



By the Faith of Christ, or our faith in Christ?

by Tony Warren

The most common distortion in the church today of *'the doctrine of Grace'* is in Christians attempting to make faith an action of conscience on our part, rather than humbly accepting that the faith we have is by the sovereign action of God alone. No one has faith of their own free will, faith comes by the divine will of God, through the gracious work of Christ. Yet in most circles today we are continually told that the old Bible versions are mistranslated and the scriptures should read, our *'faith in Christ,'* rather than the *'faith of Christ.'*

This modern controversy revolves around how one is to interpret and translate the possessive or genitive phrase, which means that this phrase can be interpreted as either subjective or objective. In other words, is Christ the objective genitive, that is to say "the object toward whom faith is directed," in which case we would translate it, "faith in Christ." Or is Christ the subjective genitive, the subject from whom the faith originates, in which case we would translate it, "faith of Christ." I contend that there really is no issue, and it is frankly an issue forced into the scriptures by those with a fixation on the freedom of the individual will. This fixation clearly distorts one's perspective of the Greek in the passages in question, and more importantly, God's vision of exactly how faith justifies us. In this reading a "Faith in Christ" we see a very man centered view, rather than Christ centered.

In fact, the theory of "faith in Christ" is in itself curious, because nearly all Christian Theologians readily admit that faith is 'necessary' for salvation. Yet many of them will just as readily (and illogically) conclude that this 'requirement' is not a work, nor is it any effort on their part. But how something can be required (*meaning it's necessary to be done*), and yet somehow not be an action required (work), bridges on the nonsensical. Because how can we rationally harmonize the conclusion that the faith to believe is 'our' faith (not the faith of Christ), and yet still profess that it is not an effort on our part? If it's our faith, then it's our effort. To say anything less makes the gospel disjointed and contradictory. Moreover, we are commanded of God to have faith. So how then is it not a work, when we are told that it is something which must be done?

Matthew 23:23

- "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters of the law*, judgment, mercy, *and faith: these ought ye to have done*, and not to leave the other undone."

How were these old testament people commanded by the law to have faith, and it not be a 'work' of the law? Again, it makes no sense. For by their own law we see that in order for them to have faith, they had to participate in the act of doing it. Christ said to them, 'these things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' He is telling them that faith is a work they should have done, but didn't do. If faith is not by this work of men, then it is by the work of Christ. In

other words, it is a gift from God to believe. We can't have it both ways.

1st Timothy 6:12

- "***Fight the good fight of faith***, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

How are we to fight the good fight of faith and it not be an effort or labor? Is not fighting a work of faith? This idea that faith is not a work is foreign to the Holy Bible. Because faith is an action which is the result of the Spirit. It thus 'requires' Christ's work. As any movement in a person requires energy, so faith requires work. To say faith requires no work is like saying a car requires no engine. To say our faith requires our work is to say we're justified by our works (Romans 3:28; 5:1). What's more, God has never been ambiguous about faith being a work. It is only by the will of man that there are these distortions of His teachings present in the church.

1st Thessalonians 1:3

- "Remembering without ceasing your ***work of faith***, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;"

Here God has spoken it very plainly, and in concise language which is 'consistent' with the whole of scripture, and illustrates this very same principle. Remembering without ceasing our work of faith. Faith takes an effort or some power or energy to accomplish. So then, the only question is, is it our power or is it the power of God? In 2nd Thessalonians chapter one we have a very similar statement that also addresses this point.

2nd Thessalonians 1:11

- "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the ***work of faith with Power***:"

How can a work of faith be with power, and it not be a work? Frankly, to argue against this is ridiculous. This power [*dunamis*] illustrates some energy or effort, and particularly Godly power or miraculous power. True faith is in having this power to believe in God, not merely intellectually, but by the Holy Spirit. A Spirit by which we are 'persuaded' that His Word is both true, and the bread by which man lives. It is by this power that the faithfulness of Christ works in us to believe and to do what is expected. Our faith, if not inherent, must of necessity be the work of the Holy Spirit. If it was our own inherent faith, then everyone would have it. But the pertinent Biblical record illustrates just the opposite. It shows that without the Spirit of God, we are desperately wicked and have no faith, just like everyone else. The people who philosophize about their own faith in Christ, while at the same time rejecting it as a work, are a walking a contradictory line, ignoring the very fact that Jesus Himself called the faith to believe, a work.

