

Changes

Back in 2003-4 time frame, I penned a statement of faith that was based upon the statement of faith of the first true New Testament church I was in. What I did was essentially corrected and amended their statement as there were (and to this day still are) typographical errors, citation errors, and statements which were either nonsense, or were arcane enough so the average person could not actually understand what was expressed. Primarily, I did this to more fully express what I believed, and to solidify in my own mind how best to do that. Nothing accomplishes those purposes quite like writing.

In 2009, Ebenezer Baptist mission undertook the task of writing its statement of faith, which resulted in some changes to my statement, as I am under the authority of the mission. Most of the changes were not significant or substantial, but clarifying of held doctrines. A couple of articles were split for clarification, and one new was added ([Of Liberty of the Conscience](#)). With those basic changes the statement of faith was pretty much complete.

However, that was four years ago, and much teaching has gone on since then. There is a far better understanding of certain doctrines, and for the first time, an valid, defined, testable understanding of iniquity, transgression and sin. There is also a far better understanding of how man is made in the image of God. These things and others warranted looking again at the statement of faith to see what needed to be changed and/or clarified. This time, there are significant changes.

Do these changes alter the doctrine? Actually, no, they do not. What they do is clarify the foundations of the belief and add significant information to the doctrine, which strengthens the doctrine. Additionally, gaps and ambiguities are removed so there is no misunderstanding as to what is believed. To illustrate what I mean, article six (VI) is set forth below.

First is the statement from 2009, and below it is the newly agreed to statement.

VI. Of The Creation (5/31/09)

I believe in the Genesis account of creation, and that it is to be accepted literally, and not allegorically or figuratively; that man was created directly in God's own image and after his own likeness. I hold that all of creation was not, and is not a matter of evolution or evolutionary change of species, or development through interminable periods of time from lower to higher forms; that all animal and vegetable life was made directly, and God's established law was and is, that they should bring forth only "after their kind." Moreover, that the earth is approximately 6000 years old, and that the creation of the entire physical universe occurred in six, twenty-four hour days, and that on the seventh day the LORD rested.

Some things to note in the original statement from 2009 are a lack of specificity as to where everything came from, and whether the twin errors of the Gap theory and day/age theory are allowed. Moreover, only the minimum is mentioned about the creation of man. Since the majority of the rest of the statement of faith deals with man and the LORD's provision of salvation in Christ, it is rather odd that so little is mentioned about man and how he was created, and why he is accountable.

You are free to judge, but I believe that is fixed with the following statement:

VI. Of The Creation (9/25/13)

I believe in the Genesis account of the creation of the physical universe; that it is to be accepted as factually and literally true: That all things which are, were created ex nihilo, or out of nothing, by the infinite knowledge and power of the LORD God. I reject any assertion that the account is

allegorical or figurative as pertaining to the events of creation and their sequence. I reject as spurious both the "Gap" theory and "Day/Age" theory of the creation account. I hold that all of creation was not, and is not, a matter of evolution or evolutionary change of species, or development through interminable periods of time from lower to higher forms. I believe, as Scripture plainly expresses, that all animal and plant life was made directly, and God's established law was, and is, that they should bring forth only "after their kind." I believe that all of creation was formed fully functional, or "in-process," as if it had always existed; that all life was created in a mature state. I hold, in accordance with the Biblical timeline, that the earth is approximately 6000 years old; that the creation of the entire physical universe occurred in six, twenty-four hour days, and that on the seventh day the LORD rested.

I hold as true, that man was created directly by the LORD God, and in the similitude of God. That this likeness is found in five distinct aspects: That man is a tri-unity of parts: soul, spirit, and body; That man has the innate ability to judge; That man has free-will within the parameters of his given existence; That man is creative, being able to bring forth out of that which exists; That man has the moral imperatives of mercy, compassion, forgiveness, grace, and love. Accordingly, man is the pinnacle of the LORD's creation. I believe that the LORD God, having bestowed upon man such attributes, holds every individual accountable for the conduct of his existence.

