

Faith in Christ
By Edward H. Overbey

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Introduction:

The subject of the Bible is Jesus Christ and His salvation. It is of the utmost importance that one be correct on the way of salvation. To be wrong on the way of salvation means one is lost forever. Jesus spoke to some religious leaders of His day who were in error on salvation and lost. He urged them to study the Bible that they might learn God's plan of salvation and be saved. John 5:39-40 says, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The Bible teaches that one is saved forever by faith in Christ. This sums up the teaching of salvation. Acts 10:43 briefly gives the way of salvation in these Words, "To Him (Christ) give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

In this work we will study **Faith In Christ** according to this outline.

Introduction

- I. Faith In Christ Is Depending On Christ.**
- II. Faith In Christ Is Life.**
- III. Faith in Christ Begins With Regeneration .**
- IV. Faith In Christ Is Caused By The Spirit And The Gospel.**
- V. Faith In Christ Is The Result Of Election.**
- VI. Faith In Christ Brings Great Blessings.**
- VII. Faith In Christ Is An Act Of The Will,**
- VIII. Faith In Christ Is Pictured By The Ordinances.**

Conclusion

I. Faith in Christ is Depending on Christ.

A. Meaning.

Faith in Christ means to depend on Christ for salvation from sin. The basic meaning of "faith in" is "depend on" or "trust in" or "believe in" or "believe on," etc. All of these terms mean the same thing. It is depending on Christ to do all that is necessary to save one from sin.

It is important to note that faith demands an object. Faith does not exist without an object. In the Bible record an object is always stated or is implied in the context. The faith that saves has an object, Jesus Christ. To say, "I have faith", must be clarified. Faith in what? Self, your works, baptism, the preacher, Christ?. The capacity for faith is not faith. All human beings have the capacity for natural faith. But one does not have faith in a bank to keep his money until one places faith in a bank by putting his money in the bank. One does not have spiritual faith until he has faith in Christ to save him from his sins.

Not only must Bible faith have an object before it exists but it must have the right object. The right object is Jesus Christ. There is no other Saviour whereby human beings can be saved, Acts 4:12. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." To depend on oneself to save oneself from sin is to have a real faith, but it is in the wrong object and this kind of faith cannot save. To have faith in ceremonies, a church, sincerity, etc. is to have an object but the wrong one. Only Christ is the right object of faith to save from sin, John 14:6.

A true Bible faith also demands the right purpose. A genuine faith depends on Christ, the right object, to save from sin, the right purpose. To depend on Christ to give one financial success may be very sincere but if that is one's only purpose then he does not have the right purpose and he is not saved from sin. Believers mentioned in the Bible were concerned with being saved from their sins. After one depends on Christ to save from sin he should also depend on Him for many things, everything He teaches us. To depend on Christ to get well from an operation is not the right purpose if one wants to be saved from sin.

The definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1 is a definition from the standpoint of the purpose of faith. The faith spoken of in 11:1 is a faith in Christ for the purpose of saving one from sin as the previous verse, 10:39, and the previous chapters make very clear.

An explanation of Hebrews 11:1 follows. Faith in Christ to save from sin is the substance or basis for things hoped for which are a new body like Christ's, free from all sin, and a new world without the curse of sin on it and faith in Christ to save from sin is the evidence or proof that we have for things not seen by our eyes which are full forgiveness of all sins right now and sonship in God's holy family right now.

Faith in Christ to save from sin is the basis for the desired purpose. Since Christ lived a perfect life and died for the penalty of our sin and arose again then He did all that was necessary to attain the purpose of being saved from sin for us. When one has Christ by faith then he has the purpose Christ attained, Jesus' work of living, dying, and arising saves from sin. We receive future and present benefits because of Him. The penalty is removed and one is saved from Hell. The power of sin is being overcome and one has His life and is a child of God. The presence of sin will be removed and he will receive a new resurrected body like Jesus' body at the second coming and a new world. When one has Christ by depending on Him then the believer has the purpose Christ attained and will receive the benefits, some the moment the believer receives Christ by faith and others at the second coming of Christ.

Depending on Christ to save from sin is like trusting a bearer bond to give financial benefits now and in the future. When one receives the bond by faith to give financial benefits he can't see the benefits but he has the basis or guarantee of those benefits which is the purpose of the bond by receiving by faith the bond.