John 6:28-29

- "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"
- Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the ***work of God, that ye believe on Him*** whom he hath sent."

These type passages immediately reveal to us just how God works in us so that we have faith to believe. The only way we could be justified by faith is if that faith was "indeed" a work of Christ. If it was our own work, we could never be justified by it. Likewise, in Galatians chapter 2 God's Word insists that we are justified by Christ's faith, not by our own will to believe. The fact is, if we were justified by our own faith/belief, then we would have to revisit and reevaluate the

whole theology of justification by man's works. God forbid! Consider wisely and without prejudice:

Galatians 2:16

- "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but *by the faith of Jesus Christ*, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be *justified by the faith of Christ*, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Christ's faithfulness to fulfill the Promise and be obedient unto death is our justification unto salvation. It is not the unbiblical and widely accepted theory of our own faith in Christ. This is why Christ came to earth in order to confirm and fulfil the Promise (Covenant) of a Savior who would justify us through His own death and resurrection. Salvation cannot be based upon, nor hang upon our own faith. It has to be upon Christ's faithful unto death, that in this selfless act we might be made righteous.

Romans 5:18-19

- "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.
- For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

The redemption in the "faith of Christ" unto death is clearly demonstrated in these passages. The obedience of faith is Christ's not our own. It is by "this faith" that we are justified. A man is not justified by his own faith or his own work (in keeping the law), but by the 'faith of Christ.'

Romans 4:25

- "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

Romans 5:1

- "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

Without the faith of Christ justifying us, our faith is the same as the faith of people from any other religion. The truth is, being justified by our own work of faith would be heretical. Because the Holy canon is clear, accurate, and unambiguous in its declarations that we are justified by the faith of Christ. Just as clear is that it is not by '*our faith in Christ*,' which would mean we are justified by our own action of believing. This would be an impossibility since it is by the Spirit of Christ that we believe. If there were the slightest chance that it was by our own faith in Christ that we were justified, that would be a merit system for man. This is not something through which true grace can work. In fact, it would be anti-christ, and anti-grace (Romans 11:6). For if at all by our own work of faith, it cannot be by grace of God.

Knowing these things, we understand why it must be the faith 'of' Jesus Christ, because this is the work that was necessary in order that we might have a changed Spirit and become saved. Faith of Christ comes to us through revelation from God (Matthew 16:17), and that means that there is no such aberration as faith 'apart' from the action of the Spirit's persuasion.

Let's also take a general look at this word faith. It is the Greek word [*pistis*], meaning the act of being persuaded. It is derived from the root prime verb [*peitho*] meaning to convince or 'bring to belief.' Therefore of necessity it is intimately connected and identified with work. It is not something that is outside of work, but something which energy (work) brings about. In other

words, we are persuaded or have faith because of the substantive 'working' of Christ in us. We would never have it by our own efforts, despite what theologians and some Greek enthusiasts might claim. That is exactly why we read in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews:

Hebrews 11:1-3

- "Now faith is the *substance*

of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen. Saving faith is the substance [*hupostasis*], or undergirding of what we hope for. That is because it is a foundational work. It is by God's persuasion in us of the truth of things that we cannot physically see, but in which we have hope. It is by this persuasion (work) of the Spirit in substantive faith, that we believe (have unseen evidence) that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, and were not made through the methods that it might appear to evolutionists to have been made. This persuasion of faith in us is 'obviously' a working of God (1st Corinthians 2:10), and not something of ourselves.

Indeed how could we have assurance (this same word [*pistis*] translated faith), if it was not the working of Christ powerfully persuading us of that hope? Can we possibly have true assurance or faith 'apart' from the working of Christ? Absolutely not, because it is the Spirit that assures us and convinces us in what we call faith.

Romans 8:16

- "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"

That's how we have faith that we are children of God. It is evident that it is only because of Christ's Spirit within us that we have assurance (same word, translated faith) that we are indeed truly born from above. His Spirit testifies to our spirit. To say anything less is to dabble in Biblical absurdity. So we must understand that our faith is a gift of God, and not something inherently of ourselves, lest anyone could boast.

Acts 17:31

- "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given **assurance** unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Again, this word assurance is the exact same Greek word translated faith [*pistis*]. We see very clearly that God gave all of us (His chosen) this faith that we might believe that Christ has been resurrected from the dead. It's not faith in Christ we conjured up of ourselves, it is the faith of Christ in us. It is God's Spiritual act of convincing us that we have true salvation. This act of assurance or faith is of Christ, not of our faith in Christ.

