

May 2011 Newsletter

We Walk By Faith

AA. Faith inspired by agape.

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Galatians 5:6 εν γαρ χριστω ιησου ουτε περιτομη τι ισχυει ουτε ακροβυστια αλλα πιστις δι αγαπης ενεργουμενη.

We want to note the word *availeth*, *ischuo*, which speaks of having the power or strength to meet a situation, endure it and overcome it in victory. Now Paul says that neither circumcision, or uncircumcision, things done to the flesh, do not have the power to accomplish anything spiritual. The only thing is faith working by *agape* love.

This verse is telling us what faith can do; it's telling us about the power found in faith, (or how faith accesses the power of God); it's telling us about how faith inspires us in our souls, and it's also telling us where faith comes from. And it's found in the expression, “*but faith which worketh by love*”, *alla pistis di'agapes energoumene*. Now on the surface this may not seem very important, but when one goes back to the ideas found connected with the word, *energeo*, it opens up a whole new world.

The word used here, *energeo* or *energeia*, was a word connected to the cosmic powers in the Greek mind. Now in their minds the cosmic powers could be either good or bad. But before we get into that, perhaps we need to set some sort of backdrop to help us in our understanding. To begin with, they regarded the *daimones*, (demons, cosmic powers), as not being necessarily bad. Actually, they used the term *daimones* to refer to a race of superior beings who came to earth from far away galaxies to impart knowledge to man.

Now when one of these cosmic powers imparted useful knowledge to someone, that impartation of knowledge was what *energeo* was about. The word we would use today would be **inspired**. They were inspired with an idea. Of course we have been seeing this go on for thousands of years with the demons inspiring mankind with their evil ideas. We might as well bring in the idea behind the word genius. When one of these *daimones*, who were also called genii, inspired someone with an idea, then that person was said to be a genius because he had a genii! Many of the world system's leaders were said to have a genii!

But getting back to our story, the key idea that we want to take away from this is that *energeo* is talking about being inspired with an idea or a concept. The demons inspired the ancient Greeks, (and people today), with their ideas. And the Christian today, who is filled with the Holy Spirit will be inspired with faith ideas. “*But faith which worketh by, or, is inspired by, agape love*”, *alla pistis di'agapes energoumene*. Faith in our souls is activated by means of *agape*.

This tells us that the spiritual mental attitude of *agape*, which is brought about by the filling of the Holy Spirit, is the instrumental agency by which we have faith; it is the means by which we are inspired with faith and faith ideas! The Christian, who is under the teaching of the Word of God, and living in the filling of the Holy Spirit, whose mind is dominated by *agape* love mental attitude and God's Word **will be inspired with faith and that faith will create in our minds faith ideas!**

But what is an idea? It is a thought or conception, that potentially, or actually, exists in the mind as a product of mental activity. The mind-set of faith will lead us to come up with ideas in our minds, all sorts of ideas, and **it will also establish the mind-set that this is possible**, that this can come to be!

When God sent the twelve spies into the land of Canaan to spy it out, two of them came back and said, we can do this! But the other ten came back, after looking at the same thing, and said, it can't be done! The idea that the two had in their minds was that they could conquer the land, just as God had promised to them. While the ten said that it can't be done, not even with God's help! Their excuse was because the giants were in the land. The two had faith; the ten had no faith.

And the reason why the two had faith is because they believed the Word of God! They believed that God couldn't and wouldn't lie, and that he had the power to do whatever he said he would do, so they could trust him. They were convinced by the Word of God. And for us to have it today we have to be convinced by the Word of God. For it is out of the Word that we have faith! *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Romans 10:17 The preposition ek, used with hearing the Word of God, tells us that the origin of faith is from the Word of God. So what we need to do is turn our souls in total concentration on what the Word of God is telling us, especially concerning this matter of faith, then a miraculous thing will happen. **We will find our minds change from being negative and unbelieving to one of faith and hope!**

BB. Faith shields us.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Ephesians 6:16

The concept of shielding was well known in the ancient world, as it is today. The shield acted as a barrier against the arrows, spears, swords, even the bodies of enemy combatants. One can use his body to act as a shield to protect those he loves, his wife, children, friends and loved ones from those who wish to harm them. Any time there is something valued to be protected the idea of a shield comes into play, whether in protecting the quarterback or runner in football, or placing an electromagnetic shield over the theater of war on the battlefield.

