself, is taught in verse 39 — “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman....” They believed because of the testimony of

the woman. Explicit faith is taught in verses 41 and 42 — “And many more believed because of his own word, And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world.” This is explicit faith fully and clearly expressed.

Since the Bible represents faith as being explicit and intelligent, we should search the Scriptures (Ps. 119:33, 34; Prov. 16:22; John 5:39; 17:3; I Pet. 3:15). Faith is represented as an intelligent exercise. Paul made it clear that the message must be given in a language that can be understood (I Cor. 14:15). Christians do not deny that there are mysteries, because the Bible is full of mysteries. But we distinguish between the comprehension of evidence concerning the reality of miracles and the comprehension of a proposition with reference to Biblical teaching. Faith consists not in ignorance but in knowledge. Peter’s exhortation was to grow in grace and knowledge (II Pet. 3:18).

Faith is God’s gift to the elect, and the elect shall be taught of God (John 6:45). This teaching calls faith into action; therefore, it pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe (I Cor. 1:21). Man believes with the heart unto righteousness, and with his mouth he makes confession unto salvation (Rom. 10:10). It is not enough to implicitly believe without understanding to some extent the work of Christ (I Cor. 2:1-5). Understanding is necessary in order to know the difference between the power of God and the wisdom of men. Paul’s preaching was in demonstration of the Spirit and power for the purpose that the Corinthians’ faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (I Cor. 2:5). This proves that saving faith consists of the knowledge of God and Christ (John 17:3), not in reverence for any religious institution. Undue reverence for any man or human institution is a precipice to destruction. Truth is not found in error. Light is not found in darkness. Knowledge is not found in ignorance.

The word of God is the proper object of God-given faith. What one speaks enables a Christian to know if the speaker has God-given faith. There is an inseparable connection between God-given faith and the word of God. The fact that saving faith consists not in ignorance does not contradict the equally Biblical truth of the implicit faith of Christians in this life. Whatever we know, we do not know as we should: “If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know” (I Cor. 8:2 NASB). Paul exhorted the Philippian saints to wait for further enlightenment in matters in which they might differ. “Let us therefore, as many as are perfect [mature], have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you” (Phil. 3:15 NASB). All Christians agree that our spiritual growth and understanding are less than we desire. In the light of Scripture and experience, all believers have faith based on knowledge; but at the same time, our faith is implicit.

The following are a few Biblical examples of implicit faith, which contradict the Roman Catholic teaching of implicit faith:

1. In John 4:39 and 42, the Samaritans first believed because of the testimony of the woman; however, they did not rest solely in her testimony. When they heard Christ, they believed not because of the woman’s testimony, but they believed because they heard Christ for themselves. True faith does not stop with either the testimony of any institutional assembly or some person. It goes to the one true standard, God’s word which was established in heaven before the foundation of the world.



2. In John 4:50 and 53, the nobleman who requested Christ's presence lest his son die was told by Christ to go his way because his son lived. The man believed the word that had been spoken to him, and he went his way. He later believed when he found his son had been healed at the time Christ told him his son lived.

3. In John 20:1-10, the disciples who had implicit faith believed when they learned the Scripture that Christ must rise from the dead (vv. 19, 20).

Believers go from faith to faith, because the more we know about God's word the more we know about God. Faith is not brought forth to full maturity in its initial act of embracing Christ as Lord and Savior. No one knows all the word at either the beginning or the conclusion of his earthly pilgrimage. But this is not the same as the gross ignorance of institutions that talk about simple faith.

God-given faith is equivalent in meaning to sound doctrine. The Lord told the Jews who believed on Him that if they continued in His word, they were indeed His disciples (John 8:31). (See I Tim. 4:1, 6; II Tim. 2:15; 3:16, 17; Titus 1:13; 2:1; II John 9-11.) Saving faith, which is explicit faith, is not contented with a doubtful and changeable opinion. Neither is it satisfied with an obscure and ill-defined conception. Assurance is the fruit of faith being well-founded. Full assurance of understanding results in a true understanding of the mystery of Christ, which results in a full assurance of faith (Col. 2:2; Heb. 10:22). Paul not only said "I know" (II Tim. 1:12), but he also said "I am persuaded" (Rom. 8:38). No one can have this assurance apart from personal experience. Assured faith can be attacked by doubt, and security is not without a struggle; however, saving faith is never mortally wounded. Our faith is the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4). This Scripture does not teach that faith will be victorious in a single fight or a few battles, but that it will be victorious over the world though it shall be assailed many times. Ultimate victory is ours.