Romans 12:3

- "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, **according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.**"

Where is the mystery? Unambiguously God declares that he has dealt to us all the measure of faith. If God measured out this faith to each and every one of us, then how is it our own faith in Christ? But people get so caught up in their egos in arguing semantics and the Greek objective

and subjective, that they forget the most important aspects of biblical theology. That the Holy word of God is in perfect harmony with itself, and no greek construction can make that null and void.

Ephesians 2:8-10

- "For by grace are ye saved through faith; **and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:**"
- Not of works, lest any man should boast.
- For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Whether we believe that we are saved by grace through faith, or are saved by faith, through Grace, the salvation cannot possibly be by our faith. Because it was created in us unto good works. In other words, God ordained it in us through Christ. Our own faith couldn't save a fly. Grace is in God giving us faith to believe, "even while" we were yet dead in trespass and sin and couldn't have faith anymore than the next sinner. Faith is the substance of things unseen. Therefore we should understand that when something is substantive and yet unseen, it has to have some undergirding that requires energy or 'work' to bring it to fruition. For faith to be the substance of things hoped for, means some work brought it about. The power of convincing or persuasion has moving substance, and what underlies this faith is not man's work.

Galatians 5:22

- "But **the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, **faith,**"

These are the fruits or 'works' of the Spirit. They are the results of God working in us, and among them is listed faith. Faith is the fruit that will show up in our lives because of the Spirit. Just as we read in Galatians 2:16 of our justification by faith, here also God reveals from a different perspective that 'His' work results in our faith.

Sadly, natural man doesn't much like the truth, but we must understand that before we were drawn of God, we also were "by nature" spiritually dead. We were as dead as Lazarus was, where we were unable to have faith to move or lift ourselves up, or to seek God. As the Lord said, there is none that seeketh after God, no not one! But when we come to understand true Grace, it is then that we discern that every aspect of our calling, drawing, and salvation, has to be through what God has done. Man in his own egotism hates giving up his pride (*often euphemistically called, self respect*) because he wants some kind of control, or desires in himself some credit for his doing (*when those other sinners didn't*) something. Man often doesn't recognize the real motivations for many of his beliefs. Because he doesn't want to 'surrender' all his will to God's will, and bow to God's complete sovereignty. But we have to come to the point where we totally trust in His faith, rather than in our own faith or what we think is our own doing. Autonomous man has the idea that he is the one that can have his own faith. But that kind of faith to believe is the faith of false religions. The faith where men think they are going to a happy afterlife by worshipping a man, a cow, an idol or the stars. But that is not living or saving faith, which is the faith to believe the truth. That is the faith "without works" that God says is dead (James 2:18-26). In true Christianity, the only work that produces saving faith is the work of Christ. It is not our works, lest we could boast, but is the faith "with works," the living efficacious "faith of Christ." No man should ever have confidence in his own

faith, but assurance in Christ's.

Ephesians 3:12

- "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

When we think of what was required to bring us to saving faith, we should understand that this meant that Christ had to pay for every one of our sins by enduring God's wrath on our behalf. What contribution did we make to this work that produced faith? Christ not only had to apply His Holy Word to our hearts and give us a new resurrected soul, He had to give us something others don't have, which is the saving faith by which we are moved or 'drawn' to Christ to receive eternal life. What contribution did we make to that? It is foolish of us to think that we of ourselves could be good enough to have our own goodness unto faith in Christ.

So professing Christians can believe whatever they want, including that their efforts or own personal faith has something to do with their salvation. But in truth, these ideas are the same as those who hold that because they chose to believe (when other sinners didn't), God reciprocated by making them righteous. That just shows they haven't the slightest idea of the 'true' nature of salvation, the definition of Grace, or whose work of faith was required in order to make us acceptable.

Romans 3:22

- "Even the righteousness of God which is by *faith of Jesus Christ* unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:"

Let's be honest. Can we gain the righteousness of God by our own faith in Christ? The answer of course is no. There are two kinds of faith and two kinds of righteousness. That which comes from men, which justifies no one, and that which is 'of' Christ, and justifies all His people. The natural man is entirely incapable of faith unto good works acceptable to God. For it is not in man, but God who supplies what is needed in our lives that we have that saving faith to do His will.

Philippians 2:13

- "For it is God which worketh in you *both to will and to do* of his good pleasure."