The concept of shielding is originally behind the word *huper*, where the Lord's action of dying on the cross for our sins shielded us from the judicial wrath of the Father. When the Lord placed his body on the cross to bear the Father's wrath for our sins, he was using his body as a shield to protect us from the righteous blows of the Father. The wrath of God we had coming he took on himself.

The shield of faith here refers to the believer's faith in the promises and doctrines of God's Word. It refers to living in the spiritual life dynamic, where the Christian lives by faith in the Word of God in the filling of the Holy Spirit. And it is as we exercise our faith in the Word of God a barrier is created to protect our precious souls to keep them from being harmed by Satan.

One of the most terrifying weapons in those days was when the enemy would fire flaming arrows at them. It was bad enough to have thousands of arrows flying at your position, but to have them ablaze became a much more serious threat. The arrows, or fiery darts, that Satan shoots at us are not fiery in the sense of being on fire, but **burning**. **The burning here refers to the burning of the venom of the cobra, the devil's symbol, and refers to the bitterness of Satan and his demons making penetration into our souls, thus inflaming us with anger.** Faith in the Word protects us from that.

CC. Faith has activity.

*“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;” 1 Thessalonians 1:3 υμων του εργου της πιστεως*

The word for **work**, *ergos*, refers to any form of activity. Faith in the Word of God may be the inner mental dynamic, but action is all that which is outside the inner mental dynamic. It encompasses speaking, acting, walking, doing, etc.. So we have faith is the inner motivator that leads us to action.

Abel's faith in what God had said about a sacrifice was behind him offering the proper sacrifice to God. *“By faith **Abel offered** unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”* Hebrews 11:4

Noah's faith in what God had said about a coming flood motivated him to build an ark. *“By faith **Noah**, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, **prepared an ark** to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”* Hebrews 11:7

Abraham's faith concerning what God had told him about a certain land was the cause behind him leaving his home country, even his family, to go to a place he had never seen. *“By faith **Abraham**, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and **he went out**, not knowing whither he went.”* Hebrews 11:8

By faith **Isaac** blessed Jacob and Esau. *“By faith **Isaac blessed** Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”* Hebrews 11:20

By faith **Jacob** blessed both the sons of Joseph. *“By faith **Jacob**, when he was a dying, **blessed** both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”* Hebrews 11:20

By faith **Joseph** gave instructions concerning his earthly remains after he died. *“By faith **Joseph**, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and **gave commandment** concerning his bones.”* Hebrews 11:22

By faith **Moses' parents** hid him for three months. *“By faith **Moses**, when he was born, was **hid** three months of his **parents**, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”* Hebrews 11:23 A clear example of God's people who, by faith in God, put the Word of God higher than the “laws” of human authorities.

It was **Moses'** faith that motivated him to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, to choose to be identified with the people of God, to forsake Egypt, to keep the Passover. *“By faith **Moses**, when he was come to years, **refused** to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; **Choosing** rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he **forsook** Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith **he kept the passover**, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.”* Hebrews 11:24-28

By faith the **people of God** walked through where the Red Sea had been and came out the other side victorious over Pharaoh and his army! “*By **faith** they **passed through the Red sea** as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.*” Hebrews 11:29 Their faith motivated them to the action of walking.

Here we see faith motivating the people of God to one form of action or another. Whether **offering**, or **building**, or **journeying** to a foreign land, or **blessing** someone, or **giving instructions**, or **disobeying civil authorities**, or **choosing** one people and life instead of another people and life, or **walking forward** into what would seem an impossible situation!