## GOD-GIVEN FAITH EXAMINED EXPERIENTIALLY

The unregenerate person could spend his whole life reading and studying the Bible and never experience God-given faith. All the wisdom of the world cannot produce God-given faith. Its vital power is in the heart rather than in the head. If our eyes are closed to the world of the God-given faith of light and truth, there can never be knowledge nor increase of knowledge. As we only know of this world in which we live and its wisdom because we are born into it and live in it, we only know of the world of God-given faith when we are born into it. No one can see the world of faith and understand it until his eyes have been opened by the grace of the sovereign God. As the material world has its own law and is measured by its own standard, the spiritual world has its own law and is measured by its own standard. As we have certainty about the world in which we live because it is a matter of experience, we can have certainty about the world of faith when it becomes a matter of experience to us.

God “chose us in Himself before the foundation of the world, to be being [present active indicative of *eimi*] holy and without blemish before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4 — translation). The child of God is never satisfied with his condition in Christ. He wants to be more like Christ. Playing on the borderline is not a manifestation of spirituality.

### Positive Blessings On Those With God-Given Faith

Regeneration precedes love, faith, and joy. Persons who have been regenerated are in a position to understand and appropriate spiritual things. We now love the things we once hated. Love calls faith into action. Therefore, the mind comprehends by faith only what it is prepared by love to receive. Things affect us not only according to their nature but also according to our nature. Thus, what we see depends not only on what is to be seen but also on our capacity for seeing. We now see Him who is invisible. The Holy Spirit pours out *agape* love into the hearts of quickened persons, and He paints a portrait on the retina of our spiritual vision: “Because the God who said: Out of darkness light shall shine, who shined in our hearts for the purpose of revealing personal acquaintance of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (II Cor. 4:6 — translation).

We can love Jesus Christ better because He is not seen. One might assume that being alive during Christ’s personal ministry would have enabled us to love Him more devotedly. One with that idea does not understand the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The disciples manifested greater love for Jesus Christ after His resurrection than they did during the time He walked among them before His death. The disciples never loved Him correctly until after His resurrection. Were He localized, He would seem less majestic to us than when He is understood by us as the omnipresent One. The Savior’s sufferings are past; His blessings are present to the elect who have been born of God; and His glory shall be experienced by us. Therefore, we do not presently know Christ after the flesh (II Cor. 5:16). During His personal ministry, there were those who believed when they saw Him perform miracles. But our Lord would not reveal Himself to them, because He knew what was in them (John 2:24, 25). They believed only because they saw with their physical

eyes. There is a difference between one's seeing with the physical eyes and the recipients of God's grace seeing through the eyes of faith.

The Lord told doubting Thomas, "Because you have seen [perfect active indicative of *horao*] Me, you have believed [perfect active indicative of *pisteuo*]? Blessed are the ones who have not seen [aorist active participle of *horao*] and who have believed [aorist active participle of *pisteuo*]" (John 20:29 — translation). Therefore, it is more honorable to believe in Him whom we have not seen than to see Him and then believe. Coming into contact with Jesus Christ by touch would seem to many to be most real, because their fleshly nature is primary. They do not have the Holy Spirit within. Coming into contact with Jesus Christ by faith seems to be the most unreal, but it is the most genuine. We are able to see Him spiritually for the reason that He has given us faith. Seeing by faith is more genuine than seeing with the physical eyes. Believers in Jesus Christ presently know Him not as He was in the days of His humiliation as He walked among the sons of men. We know Him in the limitless dimension of His resurrection glory. This does not indicate that Christians give up one jot or tittle concerning the historical Christ, but we love Him and believe in Him though we have never seen Him with our physical eyes.