What part of this sounds like Christians having their own faith in Christ that they will believe and work? This Greek word translated 'do' is the exact same word translated 'work.' Our work of faith is by God working within us. Likewise, there is no effort on our part that will make our works righteous. The effort and faithfulness was on Christ's part. When we understand the pure and unadulterated nature of salvation, phrases like '*the work of faith,*' or '*by the faith of Christ*' (Christ's faith) begin to fit and harmonize beautifully. It is all of God, that to Him alone may receive the Glory.

Nevertheless, there are those who think these expressions rob them of some self worth, meritorious accounting or credit. Because faith is something that they surmise is with respect to their own abilities and actions. They believe that they 'put' their faith in Christ. Because of this flawed thinking, many professing Christians (for their own self-serving purposes) treat these sundry phrases 'as if' they were misstatements. Indeed many modern theologians and consequently the new translations, now insist that these particular texts are mistranslated. That they should be changed and rendered 'Faith in Christ' rather than 'faith of Christ.' However, [*pivsti cristou*] [*pisti cristou*] and similar phrases (Romans 3:22, Romans 3:26,

Galatians 2:16, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 3:22) involves a subjective genitive and means 'Christ's faith' or 'The Faithfulness of Christ.' You must carefully read the context to find out if the noun is a subjective or objective genitive. Is Romans 3:22 subjective or objective? How do we know if this is subjective? Well, it's not really that difficult when you understand who's work of faith is required. Because it is impossible for man to be justified by his own "faith in Christ." That would be justification by his own belief, rather than by the faithful work of Christ.

Romans 3:3

- "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the *faith of God* without effect?"

The answer is, God Forbid! The Greek here is the same construction as the faith of Christ. Here it is [*ten pistin tou Theou*] the faith of God. Would the sentence make sense if we translated it, "shall their unbelief make the faith in God without effect?" If they were in unbelief, there would be no faith in God. So clearly it should be rendered, faith of God. Likewise with the same constructions in the faith of Christ.

But if there is one thing I do not do, it is to play 'Greek ping pong,' where the real object of the different theologians is bat the ball back and forth, breaking the Greek down into endless debate and ambiguity that they can pretty much convolute anything and claim it can be understood either way (neglecting of course that the Bible is divinely inspired and can interpret itself by comparison with itself). Abandoning the sound system that context often determines translation, and giving no thought to the hermeneutic that scripture interprets itself, they attempt to define translations on a strictly secular and sadly intellectual basis, rather than on an evidential, comparison and contextual basis. Using their method, the question of 'in' or 'of' can never be definitively answered to anyone's satisfaction. Because you can have ten Greek experts presenting evidence that it should be rendered 'in,' and ten others declaring that it should be rendered 'of.'

As for myself, I prefer not to play the bouncing genitive game, but to find the inspired definition and God's interpretations from within the Bible, by comparing scripture with scripture. However, in this case I believe (if we're honest with ourselves) both in the Greek, and from the historical Biblical idiom and context, we can see that it absolutely can be and **was** translated 'of' Christ. Because it's the only rendering that is in total agreement with the whole Bible.

From the logical Greek perspective, in an objective genitive, the thing that is genitive is the object. In a subjective genitive, the thing which is genitive is the subject. Without getting too complicated, there really is no way to know whether a genitive is objective or subjective without considering its meaning in the context that it is written. Thus we get right back to comparing scripture with scripture, in its context. Actually, there really seems to be no controversy with anyone on translating this 'of,' unless the name in question happens to be Christ. The fact is, 'faith of Christ' is the typical way to translate this genitive construction. Curiously (or not, depending upon our knowledge of the way modern translators think), 'faith in Christ' is the way that most modern translators choose to translate this today. Obviously it is more of a commentary on their part, than a translation. Because there is the exact structured genitive construction in other passages, and these same 'translators' (again curiously) have no problem in accepting the translation 'of.' e.g.:

Romans 4:16

- "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure

to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the **faith of Abraham**; who is the father of us all,"

This is the exact same genitive construction as the passages translated 'faith of Christ [*ek pisteos Jesus*] in the KJV, and everyone without exception translates this the faith of Abraham [*ek pisteos abraham*], not faith in Abraham. Because clearly it is talking about Abraham's faith, not faith in Abraham. Which is just another proof that it is only the word "Christ" which causes these translators consternation. They all have no problem with the wording the faith 'of' Abraham. In fact, it would not Biblically make sense to say the 'faith in Abraham,' just as it doesn't Biblically make sense to say we are justified by our 'faith in Christ.' Justification cannot come by our faith.