Even the Apostle **Paul** said that it was his faith in Christ that motivated him to speak the Word about Christ. “*We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, **I believed**, and therefore have I **spoken**; we also believe, and therefore **speak**;*” 2 Corinthians 4:13

It is the **unbeliever's** faith in Christ that motivates him to call out to the Lord. “*For whosoever shall **call upon the name of the Lord** shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not **believed**? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*” Romans 10:13,14

DD. Faith can and is to grow.

“*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith **groweth** exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;*” 2 Thessalonians 1:3

The word for **grow** here is *huperauxano*, which looks at the idea of natural growth, such as in people, plant and animals. With *hyper* prefixed to it, it looks at the idea of fast or abundant growth. Which tells us something about faith. The faith that has been measured out to us by God at the moment of our salvation is not just a static thing, but is to keep on growing and getting stronger, so that it will come to the place of completion.

If we looked at **plants**, we would take this from the time that the seed was planted in the ground, it takes root, the stalk shoots up, then one day it starts to bear fruit. Or, if we take **people**, the seed was planted in the mother's womb, the child is born, its bones grow, it starts to develop muscles, and then day it becomes an adult who will be productive in life.

We also can look at this from the perspective that faith in God and his Word is just a small thread, one that we think can so easily be broken – like a spider's web. Then another **strand** is added to it and it becomes a little stronger. And then more and more strands are added to it until it gets to the place that it is a strong rope.

Or we can look at it from the standpoint of **muscles**. All of our muscles start out pretty small and weak. But it is through the constant exercising of them, and by trying to lift more weights, that we find our muscles get bigger and bigger and we get stronger and stronger. And so it is with faith. The more we use it, the more we exercise our faith, the stronger our faith becomes!

This is why God is constantly placing us in various kinds of trials. He does this so we can have the opportunity to exercise our faith! And when we finally trust him in one trial, we pass our test and move on to the next one and one day finally arrive at the place where our faith is completed.

EE. Faith and endurance.

“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Hebrews 6:12 ινα μη νωθροι γενησθε μιμηται δε των δια **πιστεως** και μακροθυμιας κληρονομουντων τας επαγγελιας.

There are many things that God has promised his people in their temporal existence here on earth. These things we refer to as the blessings of God. And, as we have seen before, these blessings come to us out of his grace and are appropriated by faith. Much of the Bible is a history of God's men and women who have lived here on earth and enjoyed the wonderful things that God has done for them out of his grace. Things he has done for their souls, for their families, for their physical health, areas of job prosperity and the opportunities to serve him.

Throughout the Bible the Lord tells us to seek his face, to call on him and he will bless us. He instructs us on how to live our lives in such a manner that is pleasing to him so that he might bless us. These are all things that he has promised to us. And a promise of God is the most certain thing on earth. So all we have to do is believe his promises.

And there's something else in this passage and that is **endurance**. Endurance deals with the believer's forward momentum as he moves through his trials toward the goal of carrying off the promises of God. The believer can't give up in this matter. We must believe that God will come through in what he has promised. And this gets back to living our lives based upon **the faithfulness of God**. God is faithful to his Word; he is faithful to what he has promised; and he is faithful to his covenant with us.

FF. The full assurance of faith.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:22

The word for **full assurance** is *plerophoria*, which has the idea of being filled up with something. What is it that we are to be filled to the top with? **Faith!** When we talk about faith at this level, we are looking at the idea of being totally confident before God. Confidence has no doubts whatsoever, so that when we approach the throne of God, we are confident that he will hear our prayers.

In fact, confidence in God will govern our entire existence here on earth. We are confident that God has a plan for our lives, that our lives are not left up to chance, nor left up to our flighty wills. We are confident that God will protect us and that he will provide for us. We are confident in the omnipotence of God's power. We are confident in God keeping the promises he has made to us, because he cannot lie and he has the power and determination to keep his them regardless of any and all opposition to them. And we are confident in the process that God chooses to perfect us, even though we might not understand it at the time.

And how do we get this full assurance of faith? We get it through the consistent intake of the teaching of his Word! It is as we focus our thinking on Bible doctrine that our faith grows and grows. And it is as we meditate on the faithfulness of God that our faith in him becomes stronger. In fact some translations have Habakkuk 2:4, “*The just shall live by his faith*”, as, “*The just shall live by **his faithfulness***”, referring to God. This was the translation in the Geneva Bible that launched the Reformation.