The Biblical order of the words love, faith, and joy is recorded in I Peter 1:8-9 — "whom not having seen you are loving, in whom not at the present time seeing but believing and having been honored, you are extremely joyful with happiness that cannot be expressed, receiving the conclusion of your faith the deliverance of your souls" (translation). There seems to be a paradox in I Peter 1:8. Scripture abounds with Divine paradoxes. Some principles set forth in Scripture in this manner are "unknown yet well-known," "possible but impossible," "absent yet present," "on earth yet in heaven," and "knowing nothing yet judging all things." We are not unscriptural in the study of God's word to apply words which in their contexts are restricted in their principles to profound truths. For instance, the future to us is unknown and yet it is well-known. Christ's second advent is well-known by every Christian informed in prophecies that relate to the future. Suppose we call the future tomorrow. Tomorrow has not come. It is future. Although no one has at any time seen or experienced tomorrow, we are influenced by tomorrow. It is known as a broad fact, but its minuteness and the details of its results are unknown. It is appointed unto man once to die, but no one knows how he will die. Hence, there is the known and the unknown concerning physical death. We all have been influenced by history, and we are influenced by prophecy: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and what we shall be was not yet revealed. We have known that when it is revealed we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone having this hope set on Him is purifying himself as that One is pure" (I John 3:2, 3 — translation). Our sanctification and our position in Jesus Christ will be purified.

The greatest mystery of life is God. The person who can accept the fact of life, knowing that he is alive, should have no difficulty accepting the fact of God, who is the source of life. The existence of God is both known and unknown to sinner and saint. The sinner knows that God exists, but he does not know Him as his Savior. Saints know God as Savior, but we do not know Him in all His perfection. Children of God know Him, but we do not know Him as we shall know Him. We know some of the realities by the power of love that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

The order of the occurrence of the words love, faith, and joy is different from what the average believer supposes. Most people think that one must have faith in the Lord before he can love Him.

However, love for the unseen calls faith into action. When God-given faith is exercised, it feeds love. Love increases with truth embraced; therefore, love is continually enlarged. Thus, the recipient of love that has been poured out in regeneration and experienced by faith which enables love to expand has joy that is never decreasing.

FIRST — Love may be evoked two ways: (1) by nature and (2) by the Holy Spirit. Natural love may be blind, but spiritual love is altogether lovely and pure. Spiritual love is one of those good gifts given by God (James 1:17). Man's love for man is more or less instinctive. Man's love for God is altogether spiritual. It is the highest form of love. Man's love for man is motivated by sentiment. Man's love for God is motivated by principle. Man's love for man is natural. Man's love for God is supernatural, because the love of God has been shed abroad in his heart by the sovereign Spirit. The love of Christians for Jesus Christ is superlative. No love can exceed it. Love for Christ comes from God. It is given to recipients of grace in regeneration. It exceeds the soul's esteem for all other things. It will lead us to not only adorn but also to adore the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The Greek noun for love (*agape*) is an action word. Love is viewed in action "in order that the genuineness of your faith, much more precious than perishing gold, now being tested through fire, may be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:7 — translation). The proof of love is that it bears the trials at some cost to itself. True love is never so lovely as when it is seen in action under the trial of faith.

There are false as well as true affections. A person does not prove he is saved by his much affection. But one with no affection proves he is not saved. Hence, we cannot say that all affection is false; neither can we say that all affection is true. However, we can distinguish between false and true affection when love is tested. Affection is not genuine when it is more exercised in pleasing men, advancing one's own personal cause and honor, promoting the traditions of men, and achieving worldly advancement and pleasure. On the other hand, affection is genuine when testing results in reverential fear for God as a proof that God has put that fear within the individual in order that he might not depart from Him (Jer. 32:40). Believing in the providence of God, totally depending on the sovereign God, fearing God too much to fear the face of any mortal man, loving the honor of God more than the honor of man, willing to give up any and everything, and consenting to become a martyr if need be for the cause of Christ is the test of genuine affection.

The regenerate are struck with a sudden love for God and the things of God; therefore, we were surprised into love. Before the work of grace in our hearts, we rebelled against restraint. We wanted to be free to do what we pleased when we pleased. Christians do not know the time the love of God was shed abroad in our hearts; but afterward, we were surprised to learn that the formerly desired things were no longer appealing to us. Holy and wholesome things became our chief interest. Our being surprised into love was the first point of contact with God. Love in our hearts for the very things against which we rebelled followed. There was then a call for faith. God had given faith but it had not yet been called into exercise.