It is my prayer that the updated articles in the statement of faith are a benefit and a blessing as they are intended to clarify and answer why certain things are as they are. Additionally, there are three (3) new articles which are identified as necessary:

[Of Righteousness and Iniquity](#)

[Of the Penalty for Sin](#)

Of the Father

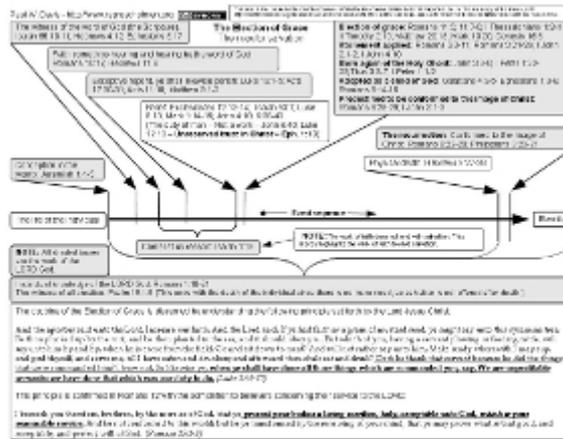
Two have already been added, and the third will be shortly. These articles are necessary as these subjects are prone to error and very little is taught and/or understood about them.

May you be blessed,

Paul W. Davis

The Election of Grace: The road to salvation

Beyond doubt, the doctrine of the election of grace has been hijacked and misconstrued by certain persons into a false doctrine of “election to belief.” An honest study of the Scriptures demonstrates clearly that there exists no “election to belief,” but a very clear election of grace by the LORD God. The following graphic, and Adobe Acrobat link below the image, illustrate the path which one walks to salvation in which, if one ultimately believes, the LORD God will of His own volition, elect them to salvation by bestowing grace upon them in Christ Jesus.



[The Election of Grace: The road to salvation](#) – Adobe Acrobat document.

I pray you find it profitable in Christ.

The Necessity of Faith

The Scripture is express that faith is essential if one is to have any hope of pleasing God. However, it seems that the “faith” defined by many Christians is not really faith at all. Rather, it is either intellectualism or emotionalism dressed up as faith.

This is not acceptable. Moreover, it is a ticket to destruction. It seems to be lost on an increasing number of individuals that there is no substitute for faith. However, I suppose this also has never changed – that it has always been this way. Which is why we have the example of Israel as an utter failure in the Old Testament. Israel failed due to a total lack of faith on the part of a majority of it’s citizens – they could not perceive who the LORD is, and what He was doing.

Individually, that can happen to anyone today – even those who

claim Christ. Hence, it is incumbent upon each of us to insure that the faith we believe we have, is actually the faith defined in Hebrews, chapter 11.

I pray the message is profitable for you.

For those who cannot use the embedded player, wish to use a different player, or want to save the file, the following link is provided:

[The Necessity of Faith](#)

In Christ,

Paul W. Davis

Faith vs. Rationality

There exists in the minds of many, a divergence between faith and reason. However, there exists no such divergence if one has a proper understanding of Scripture. Moreover, the reason and logic of the Scripture can be taught, and taught in such a way that someone who is lost can understand it if they apply themselves.

Herein lies the problem: Knowledge of salvation gained in this way – is not faith. Moreover, it is not an acceptable substitute for faith. Though the understanding arrived at may be the same, the means by which that understanding is arrived at is crucial. The route of one is the mind, but the route of the other is the spirit. The difference is life and death.

We would do well to examine ourselves as to how we arrived at our own understanding of the things of God – is it by faith,

or by reason and rationality. The difference does determine where we end up.

I pray the following lesson is profitable for you.

For those who cannot use the embedded player, wish to use a different player, or want to save the file, the following link is provided:

[Faith vs. Rationality](#)

In Christ,

Paul W. Davis

Faith and the Lack Thereof

The following is a message about Simon Peter's lack of faith when he walked on water, and what we can learn from it.