When he goes to the bank and shows the bond he receives the present interest and when he returns in the future he gets the rest of the interest. When a person depends on Christ for salvation from sin then he has the basis or guarantee of forgiveness from the penalty of his sin and in the future the basis or guarantee of a new body that is not affected by sin.

Faith in Christ is not a profession of faith in Christ. Faith in Christ is within the soul, but a profession is in words. It is possible for a person to give a false profession sincerely or insincerely. Since man can only see the outside and not the soul, he assumes that the profession is sincere unless there is something that indicates otherwise. Then, he may doubt the reality of the person's faith but he cannot be absolutely sure because he cannot look on the inside. The Bible many times writes about those that profess to believe as if their professions were genuine until revealed otherwise because we can only see the outside even though God can see the inside and knows all things.

Romans 10:10 says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

B. Companion.

Faith in Christ to save always has a companion, Bible repentance. Repentance and faith are inseparable. They are in the soul. Repentance is always first but they come together.

Repentance means "change of mind." We are commanded to repent, change our mind, and believe or depend on Jesus Christ. Matt. 3:1,2; Mark 6:12; Luke 13:3. We can not truly depend on Jesus Christ to save us unless we change our mind first about our sin and need of God's salvation and what that salvation is. When one changes his mind or repents he automatically has faith in Christ to save. If one has faith in Christ to save he automatically had to change his mind first or he would not have faith in Christ. Sometimes the Bible mentions both together with repentance always being first. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21. Sometimes it mentions Repentance by itself or Faith by itself. In these cases the one not mentioned is always implied for you cannot have one without the other. It is not always necessary to mention them both.

To change one's mind or repent requires that there must always be something to change one's mind to stated or implied in the context. Jesus preached the gospel and then said repent or change your mind. To what? To what He has been preaching, the gospel. This is true of the other Bible preachers also.

Repentance is in the soul not the body. It is internal not external. Saying prayers, giving money, doing works are all of the body, Repentance is in the soul, and particularly of the mind as the meaning of the word makes clear. It is a change of mind not body. Repentance and faith are both of the soul and always come together with repentance first. Repentance is not godly sorrow or fruits such as stopping some particular sin such as stealing or idolatry, etc. Godly sorrow and fruits are important but they are not repentance. Godly sorrow worketh repentance and repentance results in fruits. Matt. 11:20,21; 2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 3:8.

C. Growth.

Faith in Christ may grow and should grow. Since this is true, faith in Christ may be very small. The apostles were rebuked because their faith in Christ was small. Matt.8:26. Others were commended because their faith was great. Matt.15:28. Faith begins with the preaching, teaching or reading of the Bible and increases with the preaching etc. of the Bible.

A weak faith in Christ will save from sin as much as a strong faith in Christ because the power of faith in Christ is in the object which is Christ. Even faith the size of a mustard seed can do mighty things because the strength is not in the faith as such but in the object, Christ. Luke 17:5-6. The quality of faith itself may vary but not the object of faith, Christ. He is always the same. Heb. 13:8. He saves completely the one with weak faith in Him just as He saves completely the one with strong faith. The merit and power is in Christ, the object of faith. Repentance also grows as faith does. Since they go together, they grow together.

D. Value

Faith has no value in itself. The value or merit is in its object. By the nature of its meaning it does not do anything, it does not itself work, it does not have value or merit in itself. Faith depends on its object to do something, to work, to have value or merit.

The one who needs surgery depends on the Doctor to do the operating. The patient does not work or operate. The object of his faith, the Doctor, does the work of operating. There is no merit or value in the patient as far as the operation goes. His faith does not deserve the praise or glory because there is no value or merit in it. The value and merit is in the object of faith, the Doctor, and he should receive any praise or glory humanly speaking. The one with faith stops working for salvation and depends on the object of faith to do the work. Romans 4:5.

Salvation is by grace. Eph. 2:8-9. Grace means unmerited favor. Since this is the way God saves, He appointed "faith" as the means of receiving salvation because there is no merit in it. A grace salvation demands a grace means of receiving it. Faith is that grace means. Romans 4:16b. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Ephesians 2:8-9. "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." This passage makes it clear that "saved through faith" is grace. Not "saved" is grace but "saved through faith." "Saved through faith" is a gift of God, it is not of oneself, it is not of works, the person who has it cannot boast of his salvation through faith.