GG. Faith is the substance.

“Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1 εστιν δε πιστις ελπίζομενων **υποστασις** πραγματος ελεγχος ου βλεπομενων.

To begin with we need to see once again that faith always has to have an object and for us the object always has to be the Word of God. So we have the Word of God, or **the Bible doctrine that we have believed**, is the **substance** of things hoped for.

Now some translations have *hupostasis* translated as *substance*, other translations as *assurance*. We could also put in the idea of confidence for that is involved as well. *Hupostasis* was the word used along with the idea of a **title deed**.

A man buys a piece of property, money exchanges hands, but what assurance does he have that the property is his? Really none. Suppose family members challenged him in court later on claiming that he never bought it at all! This is where the title deed comes in. It is a legal document that will stand up in court verifying that the man now owns the property. It gives him **assurance**.

The same idea would go for buying merchandise, or an animal, and somebody, maybe even the owner could come along and say that he stole it! But if he had a bill of sale, he could prove that the animal was legally his now, thus giving him **assurance**.

The same thing could be said for inheriting property in another area. The lawyer doesn't merely say that you now own twenty acres in another town he has the title deed to it with your name on it. And even though you have not taken possession of it, even though you have never even seen it, and even though squatters may be living on it claiming that the property is theirs, you know it is yours because you have the title deed to it and the authorities will uphold your legal claim.

So we have **the Bible doctrine that we have believed becomes the assurance and guarantee of the things hoped for**. Now when we look at **hope**, the present passive participle of *elpizo*, we are talking about something that is going to happen in the future. It is not unreal, it is only unrealized. There is the **subjective** side of hope, where the believer has the confident expectation that something good is going to happen to him in the future, such as, a prayer being answered. And then there is the **objective** side of hope where something good is going to happen to us in the future, because God is going to do it for us, even though we may not know it and even though we may not be believing it at that particular time, as the case was with Job in all his suffering.

There is a judicial side to *elenkos* for it could also refer to evidence that would stand up in a court of law, such as, a title deed. So what's it's telling us is that the doctrine that we have believed, the promises of God that we have believed, the gospel of Christ that we have believed is evidence of the fact that we will receive what God has promised us.

We start with the fact that God loves us and wants to bless us. Then we go to the matter of, on what basis does God bless people? On their works? No. On their personal morality? No. On their personality? No. On their keeping of his Law? No. God only blesses his children on the basis of his grace! And because it is by grace, then it also has to be by faith. So whenever we believe God's promises, or his offer of salvation through faith in Christ, then we have the proof that we will receive from him what we are hoping for at some time in the future.

HH. We comprehend spiritual truths by faith.

*“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 11:3 πιστει νοουμεν κατηρτισθαι τους αιωνας ρηματι θεου εις το μη εκ φαινομενων τα βλεπομενα γεγονενα.*

This verse tells us that it was God who created the heavens and earth, but it also tells us that we arrive at the perception of this truth, and all other spiritual truths, only by faith not by empirical evidence. There are many Christians out there trying to prove that God created the earth by the use of empirical evidence, but what they don't see is that there is only spiritual validity in the sphere of faith. Even if people demand to have the creation account proven to them, one still must accept by faith that God created the heavens and the earth.

There are three modes of perception by which one can know what is true. **Empiricism**, where knowledge of what is true is derived from the five senses; sight, sound, taste, smell and touch. **Rationalism**, where knowledge of what is true and real is derived by the use of the mind. **Pisticism**, where knowledge of what is true is gained by the exercise of faith! And for Christians our faith is placed in the Word of God and the many doctrines that it teaches.

A man stands atop a precipice wanting to cross over to the other side of a gorge that has a drop of a thousand feet. The only thing that is there is a rickety old rope bridge that connects the two sides. The question is, the truth he wants to know is, how does he know if it's safe to go across? He uses his eyes to gauge the thickness of the ropes, how secure they are tied, the slat boards, the anchor posts securing the bridge and gives it a good shake. Empiricism and rationalism working together to derive the truth.