I pray it is profitable for you.

In Christ,

Paul W. Davis

For those who wish to download the audio file, or cannot get the Podcast to work, the following link is provided:

[Faith and the Lack Thereof](#)

What must I know to be saved?

This post arises out of a study that I am doing, and is tied to one of John Locke's books, which is *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. In this book much argument is made of what one must know to be saved or born-again, and become a Christian. At the time I read the book (which was quite some years ago), I had not really considered what one MUST know to be saved. However, as time has passed and I have studied the Scripture, there are some things that everyone MUST know before one can have even the hope of salvation. The following questions are not concerned with the attributes one must have to be saved, (i.e. faith, and repentance), rather they are focused on KNOWLEDGE, or what one must KNOW with surety to be saved.

With the foregoing in mind, here are the questions:

1. *Who is Christ?*
2. *Who is God?*
3. *Who is man? (Who am I?)*
4. *What is righteousness, and why am I not righteous?*
5. *Why is God righteous? (What does mean to be righteous?)*
6. *What is sin, and why am I a sinner?*
7. *What can I do about my sin?*
8. *What has (will) the LORD done (do) about my sin?*
9. *What does it mean when the Scripture says I must "believe?"*
10. *How can I know for certain that all the Scripture tells me is true?*
11. *What am I really believing or trusting?*

The questions leave considerable room for exploration of the Scripture and explanation of the answers. However, they are well worth answering, and by the time you are done, you will

know all that is NECESSARY to know to be born again in Christ Jesus and have eternal life.

Now if you wish to argue about the questions, please take the time to answer them first BEFORE raising objection. Also, please use the King James Version of the Bible to do your study. Otherwise, you will get some very skewed and incomplete answers.

As far HOW the questions are to be answered, here is a hint:

When we ask "Who is God?" we do not speak of defining His ability, but rather examining His CHARACTER and NATURE.

May you find it profitable.

In Christ,

Bro. Paul

An Answer to David @ War on Guns

The following is an answer to David Codrea who runs the [War on Guns blog](#). He disagreed with my assertion that it is wrong to lie – period. This disagreement arose over the issue of the [Olmert government in Israel taking government issued guns away from settlers](#), and the settlers giving them up. David held that it would be fine to lie to the government. I hold that it is never right to lie, as that is a sin before God.

Please be advised, this is a much longer article than I

normally publish on the blog. However, I do believe you will be blessed by it.

I know David, you think you've got me. That's all right. However, my reply will not be short, as you require a decent, proper answer to your assertion.

To begin, the commandment of the LORD God is very plain:

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (*Matthew 19:16-19*)

Moreover, to lie, is to follow after the father of lies, the Devil:

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (*John 8:44*)

Thus, lying is not an option as it directly disobeys the express command of God. Thus, it appears that we are left between a rock and a hard place by your scenario. However, there are some things that are beyond our limited understanding, but not beyond the understanding, scope and power of the LORD God.

Now, I will not tell you that one must blindly believe and

trust the LORD God for the outcome for such situations as that would be superstition. The LORD does not operate through, nor does He acknowledge superstition. Instead, one must operate by the instrument of faith.

Thus, the instrument of faith is extremely important to understanding everything that follows.

Now, allow me to present a couple of instances where individuals in Scripture chose different options for dealing with their situations, and the results of their choices. I will begin with the Hebrew midwives in Egypt:

And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive. (*Exodus 1:15-17*)

Now, it is quite plain that the Hebrew midwives were disobedient to the commandment of Pharaoh and they were called into account for their disobedience:

And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them. Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. (*Exodus 1:18-21*)

Okay, they lied. Moreover, the LORD God still blessed them and gave them houses. Now, that would seem to indicate that one could lie and the LORD God will still bless. Additionally,

much like your hypothetical situation above, the Hebrew midwives lied for the express reason of saving Hebrew babies. In your situation, one is doing it to save one's family. Fair enough.