There is no value or merit in "faith" because it is contrasted with works or merit. Faith is not a meritorious work that earns salvation. Faith is just the opposite of works or merit. It is contrasted with works. Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 3:2,5,11; Rom. 3:27-28; 4:4-5.

Faith in Jesus Christ to save leads to works out of love and appreciation for Christ. Because of the salvation one receives by faith in Jesus Christ, he wants to obey Christ and serve Christ and do the works that would please Christ. Gal. 5:6b; Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:17. He has salvation as a free gift through faith. He need not work to attain it because he has it. He need not work to keep it because God keeps him by his power. 1Peter 1:5 The work that a person does who is saved by faith does not earn or keep this salvation but is an expression of love to the Saviour who did all the saving.

Faith in itself does not have any merit for the person who exercises it. The person who has faith in another or depends upon another is not working but has stopped working for the thing he depends on another to do. But, since faith is a function of life, it is a creation of God or a work of God. God brings this life function into existence. It is not a work of man.

The Bible says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life . . .", John 6:27. They were not to work for material things as their purpose in life but to work for spiritual things as their main purpose. This should be their purpose but He did not say they could attain it by their works, Jesus told the rich young ruler in a similar situation to keep the commandments to have eternal life. Jesus didn't say that he could keep them. He went on to say with men this was impossible but with God all things were possible. Matt. 19:16-26. Jesus brings out the same truth in John 6:28b-29 when the people said, "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." The sinner needs a substitute who is Christ to labor for us to attain the gift of salvation. The sinner who has faith in Christ to do the work of salvation for him is saved. The sinner who has faith in Christ died, was buried and arose in Christ.

In this context Jesus reinforces this thought when he says, "But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me . . . No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . . It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." John 6:36-37b, 44a, 45.

It is clear that faith is produced by God. It is His creation. The man believes on Christ but he didn't produce his faith. It is the work of God. This creation or work of God has no merit in itself as has been shown for the person believing.

In Isaiah 55:1-3 we are told to buy salvation without money or price. The milk and food represent the salvation blessings in Christ. We are to attain them by buying without money which is faith. Buying is a means of receiving food but money is involved in material food. We earn the food by buying with money. But, spiritual food which is salvation in Christ is received by a means with no value or merit in it. This means is faith and buying without money or works represents this means.

God is said to be pleased with the one who believes, not because of merit in the believer

but because of merit in the object one believes in which is Christ. Heb. 11:6; Eph. 1:6; Col. 1:19-23. God is well pleased with us because of Christ our representative. Matt. 3:17.

Repentance like faith has no merit in it. By its very nature it is impossible for it to have merit. Repentance is a change of mind, from our wrong ideas to the Lord's truth. The one who repents is saying in a sense my ideas are all wrong on this subject and therefore I change my mind to the Lord's truth. The person accepts truths concerning salvation that he did not create. He cannot claim for himself any merits whatever for what he changes his mind to is entirely of the Lord's doing.

II. Faith in Christ is Life

A. Faith in Christ has everlasting life, John 3:36.

Physically dead men do not have a natural faith in the things of this world because they are dead and natural faith is a life function. Spiritually dead men do not have faith in Christ because they are dead and faith in Christ is life, Ephesians 2:1, 5. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Hath" is present tense. The one who believes on Christ as Saviour "hath" or has everlasting life because believing on Christ is everlasting life. The one who doesn't believe on Christ doesn't have everlasting life and never will as long as he doesn't believe in Christ as his Saviour.

B. I live by the faith of the Son of God, Gal. 2:20.

Paul gave his testimony in Gal. 2:20 in these words, "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."

Christ lived in Paul through Paul's faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ is life. The way Paul lived, that is, thought, spoke and acted was due to Paul's depending on Jesus Christ. Phil. 1:21. For Christ to live in Paul, Paul must stay out of the way. To stay out of the way he depends on Christ to live in him. Christ does not physically or literally live in Paul but by faith in Christ; Christ lives in Paul and every believer in Christ.

C. "The just shall live by faith," Rom. 1:17b; Gal. 3:11.

God's family lives by faith in Christ. The object is not mentioned in this quote but the Bible makes it clear in the context that the object of this kind of faith is Christ for the purpose of salvation. Without faith in Christ a person doesn't live spiritually but with faith in Christ a person lives because faith in Christ is life.