His mind mulls it over, but still he is not sure and doesn't want to go out in the middle to check it out. All of a sudden there is an old man standing on the other side. So he asks him, how did you get over there? To which the old man replied, I walked over the bridge! He asks, so it's safe to walk across then? To which the old man replied, yes, we do it all the time. So by faith he believes the old man's words and walks across.

To be able to comprehend spiritual truths the individual, first, must be a believer in Jesus Christ where he now has a new nature, which is spiritual in essence, and, then, there must be the exercising of faith. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14*

Having said that, then one needs to understand that believers in Christ have two natures, one that is the flesh and the other the spirit, which God created in him at salvation. If we are operating in our flesh nature, then we will not be able to comprehend spiritual truths. So we have to be operating in our new natures and to do that we must confess our known sins to God to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Now that we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will then have to be exercising faith toward the teaching of Bible Doctrine. And it is there, as faith metabolizes the Word of God, that the believer will be able to comprehend the spiritual truths that lie within it. Many believers fail to do this, or refuse to do this. They either want something proven to them, or they want to see some form of empirical evidence, or they approach it from a purely academic point of view. What they fail to see is that faith levels the playing field. It takes all merit away from people and their mental or academic abilities and puts it solely upon God and his Word, where it should be.

II. Without faith, impossible to please God.

“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 **χωρις** δε πιστεως αδυνατον ευαρεστησαι πιστευσαι γαρ δει τον προσερχομενον τω θεω οτι εστιν και τοις εκζητουσιν αυτον μισθαποδοτης γινεται.

Now when it talks about faith, remember that it is talking about **faith in God and his Word!** Biblical faith must always have God and his Word as the object of our faith. In that way faith is meritless for the merit lies in the object of faith - God and his Word.

The word for **without** is *choris* and it means apart from something. Used in many ways, but one is the idea of a main ingredient, such as the main ingredient in a recipe, without which you do not have the entree. Oysters Rockefeller without the oysters is not Oysters Rockefeller. Apart from faith in the Word of God - impossible to please God.

In every believer in Jesus Christ is the desire to please God, and this due to the act of regeneration by the Holy Spirit at salvation. But some try to please God out of their own works, legalism, morality, following along in the religious program of their church, by being good, etc.. But there is only one way that we can please God and that is **through faith in his Word!**

Just as there is only one way we can worship God and that is through the Holy Spirit and the truth!
“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must worship him in spirit and in truth.**” John 4:24 A fact that is woefully lacking in most churches today, who think that through their programs, entertainment, singing, religious activities, and sometimes totally bizarre behavior they are worshiping God. But if their assembling is not gathered around the teaching of his Word – **they are not!**

JJ. Faith empowered Sarah.

“Through faith also Sara **herself** received **strength** to **conceive** seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she **judged** him **faithful** who had promised.” Hebrews 11:11 πιστει και αυτη σαρρα δυναμιν εις καταβολην σπερματος ελαβεν και παρα καιρον ηλικιας ετεκεν επει **πιστον** ηγησατο τον επαγγειλαμενον.

God had made a promise to give Abraham a son, but he also stated that the son would come through Sarah. So what this means is that Sarah as well would have to be empowered to conceive and carry a child, just as Abraham would have to be empowered to perform in the masculine way. Sarah would not only have to be able to lay down eggs once again, but she would also have to be strengthened physically so she could bear the child for nine months and then deliver it!

To **conceive** is *katabole*, the word for laying down a foundation, so **God had to so strengthen her in every way for the rigors that lie ahead in bearing the child**. This strengthening she received from God, for she no longer possessed the strength in her own flesh to do so. And she received this strength by the exercising of faith in the promise of God. But what was it about God that gave her the confidence to believe him? He had made the promise about a son, but what was it that enabled her to fully trust him? It was in his **faithfulness!** Abraham looked at the **power** of God to perform what he promised to do. But Sarah looked at the **faithfulness** of God in carrying out his promise.