However, we need now look at the situation in Babylon with three Hebrew men who refused the commandment of another king:

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Daniel 3:13-18)

Now that is bold, and seemingly stupid. After all, how can one know what will happen. Even the Hebrew men acknowledged they do not know for certain what God would do. However, they did know that they could trust the LORD for the outcome. At this stage, everything is seemingly in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, and he has full control. Moreover, by their reply they have invited certain death.

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the

furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. (Daniel 3:19-27)

There is here a world of difference between the way the LORD blessed the Hebrew midwives and the three Hebrew men. The midwives only received houses, but the three Hebrew men walked with God Himself in the midst of a fire that killed the very men who threw them in.

Now, there is a significant difference between the way the LORD God protected the Hebrew midwives and the way the LORD protected the Hebrew men. Thus, analogous to your proposed situation, there are three more options to telling where one's

family is:

1. *Refusing to speak at all.*
2. *Telling them that you will not say at all. In short, saying "Go ahead and kill me, I will not tell you."*
3. *Preaching unto them the gospel.*

Of the five options available, the very last one is one that the LORD God will honor every time. I know this as it is expressly His promise that His word will accomplish the work He has for it:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (Isaiah 55:8-11)

However, if one has no understanding of the promise of the LORD as they cannot see, then they will not understand the power of the fifth option. That understanding of the power of the word of God comes by the instrument of faith. Without this instrument, one is blind to the express will of God in situations, and to the power of God to change hearts in an instant. The LORD God does have the power to restrain someone, no matter how evil their intent. As in the case of the Hebrew midwives however, the power of God to work on Pharaoh was limited by the fact that they lied to cover up their activities. The Scripture is quite plain: had they simply told Pharaoh they will not kill the LORD's heritage, no matter the consequences, the LORD would have done some other thing to protect them and the Hebrew babies. However, they lied as they

could not see by faith the LORD's will in this. Thus, they chose a lesser option. The LORD blessed them, as saving life is better than allowing murder to take place. Nonetheless, the blessing was not of the magnitude of the blessing of the Hebrew men for boldly testifying of their confidence in the LORD God to save, one way or the other.

This is not to say the Hebrew midwives had no faith. Rather it is to say that their use of it wavered as they allowed what they saw and heard with their physical senses to overwhelm what faith showed them.

At this point, it must be clearly understood that faith, that is, the faith described in Scripture, is not merely believing, or hoping in God or the things promised in Scripture. Rather, the faith that enables one to be born-again in Christ is given to the individual upon their consideration of what the LORD states in His word:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (*Romans 10:17*)

This then is a promise by the LORD God that whosoever will hear His word and seriously consider it, then He will grant them the means to see the truth of what He states. Thus, faith is a spiritual instrument that belongs to the LORD and He grants it to anyone who fulfills the criteria He set forth.

Faith, like many other instruments, enables one to perceive things not readily apparent to someone who does not possess the instrument. Some examples I frequently use are radar, a microscope, and a radio, all of which enable the possessor to perceive certain things that cannot be perceived by someone who does not possess any one of those instruments.

Hence:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good

report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. (*Hebrews 11:1-3*)

In the situation you propose, if faith is not in use, then one's perception of the options available is indeed limited. On the other hand, faith would show that the LORD God is sovereign and is in full control of the situation. Even if one doesn't fully grasp what the LORD is doing with the situation (as in the case of the Hebrew men), one is still assured that the LORD God has his reasons for allowing the situation, and His purpose is beyond the mere moment we are dealing with.