Philippians 1:27

- "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the **gospel of Christ**: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Gospel of Christ [*euaggelion Christos*], and again it is the very same Greek construction. No one argues this should be translated the gospel in Christ, so you see the problem isn't in the text, context, or the nuances of the Greek. The problem is in the minds of modern translators who do not understand the faith of Christ and allow their prejudices to seep into their work. It is obvious that if it wasn't Christ who was being spoken of, the modern translators wouldn't cast one bit of doubt on it. It would simply be rendered "of." Thus the deviation in the way the modern versions of scripture render this verse is motivated by theological viewpoint rather than unbiased scholarship. It is truly amazing how slight, prepositional differences in scriptural interpretation, can lead to damaging implications for our salvation.

The bottom line is that it is quite obvious that many Theologians do not like this language because it robs them of every semblance that they had anything 'at all' to do with their persuasion or faith to believe in Christ. It gives all the energy and motivation to Christ. By rendering this, 'faith in Christ' the magnificent and glorious truth of the absolute predestination and sovereignty of God is all but obliterated. Indeed, from the Biblical perspective, I wonder why there is any controversy at all. Especially in Reformed circles. Because from the Biblical standpoint, it is impossible to move God, to merit God's calling or to be justified by our own faith. It's started and completed in Christ.

Hebrews 12:2

- "Looking unto Jesus the **author and finisher of our faith**; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Christ is the author [*archegos*], meaning the beginning or starter and the finishing of our faith. When we compare scripture with scripture, we have contradiction after contradiction with rendering these various texts as 'our faith in Christ.' If Christ is both the Author and Finisher of our faith, how is it our own meritorious faith? It makes no sense. The modern translators can vainly argue about tense and subjective genitive nouns for the next ten years, but by the preponderance of Biblical evidence, it is conclusive. We are saved by the faithfulness of Christ. He is the author and finisher of the faith that is within us. It was by His obedience, it was secured by His work and it was by His sovereign choosing. Can man's own faith in anything cause belief?

Romans 3:10-11

- "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
- There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

God says there was none that seeks after Him, so how could "anyone" have faith in Christ that they would be justified by that faith, apart from it being given by Christ? If none seeks after God, then human faith cannot be used to seek God. It is only by the work of the Spirit, which is the faith of Christ in us, that we are made justified in God's sight.

Romans 3:28

- "Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith** without the deeds of the law."

We are not justified by law, but by the faith of Christ. That man might be justified by his own faith is Biblically untenable, and yet this is what we would have to conclude if we were to accept the wide-spread teachings that it is our faith in Christ.

Philippians 3:9

- "And be found in him, **not having mine own righteousness**, which is of the law, **but that which is through the faith of Christ**, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"

Here is another absolutely clear statement of our justification by the faith of Christ clearly illustrating the absolute contrast between our own faith (which is works or keeping the law) and the faith of Christ (through which the law is dead). We see God contrasting our own righteousness, which is by attempting of ourselves to keep the law, against that which is the faith of Christ (which is grace). In other words, His faith rather than our own. The contrast is not possessive, between mine and God's, rather it speaks to the means by which we find our righteousness. Yet many of these newer, modern translations add an emphasis that is not really there, and pervert the meaning of these passages by translating them 'faith in Christ' rather than 'faith of Christ.' To clarify, when I say the faith of Christ, I don't believe that the "faith of Christ" means we have no faith. Rather, it means that we only have faith "because" of Christ's faithfulness toward us. In other words, our faith is undergirded by the power of Christ, and is the evidence of Christ working in us. Not the evidence of some supposed inherent faith, or our own will to believe (that we possessed beforehand). Obviously if the righteousness is of God by faith, it cannot be by 'our' faith in Christ, for no man is justified by His own faith (work). Faith was started and finished by God, and is His gift to man, as can clearly be seen in Galatians:

Galatians 3:22

- "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise **by faith of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that believe."