SECOND — Faith follows love in the Divine order. The regenerate see the riches of God's love by faith, not with our physical eyes. What is seen depends on what is to be seen and our capacity to see it. As worldly affections are the natural consequences of worldly men, spiritual affections are the natural results of Godly men. Holy affections are a vital part of Christianity. Faith sees the unseen Christ. The Greek word for believing (*pisteuo*) is a present active participle in I Peter 1:8-9 —

“whom not having seen you are loving, in whom not at the present time seeing but believing and having been honored, you are extremely joyful with happiness that cannot be expressed receiving the conclusion of your faith the deliverance of your souls” (translation). It describes continuous activity. The person who believes never ceases believing in the unseen Christ. In this verse, the word “faith” (*pisteuo*) is accompanied with the phrase, “in whom” (*eis hon*). The Greek preposition *eis* is used here in the accusative case to express movement into or entrance into. A companion passage of Scripture is Hebrews 11:27. Moses persevered because he saw Him who is invisible to the physical eye, but visible to the eye of faith.

Invisibility along with unchangeableness, unsearchableness, and irresistibility are attributes which are characterized by the absence of distinguishing qualities which call faith into action. God has both positive and negative attributes, and they are of equal importance. The following are some of God’s negative attributes: (1) God is unchangeable. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning (James 1:17). (2) God is unsearchable. A person cannot search and find out all he would like to know about God (Rom. 11:33-36). (3) God is irresistible. He is the sovereign Lord and cannot be resisted by the elect for whom He died. Since the soul of man is invisible, man cannot be satisfied with the visible. That which is visible to the physical eye can never satisfy the invisible soul. This is the reason for the longing in the soul and its always searching out the invisible God.

When love within called for faith to act, the realization of the needs of the soul came to us. We knew God exists, and we wanted to know Him. Faith was exercised when we were subjected to the truths and promises of God’s word, and we apprehended and embraced the precious promises of God. When faith began to operate, love became wider and more earnest. Henceforth, faith was the feeder of love, and then love felt obligation to God, the assembly, etc. Love to Jesus Christ is sincere, sensible, active, entire, the highest in rank, constant, and unspeakable. The mind comprehends by faith only what it is prepared by love to comprehend. The incarnate Savior and the written word of God were prepared by love.

Love and faith differ. There is no obstruction to the love of God poured out by grace into the heart of an individual. Since the sinner was passive, all was by God; hence, there was no obstruction. But there is obstruction to faith. The lives of the disciples of Christ revealed that there were many obstructions to their faith, and there are obstructions to our faith. The disciples’ unbelief was manifested on many occasions, but there was never any obstruction to their love. Faith must wrestle with the things that are enemies of our faith. Nevertheless, faith always comes out victorious, but not without struggle. Love goes directly to its object unobstructed; whereas faith has many battles along the way. Love is the first point of contact, and faith is the second. We cannot, like the Israelites, see the ephod and the breastplate on the high priest. We need not look with physical eyes at the ephod and the breastplate, because Jesus Christ is our great high Priest interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. Even in our believing we must confess too much unbelief. We see Jesus Christ with spiritual, not physical, eyes. The world’s philosophy is to know and act on the visible; furthermore, its happiness is to enjoy the visible. Beyond these, everything disappears for the philosophers of this world. However, the soul of the person who has been quickened by the Spirit in regeneration can never be satisfied with what he sees with his physical eyes.

Faith preserves because it is protected by the power of God: “Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ to the chosen sojourners of the dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the prearrangement of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, to obedience and sprinkling the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be increased to you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy having regenerated us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to a possession imperishable and unstained and enduring, having been reserved in the heavens for you the ones being protected by the power of God through faith for a deliverance ready to be revealed in the last time. In which you are greatly rejoicing, now for a little while if necessary having been distressed in the sphere of manifold trials, in order that the genuineness of your faith, much more precious than perishing gold, now being tested through fire, may be found to praise and honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ; whom not having seen you are loving, in whom not at the present time seeing but believing and having been honored, you are extremely joyful with happiness that cannot be expressed receiving the conclusion of your faith the deliverance of your souls” (I Pet. 1:1-9 — translation).