Additionally, for the child of God (one who is born-again in Christ) there are a couple of things we are expressly told concerning our life on this earth after salvation. I will not say they are easy things to remember, as the implications are far-reaching:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (*Romans 12:1*)

And:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (*Romans 8:28*)

However, the child of God should understand by the instrument of faith that absolutely nothing happens without the LORD's express permission, and no one, but no one is able to go beyond the limits of action set by the LORD. This was made clear in Job when Satan challenged the LORD concerning Job:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me

against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. (Job 2:3-6)

On this, I am reminded of a Romanian Baptist preacher, whose testimony I heard several years ago. Dr. Josef Tson lived under Ceausescu, but was able in the late 60's to leave (not legally) and was trained at the Baptist School at Oxford. They stressed repeatedly that the sovereignty of God must be the pillar of one's theology. When he finished his training he elected to return to Romania. There he suffered greatly under the persecution of the secret police. However, he relates that he always understood Romans 8:28 to be active, and the LORD was the one in full control of the situation. Josef Tson, by faith, perceived and understood the working of the LORD in his life, and the lives of all who persecuted him. ((<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=18713>))

We must also know and understand what Elihu understood when he testified to Job and his three friends about the sovereignty of God and the LORD's ability to instantly take someone's life if the LORD deems necessary:

Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. (Job 34:10-15)

Fundamentally, there are two different perspectives one can

have:

1. The perspective of this world, and the limited perception of our physical senses. This will yield the response that you advocate – lying to protect your own life and the lives of your loved ones. Nevertheless, lying is still a sin before the LORD, and we will answer for it.

2. The perspective of faith, and having the mind of Christ toward this world and all in it – even those who are evil. This yields a perception of the state of the soul of the individual, and that they are in need of the salvation Christ offers them. This salvation WILL change the very nature of their heart and soul, and they will no longer desire to harm you or your loved ones. Yes, there are modern, current testimonies of this happening, where kidnaping “victim” witnessed to their kidnapper and the kidnapper repented, believed the gospel, and then released the “victim” and turned themselves in.

You must remember, the child of God, who is born-again in Christ Jesus, has a very different purpose in their life from someone who is not born-again: they are to be witnesses of the grace that is in Christ, of the righteousness of God, and of the salvation and reconciliation the LORD God offers through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The child of God also should never be concerned about dying, as for them it is a matter of simply going home. The apostle Paul put it this way:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. *(Philippians 1:21-24)*

There is your answer David. I could have simply slammed down

the Scripture and the commandment, but you deserve a better answer than that. You may still disagree. However, I would that you consider what the Scripture states seriously, and consider Who really is in charge of everything.

I trust the LORD to watch over you and yours. May the grace of God be upon you.

Faith – part 2

Since the receiving of faith is based upon whether one reads and studies the Scriptures, and has a genuine and sincere desire to know who God is and what He requires, it is plainly obvious that not everyone is going to have faith. Really, it is quite the miracle that any of us have any faith at all when we evaluate it in this light. Nevertheless, the LORD is gracious and grants those who truly want to know and understand Him, the faith necessary to do so.

Now I understand that this is a different view than the mainstream “Christian” view. The mainstream view is expressed in the following quote from an on-line Bible Study offered by a independent Baptist church:

“HOW DOES A PERSON OBTAIN FAITH?

The answer is by trusting in God’s Word. This of course requires that one hears what God has to say first. After all, you can’t trust in what you haven’t heard nor can you claim a promise that you don’t know has been given.”

Now, this would initially seem to support what I have previously stated, and what the Scripture demonstrates.

However, if we note the initial sentence, we see a precondition that is nowhere in the Scripture. That precondition is "trusting in God's word." However, when in reading the study you would have already come across the following statement:

"Faith is TRUSTING IN GOD'S WORD. When you consider how trustworthy God's Word is, faith becomes a very sure thing. Throughout the New Testament we find various examples demonstrating that faith means trusting in God's Word."

Certainly this ought to cause one to question the validity of how one can even claim to have faith at all. It reminds me of being little child and playing "Ring around the Rosie." Utterly pointless. In short, this is circular logic that has no place in the word of God and is invalid for teaching anything about the doctrines and principles of Scripture.