You will not find anything in Galatians chapter 3 that illustrates God is placing any emphasis on the salvific efficacy of man's own faith, nor is there one single place where we might conclude that God speaks of Christ as the object of human faith. On the contrary, the word declares there "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." If faith in Christ is given, then how are men justified by their own faith? It makes no sense. Was the promise given by our work of faith, or by the faithfulness of Christ (2nd Timothy 1:1) in His work? Was it given by the will of God, or by our own conscience of will, because we had faith in Him? You see it always gets back to our action/work, verses the action/work of God in us. Our own faith verses Christ's faith, which is the only faith of assurance. The only faith in which we

are secure.

Hebrews 12:2

- "Looking unto ***Jesus the author and finisher of our faith***; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

It is a riddle inside a mystery wrapped in an enigma how God says that Christ is both the author (starter) and finisher of our faith, and yet some theologians continue to insist that we are the ones who have faith in Christ. If you start something, and then you see it through to the very end, then what part of this faith was by someone else? But again, this is just another example of the obstinate nature of the heart of man, who surmises that it is his own assurance, faith, and persuasion. But if man's hope depends upon his own endurance of faith, then he is truly lost.

Philippians 1:6

- "Being confident of this very thing, that ***he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:***"

Ephesians 4:30

- "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, ***whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.***"

1st Peter 1:5

- "Who are ***kept by the power of God through faith*** unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

What part of these things is ambiguous? What part has man in starting, possessing, or maintaining his own faith? It is totally the work of Christ in us, and it is only man's pride and vanity that prevents him from receiving this truth in love.

Ephesians 3:11-12

- "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:
- In whom we have boldness and access with confidence ***by the faith of him.***"

Here we have the Greek [*dia tes pisteos autou*], obviously a personal pronoun possessive genitive..."autou," Christ's faith(fulness). Not by our faith in Him, but by the faith of Him. This theme is so constant in scripture that one often wonders why there is this great debate about the faith of or the faith in Christ. Would we translate Ephesians 2:13 as the blood in Christ? No, it is the blood of Christ. The context supports a subjective genitive, and this supports the Ephesians 3 faith of Christ translation. Hasn't God made it abundantly clear in countless scriptures through whose faith we are justified? Our success in believing on Christ is entirely dependent on God's eternal purpose in Christ's faith being imputed to us, that we might be justified thereby.

Philippians 3:9

- "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but ***that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:***"

Could man possibly attain righteousness through His faith in Christ? That is an absurd theology. Our righteousness can only come through the faith of Christ, and never by our own faith to believe. No man can believe, nor come to Him, except he is drawn of God. The evidence is overwhelming.

There are others who take a different tact in attempting to get around these truths. Some theologians accept that 'work of faith' is the right translation, but then submit that it means the 'results of faith,' as in works produced by faith. For example, in the statement, 'the house of John,' it doesn't mean that John is a house, likewise they surmise that the 'work of faith' doesn't mean faith is a work, but that work is a result of 'our' faith. But even apart from being contrived and convoluted, careful consideration will reveal that this is the same unbiblical concept. What this does is this:

- #1) Makes our work a result of our faith.
- #2) Since God says we are justified by faith, we are self-justified
- #3) Claims that without Christ's work, we have no faith in the first place.

The fact that they mostly agree with this third point, clearly makes their whole premise contradictory and fatally flawed. Logically speaking, if work of faith meant that works were the result of our faith, then that 'inextricably' means that our works are not the result of Christ's work, but of our 'own' faith. Again, an unbiblical and untenable position. On the contrary, our work is the result of Christ in us, not our own faith in Christ.

Hebrews 13:21

- "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, ***working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ;*** to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

If it is God working in us to make us perfect in every good work, then what part are we doing that we can usurp or rob God of some of the merit? All power of faith 'in us,' is the power of God in us.

The usual objection is that this denies man's responsibility before God to repent and believe. But truly, it does no such thing. What it does is concur with the Word of God that without the power of God working within us, we would not repent and not believe, just as everyone else will not. What it does is uphold the doctrines of the Grace, election and Sovereignty of God. All men are responsible, and none seek after God, but Christ has Mercy upon only those whom He has chosen. That's not a denial of responsibility, that is an agreement with God that it is all of Him, and not of us.

2nd Corinthians 4:7

- "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of ***the power may be of God, and not of us.***"

Why must man in his carnal thinking believe that he deserves some credit for having 'faith in Christ,' when in truth our faith is by the undergirding of Christ just as sure as our walking is by the undergirding of our muscles. Walking is all the work of the strength of muscles, without which, we couldn't walk. Likewise, faith is all by the strength of the Lord's work. We are drawn to believe by God's faithfulness in Christ to do so. We live the life of faith only because Christ lives in us. With this faith of Christ in us, we should humbly recognize these truths and 'receive'

God's declarations on the matter.