Perseverance is not an independent thing added to Divine preservation. Persons who persevere are those who have been elected, redeemed, and regenerated. The transition from spiritual death to spiritual life is irreversible: “Everyone remaining in Him is not sinning; everyone sinning has not seen Him nor has known Him. Little children let no man lead you astray, the one practicing righteousness is righteous, just as that One is righteous; the one committing sin is of the Devil, because from the beginning the Devil has been sinning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He may bring to an end the works of the Devil. Everyone having been born of God is not practicing sin, because His seed is remaining in him; and he cannot be continually sinning, since he has been born of God” (I John 3:6-9 — translation). Verses 6 and 9 go together to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that persons who persevere are those who have been elected, redeemed, and regenerated, and the transition from spiritual death to spiritual life is irreversible. Perseverance is not a supplement to preservation. It is the fruit and manifestation thereof.

God-given faith gives assurance. The gospel comes to regenerated persons in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (I Thess. 1:5). The more we learn about the Scriptures the more assurance we have. Saving faith embraces God’s way of saving sinners and renounces all other ways. God-given faith does not deal in fragments of Scripture. We do not rush to a proof text in order to prove our theory. Our desire is to have a workable knowledge of all the Scriptures, because every Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, correction, and instruction thus furnishing the man of God to every good work (II Tim. 3:16, 17). Those with God-given faith consider what they shall answer when questioned concerning their hope. The Gospel of John confirms our hope in that the judicial aspect of our sin has been dealt with in the death of Jesus Christ, and the first Epistle of John establishes our hope in that the practical aspect of sin in our lives is dealt with by the living Christ at the right hand of the Father.

God-given faith increases our knowledge and produces fruit. The faith of God’s chosen ones is linked with correct knowledge of truth according to true piety (Titus 1:1, 2). God-given faith purifies the heart: “And God who knows the heart witnessed to them giving them the Holy Spirit as also to us, and put no difference between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles], cleansing their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8, 9 — translation). Subjective faith becomes sound in objective faith. “On one hand the One having been foreknown before the foundation of the universe, on the other hand He who has been revealed in these times for you who through Him are believers in God the One who raised

Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God. Having purified your souls by means of obedience to the truth results in genuine brotherly love, earnestly love one another out of a pure heart” (I Pet. 1:20-22 — translation). Verse 22 is a Divine interpretation of Acts 15:9. Our souls are purified by obedience to truth. The word “souls” (*psuchas*) could be translated “lives.” As we are exposed to truth, we are continually purified. We are permanently positionally cleansed, because positional cleansing has to do with our standing before God. Conditional cleansing is related to our condition in life; therefore, we will never in this life come to the place where we do not need conditional cleansing.

THIRD — Joy in the unseen Christ is extremely joyful with inexpressible joy: “and having been honored, you are extremely joyful with happiness that cannot be expressed” (I Pet. 1:8b — translation). Love and faith give an experience of present increasing joy. Although the best is yet to be experienced by us, there is present joy. Peter’s Epistle was addressed to strangers scattered abroad. They were persecuted Christian Jews. He spoke of the trial of their faith that was necessary to test their faith. Christians presently experience the valley of various trials, but the mountaintop is already radiant with the rising light of the eternal day, expressed by Peter in verse 9.

The work of the infinite God cannot be restricted to the narrow limits of our vocabulary. Hence, the joy of salvation cannot be conveyed from one to another. It must be experienced by each individual. We must live it out. It is not lived out in a week or a month, but a lifetime of living for the Lord is necessary. The person who experiences Divine love and God-given faith will be like the queen of Sheba who, when she arrived in Solomon’s presence, said the half had not been told her.

Love brings faith into action, faith feeds love, and love expands and brings joy. Joy in the unseen Christ cannot be expressed. True joy dwells more in the heart than in the countenance of an individual. Smiles are not always genuine. They may be only skin-deep. The actions of such persons soon reveal the superficiality of their joy. However, there is rejoicing in the heart of every person whose God-given faith reaches out to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible does not condemn exhilaration in the Christian life. When the foreman of a jury stands to give a not-guilty verdict in a case being tried, the one on trial is ecstatic with joy. But true ecstasy is manifested by the person who passes from death into life. He does not know when it first happens, but some day that love surprises him. Suddenly he loves the Lord, wants to serve Him, and hates the way he has been living. When the gospel is preached and the promises of God are given, faith starts operating and feeds love. What extreme joy!