What is wrong here is a presupposition that one must believe what God has to say before God will grant them faith. However, that is not at all what the LORD indicated when He stated through Isaiah:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
(*Isaiah 1:18*)

Someone who is already trusting what you have to say doesn't have to be reasoned with about what you are saying and why. Instead, they already accept what you say and don't debate it. When one must be reasoned with, it is due to the fact that one doesn't understand what is presented them and doesn't accept it. Hence, they must be reasoned with concerning the information they are presented.

The error that is present in the on-line Bible study is one of misidentification of faith, and what it actually is. Instead

of letting the Scriptures define faith properly, they have misidentified the properties of faith and thus misidentified faith itself.

The Scripture is very clear on the properties of faith, and actually does define what faith is. However, if we are not willing to allow the Scripture to stand, and we put our own "spin" on what is stated, we are going to have a flawed understanding at best.

In Hebrews, chapter 11, there is a treatise given on faith, why it is utterly necessary, and what the effect of having it is. In the beginning of the chapter, the following is given:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. (*Hebrews 11:1-3*)

it is very interesting how the above passage is constructed. For one, hope is not what we would term 'substantial' in the sense of being physical, or something materially based. Rather, hope is a thing of the heart and mind. Hence, hope can be built upon an unsure foundation of '*I think so. . .*' or it can be built upon a more sure foundation of '*I know so . . .*' What one then hopes for, is entirely dependent upon what one perceives and understands. In the case of the first sentence in the above passage, we are told that faith is the foundation of the things that the children of God hope for, or await the coming of. Now, the sentence continues on to state also that faith is an evidence of things that are not seen. This is understandable as the things of God, and God Himself are not seen, as the Scripture states:

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (*John 4:24*)

Hence, there must be an understanding that faith then deals

with the unseen – the spiritual. Faith is then further clarified by the second sentence which states:

“For by it the elders obtained a good report.”

Now, we have something that we can understand in the way of defining faith. Notice that the first few words are “*For by it . . .*” “It” is an interesting word as “it” is ever and always a noun, and not ever a verb. Everything in this world that has substance can be called an “it.” However, actions, which are verbs, are not and cannot be defined as an “it.” What this means is the “elders” possessed something that enabled them to obtain a good report in the sight of God. Backing up, we can see that “it” would also be a substance, and an evidence.

In continuing to the third sentence, we are given an example of what this “it” called “faith” enables us to do:

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, . . .”

So then, by “it” I can, or do understand that the worlds were laid out and brought into existence by what God said. What this does is define faith as a thing, rather than an action. Moreover, by using this thing, we can perceive what God is trying to show us in and through His word. However, instead of it being physical, it is strictly spiritual, and the things shown are spiritual as well.

Thus, unlike the explanation given in the Bible study above, the faith described in the Scriptures is a noun, that precedes and precipitates action. In the aforementioned Bible study, faith is described as a verb, that precipitates another action that precipitates the first action. In short, to them faith generates trust, and trust generates faith. Plainly, this is not what the Scripture states, and is illogical.

In contrast, a summary of what the LORD has stated is very simple:

If you will hear His word, be attentive to it, and you truly and sincerely want to know and understand, He will grant you the means – the instrument, whereby you can perceive what He has done, what He states, and the truth of it, so that the LORD can reason with you about the state of your soul, and what He has done to rectify its wicked state.

To be continued . . .

Faith – part 1

One of the things that is least understood (but much claimed and talked about) in Scripture is Faith. It is not well understood by the vast majority who claim it, and it is mocked and ridiculed by atheists who say it is the refuge of the religious when they can't explain something. Sadly, the atheists are more correct than many Christians. I would have to agree that the vast majority of Christians who claim they know something by faith, do not when the thing they claim to know flies directly in the face of plain Scripture. When this happens, all it accomplishes is the giving of ammunition to the atheist and scorner. It really would have been better for the Christian to keep his or her mouth (or keyboard) silent when they actually did not know what the Scripture teaches.

In the case of faith, I had to consider long and hard as to how to approach the subject. Not that I do not know what it is or how it works, but how to explain it in a sensible fashion, in writing, presents a challenge. Perhaps it is best begun where faith really starts, with the owner thereof.