Galatians 2:20

- "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the **faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Clearly we live this life, not by our own faithfulness, but due to His faithfulness. Our work is because of His work of faith, and not our own. We cannot and we will not live unto God by our faith and bring forth fruit. It is His faith in us that never waivers, while our faith will be weak from time to time. How then can anyone boast that they had the faith in Christ believe, when we were all spiritually as dead as Lazarus in the tomb? It was only by the will of God that we were moved to new life. rather than boast of our faith in Christ, we need to be thankful that Christ was faithful.

There are those who will readily admit, "*yes, all of this is true, but why are we making such a big fuss over this controversy between the faith in Christ or the faith of Christ, or between work of faith and work resulting from faith?*" The answer is because it is essential that we understand the most basic truths of God's sovereignty. We are not saved (in any way) by our own faith in Christ, but by Christ putting His faithfulness within us. There is a big difference between our being saved by our own faith in Christ, and our being saved by Christ's faith. In other words, the very character of true saving faith is at stake. Christians with the faith of Christ should not fight these truths that it is not our faith in Christ, but faith of Christ that justifies us. Because these are important issues, revealed by the Spirit of truth. The 'faith of Christ' indicates that Christ Himself is the originator or the 'source' of this belief. It illustrates His faithful work in persuading us, because He is the substance or essence of our conviction. The term 'faith in Christ' illustrates our own personal faith in Him. It is no small difference. So when modern man decides to translate this phrase as 'faith in Christ,' it becomes an issue of our being saved because we had something, rather than because something was given us that makes us a new creation that believes.

In addition, we would be remiss if we didn't look at the verse that many proponents of this doctrine often bring up in support of their contention that we possess our own faith. It is the issue of Christ marveling or admiring the faith of the Gentile soldier, as recorded in the book of Matthew.

Matthew 8:10-11

- "When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
- And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

Why do we read Jesus admires this man's faith? It's a good question and deserves an answer. First of all we have to start with the most basic and fundamental truth of sound hermeneutics. We understand that no one scripture stands alone, nor can it nullify all other scriptures. If we approached each verse as if it were an island by itself, we would never understand anything, because everything would appear to be a contradiction. We always consider the 'whole' of scripture, and then comparing scripture with itself, it will interpret itself.

Jesus was God, and therefore He knew the end from the beginning. i.e., He knew what was in

this man's heart before He talked with him, and was not amazed or shocked into admiration this man had faith. He already knew the Jews wouldn't have faith and that their house would be left desolate before He ever preached one word to them. He is after all, God! He knew that Judas would betray Him before he ever lifted up his cup. He knew when He went to Jerusalem that the people would kill Him. He saw Nathanael under the fig tree and knew he was a man of no guile before Philip even called him (John 1:47-48). Likewise, Christ our Lord knew this soldier 'had faith' before He ever talked with him, because He was omniscient God. In other words, He was not a man that He should be amazed or surprised that this Gentile had more faith than He had seen in Israel. God is immutable or unchanging and all knowing. He was not surprised by events, He does not change his mind (because He never makes an error), He does not have remorse for something that He has done. Although reading scripture we may be left with the impression that He does. But things are written this way for two reasons. Number one, as a stumbling block for the unrighteous (that they may see and not see), and number two, for our circumspect consideration. Christ went to this location knowing that this would happen for the specific purpose of confirming the faith of the Gentiles. The faith this man demonstrated was given him in order to 'illustrate' to us that the gospel would now go forth to the Gentiles. He is signifying in this man's faith certain positional truths.