### **Negative Reactions Expected By Those With God-Given Faith**

Negative reactions to God-given faith can be extinguished by the shield of faith: “With all these having taken up the shield of faith, by which you shall be able to extinguish all the darts of the evil one having been inflamed” (Eph. 6:16 — translation). The first word in the Greek text is *en*, which is the instrumental of association. Hence, in association with all the parts of the armor that Paul had already mentioned in the preceding verses, we now take up the shield of faith. Some translators render the preposition *en* “above all,” thus making the shield of faith over all other graces on earth. However, faith is not above all as being of greater importance. Love is greater than faith or hope (I Cor. 13:13). Faith operates only in time. It will conclude in the presence of Jesus Christ. We are saved in our hope now (Rom. 8:24), but hope will not be needed when we stand in the presence of the One for whom we hoped. Jesus Christ is called the blessed hope (Titus 2:13). Therefore, the

preposition cannot be translated “above.” The shield is in association with all these other parts of the Christian armor.

Worship, which is taught in the first two chapters of Ephesians, merges into walking as Christians in the next two chapters. A consideration of blessings in the heavenlies in Christ in chapter 1 is a mountaintop experience. Through worship we gain spiritual strength for living out what we learned spiritually. Living it out causes warfare; hence, this Epistle concludes with the necessity for fighting all our enemies, even those in the heavenlies, in Christ.

Between worship and warfare, we walk as children of light: “I therefore the prisoner in the Lord exhort you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called” (Eph. 4:1 — translation). The word “walk” (*peripatesai*) is an aorist active infinitive verb. It is a compound verb made up of *peri* (used in the genitive case, it can mean about or concerning) and *pateo*, which comes from *patas*, an adjective referring to a trodden path or a beaten path. Hence, the verb means to walk about or around. It is used 96 times in the New Testament in the following basic ways: (1) Sometimes it refers to the physical act of walking about, walking around, or walking a beaten path. (2) It is used metaphorically in reference to the walk of the Ephesians in their unregenerate state (Eph. 2:2). (3) It has reference to the regenerate walking in the good works in which God has before ordained that we should walk (2:10). (4) It specifies our walking worthily of our calling (4:1). (5) It is used to instruct us not to walk as other nations (4:17). (6) It denotes walking in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us (5:2). (7) It signifies our walking as children of light (5:8). (8) It shows the necessity for walking accurately (5:15). The whole word together with its prepositional prefix means to regulate our lives on the basis of what we learn or to live in a manner worthy of what we have learned.

As children of light, we should walk in a manner commensurate with the effectual call. God has called us. The word “called” (Eph. 4:1) is aorist passive indicative of *kaleo*, signifying that the effectual call had already taken place. This negates the belief that one can be saved anytime he pleases, and that one is regenerated when he decides to be saved. The only person who can respond to God’s summons is the one in whose heart the grace of God has been shed abroad.

Walk is a synonym for life. Walking physically is impossible without physical life, and walking in a manner commensurate with one’s having been effectually called is inconceivable without spiritual life. Physical life is a walk from the cradle to the grave, and the Christian life is a walk from the time a person is regenerated until he steps out of time into eternity. It is a life lived for the Lord, not for oneself. Believers are exhorted to walk even as Christ walked. A walk is made up of steps, one at a time. Hence, life is made up of many simple acts. In comparison with nonspectacular everyday duties, there are few mountaintop experiences.

The Christian life has negative and positive aspects. From the positive aspect, we live for the Lord and not for ourselves. Positively, believers are to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4), after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4), properly (Rom. 13:13), by faith (II Cor. 5:7), in good works (Eph. 2:10), in love (Eph. 5:2), in wisdom (Col. 4:5), and in truth (II John 4). Negatively, we do not live as we did. We do not walk after the flesh (Rom. 8:4), after the manner of men (I Cor. 3:3), craftily (II Cor. 4:2), by sight (II Cor. 5:7), in vanity (Eph. 4:17), or disorderly (II Thess. 3:6).