To be certain, there are those who claim that faith is owned or created by man. However, everything in Scripture has a key

verse that is the correct starting place for that doctrine. Sometimes it is the first mention, but not always. In the case of faith, there is a verse that declares that faith must be received:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (*Romans 10:17*)

Since the word "*cometh*" is in italics, it is necessary to clarify that the original Greek would have been "*faith by hearing*" which strongly implies that faith is received from someone or somewhere else. Hence, the translators of the KJV tell us that they added "*cometh*" in clarifying the implication that is strong enough to be a declaration. Thus, if faith "*cometh*," then of necessity it is received and not generated within us. This is crucial in that, if one does not have faith, then one has not yet been granted it based upon the criteria the owner has for giving it.

So then, who owns faith? Not to be insulting, but I would hope that all would automatically understand that the LORD God is the owner of faith. However, I know that there are verses that some will point to that declare that certain individuals had faith, and that it is their own. The problem is that none of us have anything that is truly our own (save the wickedness we choose to do) as the Scripture is express:

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? (*I Corinthians 4:7*)

Thus, even our very lives are not truly our own as it is God that grants us life. This being the case, we are driven to the understanding that faith does not belong to us, and neither can we produce it out of nothing. The following passages speak of faith and who owns and controls it. As you read, please note the phrase "*faith of*" which indicates ownership.

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. (*Galatians 2:16*)

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. (*Galatians 2:20*)

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (*Galatians 3:22*)

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: . . . (*Philippians 3:9*)

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. (*Hebrews 12:2*)

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. (*Revelation 14:12*)

Now, to be fair the above passages are in the context of the believer in Christ, and how that believer is kept by the Lord. Which, if we examine the passages again, we find the faith which is necessary to keep the believer is not actually the believer's faith, but Christ's. Perhaps some find this an oddity, but it is consistent with the above passage from Romans, chapter 10, which tells us that faith "cometh," and the faith that cometh is Christ's faith. Since Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and fully equal with the father, we should understand that the Father and the Holy Ghost also have

faith. Hence, the owner of faith is Almighty God.

Does this mean those who do not yet know the LORD cannot have faith? Not at all. There are two solid reasons that tell us that someone can have faith, and yet not be born-again. If we remember, it is the LORD's air we breathe and the life we have does belong to Him, not to mention everything else in creation is also His, and yet He allows us the use of all these things. More importantly, God is not willing that any should perish, and all would come to repentance (though not all will), and they cannot come and please God without faith as Hebrews, chapter 11, verse six, states:

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (*Hebrews 11:6*)

In the above statement it is clear that one must have faith before they can please God and be reconciled to Him. This means there are certain criteria by which the LORD will grant faith to the individual so they could please Him. One of those criteria is given in the above verse when it states "*he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*"

A second criteria is given in the previously quoted passage from Romans which declares that "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" plainly meaning that there is no other ordained way for one to receive faith. One must read and study the Scripture diligently for the LORD to grant them the faith necessary to see and understand the truth of God. However, this is not all; there is one last criteria that must be met:

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. (*Jeremiah 17:10*)

This verse is confirmed in Job by the statement made by young Elihu, a preacher of the gospel:

Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways. (*Job 34:10-11*)

This is further confirmed by Proverbs:

The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly. (*Proverb 20:27*)

It is this last criteria that is the most difficult to meet, as we will lie to ourselves about what we really want. However, the LORD God, Who searches us thoroughly, knows for certain why we are reading His word, and what we intend to do with it. Hence, if we never intend to properly exercise it, or wish to only mock the things of God, the LORD will never grant the instrument of faith whereby one can perceive and understand the truth of God and His word.

Thus, if one is never able to understand the word of God and cannot have assurance to the truth of the Scripture, the place to begin is their own heart. Faith belongs to the LORD God, and like everything else it is His to give based upon who meets the criteria to receive it.

Do you really want to know, or are you just playing a game?

To be continued . . .