It's somewhat like the question, '*why did the Lord harden Pharaoh's heart that he wouldn't free the Israelites, when He wanted him to free the Israelites?*' At first glance it appears confusing and contradictory, but looking at the 'big picture' brings all these things into perfect perspective. These things were inspired and written for the benefit and education of man, and not to show the lack of inherent knowledge of this man's faith by Christ. When Adam and his wife hid from the Lord God in the Garden of Eden, and God called unto him and said, '*Where art thou,*' did this mean that God wasn't aware of where Adam was hiding? Of course not, He is God and both is omnipresent and omniscient. He knew perfectly well where Adam was hiding before He asked where art thou? But these things are written for our learning and benefit. It was elucidated from the standpoint of man, that men would understand Adam knew his nakedness and was attempting to hide his sin from God. Likewise, Christ spoke as a man, because Christ was/is talking and teaching men. Christ told earthly stories with heavenly meanings (parables) because He was talking to men who dwell in earthen vessels. Christ was in admiration of this 'good' being done by this Gentile to illustrate this is what is pleasing to God, and that the Gentiles (considered dogs by Israel) would be included in possessing the faith of Christ. By showing admiration for that which is good from 'a Gentile,' He is illustrating both what we should strive for, and prophesying that the Gentiles will now receive the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the Israelites would fall in unbelief. When Christ said, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,' it was to a precursor to Israel's fall and the coming faith of the Gentiles. This episode or prophecy was ordained before the world began. Every word, every illustration, and every sentence that this Gentile spoke was inspired of God that it would become scripture (the Word of God). Once we understand God's omniscience, and do not treat these truths 'as if' Christ was a mere man who was actually 'surprised' or really caught off guard because this Gentile had faith that Israel didn't, we then possess great wisdom and understand why Jesus said this. He clearly knew that the Old Covenant scriptures spoke of faith going to the Gentiles, so why would He be surprised? Indeed by this episode, He is directing them (and us) to the scriptures foretelling that by Christ's death and Israel's fall, the nations would be made free of the law. The faith of Christ goes to the Gentiles that they may sit in the Kingdom with the Jews. Note what Christ says after making the statement about this Soldier's faith.

Matthew 8:11-12

- And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.
- But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It is a declaration of what had been prophesied before, that Israel in having dead faith in their own works of keeping the law, would fall. And the the promise to Abraham and his Seed would be fulfilled in the 'faith of Christ.' The Gentiles would have this faith, through Israel's fall into unbelief. This is the portrait painted here as Christ marvels at Gentile faith.

Galatians 3:13-14

- "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
- That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the ***promise of the Spirit through faith.***"

Far from being surprised by this Gentile soldier's faith, Christ is directing us to the prophesies that the Gentiles would come into the kingdom of Israel and sit with Abraham as well, and that it is by a faith which national Israel didn't have. Not a faith in Messiah, but by the faith of Messiah. Not by Israel's faith in works, but by the 'faith of Christ' which is not found in works of keeping the law. The faith whereby this soldier who knew (and said) Christ was a man of 'authority' and had only to speak the word, and it would be done. The very same faith of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Faith with power, faith with works, faith which is not dead but makes alive because it is secured by the work of Christ. By this whole event, God is signifying here that salvation would go to the Gentiles and they would have the faith that national or corporate Israel lacked. The faith of Christ. The only faith that justifies. That is the faith Christ was 'demonstrating' that He didn't see in Israel.

The fact is, without justification by the 'faith of Christ,' we inevitably fall into the deception of:

- 1) A faith that is by our own efforts
- 2) The denial of the efficacy of Christ's work
- 3) Not knowing the 'real' assurance of salvation
- 4) Denial of God's Word of authoring and finishing faith
- 5) Usurping true power of persuasion from God

These are precepts whereby the Lord's church stands or falls. We take the authority away from these verses when we begin changing the words to suit our modern vernacular or philosophies. Therefore Let us pray that in our consideration of these things, our gracious God, who is faithful and precious above all, will grant wisdom and understanding that we glean from His Holy Word the precious truths of His immutability, divine will, sovereignty, and omniscience. May we be blessed in knowing that it is totally by His 'grace alone,' through 'faith alone,' that we are persuaded to believe as children of God. That no man can boast of the power of his own faith. May God humble our spirit to this important issue of just who's faith it is that moves, supports, persuades and keeps us from falling.

Amen!

Peace,

Copyright ©2002 Tony Warren
For other studies free for the Receiving, Visit our web Site
The Mountain Retreat! <http://www.mountainretreatorg.net>

Feel free to duplicate, display or distribute this publication to anyone so long as the copyright notice remains intact and there are no changes made to the article. This publication can be distributed only in its original form, unedited, and without cost.

Created 4/1/02 / Last Modified 08/4/14
The Mountain Retreat / twarren10@aol.com

[[Eschatology](#) | [Bible Studies](#) | [Classics](#) | [Articles](#) | [Other Articles](#) | [Sermons](#) | [Apologetics](#) | [F.A.Q.](#) | [Forum](#)]

The Mountain Retreat