As spirit, soul, and body were affected by the fall, all three are affected by grace in the new life. The sinner is dead to spiritual things, but the Christian has a life-side to spiritual things. Therefore, we descend from the spiritual heights of Ephesians 1 to the battlefield in Ephesians 6. Man's original relationship was wrecked in the fall. His unbroken fellowship with God, knowledge of God, and created uprightness of life to God became alienated from God, ignorant of God, and spiritually dead to God. In the new birth, man by the power of the Holy Spirit is reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and the reconciled person has fellowship with God. Hence, by grace the sinner has been turned away from his opposition to God, given an understanding of Divine illumination by God, and lives for God. The study of Biblical doctrine will merge into a life lived for Christ, and that life lived for Christ will merge into spiritual warfare. Paul could not leave the lofty truths of this Epistle with any misunderstanding concerning our walking. Walking in a manner suitable to God's effectual call is the sum of Christian conduct (Eph. 4:1).

Christians have been drafted by the Father to fight the good fight of faith. We do not volunteer to be soldiers in God's army. Those God has drafted by grace are made willing to wage a good warfare. The ones who do not want to fight have never been summoned. The drafted ones heard the voice of the Shepherd, and they followed Him. Our being drafted for warfare makes it imperative that we follow Paul's command: "Finally my brethren, be strong [present passive imperative of *endunamoo*] in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10). The Greek word for finally (*loipos*) is not essentially a time word. It means that which remains to be said.

We must become strong in the position which is ours in Christ. We are obligated to have an established judgment in the truth of God. He who does not have good knowledge of the One for whom he fights may soon be persuaded to change sides and start fighting for the enemy. He who sells cheapest has the largest crowds. Strength in the Lord and the power of His might means to know that God's power is engaged for our defense. Those thus strengthened will say with the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise" (Ps. 57:7). This spiritual strength enables Christians to persevere in the Christian life to the very end of our lives. Our lives and our works must go off the stage together. Persevering by taking up the cross daily requires spiritual strength.

Saints go from the indwelling principle of grace to its external exercise of putting on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11). This armor is put on never to be laid down. It is one thing to have an armor in principle by the mental concept of truth, but it is another thing to have grace in the heart that manifests itself by the external exercise of putting on the principles of truth. Christians are to adorn the gospel before we proclaim it. Do we possess the spirit of the primitive saints? When the Israelites went out from Egypt, they greatly rejoiced on the shores of the Red sea; but the greater majority of them failed. Few of them actually entered the land of Canaan to enjoy the blessing God had prepared for them. The object of the Israelites' understanding was to root out all idolatry and to establish themselves in the knowledge and worship of the one true and living God. The authority on which they acted was the command of the sovereign God. The ground on which they were to rest their hope of success was the Divine promise of God. These things are also true of Christians. Those among the Israelites who believed, like Joshua and Caleb, felt themselves able by God's strength to overcome the enemy, but those who distrusted the promises of God turned their backs in the hour of danger. If we think lightly on God's promises, magnify our difficulties, or relax our efforts, we may expect our testimony to die and our enjoyment of spiritual blessings in this life to fail.

Christians must not accommodate ourselves to the corrupt customs of the world, but renew our minds by studying the Scriptures. We can then keep the charge in the midst of apostasy by taking the whole armor of God in order to stand (Eph. 6:13, 14). Standing is a military term. Paul used military terms when he spoke of his fighting the good fight of faith (II Tim. 4:7). Standing is opposed to falling, and it surely is opposed to fleeing. We are to stand against the methods of the Devil. This signifies resisting the aggressive attacks of Satan. The Devil's attacks will continue as long as the assembly is a pilgrim on the earth. Resistance is opposite to passivity. The battle alarm goes forth. We are to stand against the methods of the Devil (Eph. 6:11), make an aggressive move against the Devil (Eph. 6:12), withstand in the evil day (Eph. 6:13), and stand orderly in the place where God has placed us (Eph. 6:14). Withstanding in the evil day is making an aggressive move against the enemy by giving the word of God on subjects that the enemy does not want to hear. Anyone not for the Lord is against Him (Luke 11:23). We are to be on the offense as well as the defense.

Between sanctity and sin there is deadly enmity. The call for soldiers is not a call for diplomats. The victory is to be fought and won. As the Epistle begins with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, it closes with all spiritual enemies in the same position. Diplomacy has no role to play in this warfare. No skill of negotiation is necessary.

Taking up the shield is essential, because it is the armor for the armor. The shield is to be held in one hand and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in the other. The armor and the shield are defensive weapons, and the word of God is our offensive weapon. The word for "shield" is used only in this place (Eph. 6:16) in all the New Testament. It comes from the word for door as it is used in John 10. The shield was a large oblong object that would cover the whole body of the warrior for his protection. Although the different parts of the armor protected him, the shield offered double protection.

As the shield enveloped the entire man, faith envelops the entire Christian. The shield includes all of God's promises for us. It is the guide to direct our course of pilgrimage. It takes in all that we know about God. The Psalms speak of the Lord as the shield of His people: "For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield" (Ps. 5:12). "The LORD is my strength and my shield..." (Ps. 28:7). "Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield" (Ps. 33:20).

Although Christ has won positional victory for us, we must be victorious in the good fight of faith for conditional victory. The explanation of the warfare of the Christian life requires more than the realization that there is a traitor in the camp who is envious of our salvation in Jesus Christ (I Pet. 5:8, 9). We are to be longsuffering in battle until the coming of the Lord (James 5:7). Our battle against Satan is severe for the following reasons: (1) He is the evil one who is the author of all inflamed darts, regardless of who shoots them. (2) Satan knew, even before the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, that the incarnation was for the purpose of redemption. Throughout the Old Testament, he tried to destroy the seed through whom Jesus Christ would come. God prepared for His Son a body in which He could die, and Satan tried to destroy that body (Matt. 2:1-13). Although Christ's glorified body is now at the right hand of the Father, He has a body on the earth, constituted of those with God-given faith, which Satan is continually trying to destroy. The identification of the assembly with Jesus Christ draws the hostility of the adversary. (3) Satan knows he is defeated and the final reckoning with the evil and the evil one is near at hand; therefore, he is working diligently.

There was much demon activity during the personal ministry of Jesus Christ. The assembly Epistles, pastoral Epistles, and general Epistles record little of demon activity. However, all of Biblical prophecy does set forth an increased amount of demon activity in the last days. The mystery of iniquity is working, and every skirmish with Satan brings us nearer the final conflict.

The shield of faith becomes effective against the fiery darts that have been inflamed by the evil one as we claim the promises of God. The shields of history were covered with leather in order to quench the lighted darts of the enemy when they struck the shield. They were meant to not only stop the dart but also quench the fire. The following are some of Satan's inflamed darts constantly being cast against us: (1) Satan objects to our election by God by asking, "What was in you to cause God to choose you? Do you think you are better than others?" The Christian whose knowledge is determined by the Scriptures answers, "My faith replies that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, the weak things to confound the mighty, the things that are despised, and the things that are not to bring to nothing things that are in order that no flesh should glory in His presence" (I Cor. 1:27-29). (2) Satan objects to the perseverance of the saints by saying, "Some day you shall fall by my dart; I will get you sooner or later; you cannot withstand my attack; look at those who have fallen." The Christian replies by quoting Romans 8:28-39, the summary of which is, "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31b). (3) Satan says, "You cannot stand against me because you are weak." The Christian responds, "My strength is complete in weakness" (II Cor. 12:9). (4) Satan says, "Your sins have caused God to cast you off." The Christian answers, "God said He would never leave me nor forsake me" (Heb. 13:5). (5) Satan asks, "As some have suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith, what makes you think you will not do the same?" The Christian answers, "Christians are capable of distinguishing false faith from true faith; the true believer is kept by the power of God through faith" (I Pet. 1:5). (6) Satan questions, "Faith grows from faith to faith; where is the evidence of your growth?" The Christian answers, "Growth is not determined within a few days or a few months; but in the end, faith will show an increase. Although the fruit tree does not bear fruit perpetually, it does bear fruit; and the Christian will bear fruit" (John 15:5). (7) Satan accuses, "True faith never fails, but your faith has been seen to fail you many times." The Christian states, "The strongest faith that is severely tried for a long period of time will limp a little. The Psalmist said in his fear that all men are liars (Ps. 116:11), and one day he would perish by the hand of Saul (I Sam. 27:1). True faith alone is sifted by Satan, but Christ said He has prayed for me that my faith will not fail" (John 17:11).

The darts of the evil one are burning, waiting for some follower of Satan to shoot one of them at us. Nevertheless, we are able to extinguish all the inflamed darts of the evil one. We experience positive blessings and negative reactions, but we come out victorious because of the shield of faith that God has provided: "because everyone who has been born of God is overcoming the world; and this is the victory overcoming the world, our faith" (I John 5:4 — translation).