Faith in Christ to save from sin is the key to the Christian's life. Without it a person is not saved. Without it a person does not have spiritual life and cannot live for the Lord. Faith in Christ for salvation leads to love, meekness, long suffering, honesty, faith in other things that Christ teaches us, knowledge, temperance, etc. 2Peter 1:5-7; Gal. 5:22-23. Unless one has faith in Christ as his Saviour from sin then these qualities of a new life will not develop. Depending on Christ is necessary for Christ to live in us and manifest the qualities of a Christ-like life. As one depends on Christ for salvation and learns more about Christ through the Bible the Christian's life develops step by step so that the person becomes more Christ-like. 2Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11-15. Other qualities may not always be present but faith in Christ is and must be always present. It is the key to the Christian's life. 1 Peter 1:5; Luke 22:31-32; Phll. 1:3-6; Rom. 1:17b.

2 Timothy 2:13 says, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." If a professing Christian does not really believe then he will be treated by the Lord for what he is and will be sent to Hell. Our Lord is faithful to all that he says. He makes no false professions. "He cannot deny himself." He cannot make a false profession on any matter. Therefore, He is

faithful to all He has said. He will punish unbelievers as He has promised. 2Timothy 2:11-13.

D. The Greatest Is Love, 1 Cor. 13:13.

Even though the key to the Christian life is faith in Christ for salvation another very important quality is love, love for God, for other Christians, for lost people. Compared to faith and hope, love (translated charity in 1 Cor. 13:13) is the greatest. In what way is it the greatest? Not for salvation, for the Bible says "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts. 16:31. He does not say, "love the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." As we have seen faith has no merit in itself but only in its object Christ. Faith does not work but stops working and depends on Christ and His work to save. Faith by its nature is not great. Repentance by its

nature is not great either. Hope by its nature is not great for it is faith in the future promises of God, a new body and a new world. God not man will make the new body and world and give it to the believer. However love is great and greater than faith and hope. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10. Love works and does things that are meritorious. The law is summed up in one word, love. The church at Corinth was divided over several matters. They did not love each other as they ought to. Each was seeking his own glory. They needed to be reminded concerning love. This was especially needed in their case that they might serve the Lord in unity, that is, love for the Lord and love for their fellow church members.

III. Faith In Christ Begins With Regeneration.

A. John 5:24.

Regeneration is the beginning of spiritual life. The one who has faith in Christ to save has life; the one who has not faith in Christ to save does not have life. Life and faith in Christ go together because faith is life. When life begins faith in Christ begins. One cannot have spiritual life and not have faith in Christ. Since this is true, regeneration is the beginning of spiritual life and faith in Christ. If one is born again or regenerated he has faith in Christ; if one does not believe in Christ he is not regenerated. One is either dead or alive; there is no middle ground. The dead person spiritually does not have faith in Christ; the spiritually alive person does have faith in Christ. This is proved by the Scriptures. John 5:24 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

"Believeth" is a present participle in the Greek which indicates that the time of the believing is the same time as the main verb which is "hath". "Hath" is present indicative. "Hath" in modern English is "has". What does the one believing have? He has everlasting life. He didn't have everlasting life before he believes nor does he obtain it sometime after he believes but he has everlasting life the moment he believes and not a moment sooner. This verse goes on to describe this beginning of faith and life or regeneration as passing "from death unto life". "Is passed" in the Greek is present perfect indicative, which means it is a completed action in present time. The regeneration or new birth or beginning of spiritual life is described as passing "from death unto life". It was a completed experience at the same time the person believed and had everlasting life.

God the Father is the one mentioned in this verse that the person is believing. God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit all teach the same thing, that Jesus is the only Saviour from sin. And, He died and arose again that the one who believes on Him might be saved.

B. John 3:36.

John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

This verse is similar to John 5:24. "Believeth" is a present participle which means it is taking place at the same time as the main verb hath", which is present indicative. This means that the moment one believes, he has everlasting life. This verse goes on to say that the one not believing will not see everlasting life, that is, as long as he not believing but the wrath of God is abiding on him all that time he is not believing. It is obvious from this verse that a believer in Christ has everlasting life the moment he believes and not a moment sooner. The moment he believes is the beginning of life or regeneration.

C. John 1:12.

John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

The word "believe" is a present participle which indicates the believing is at the same time as God gave power to become sons of God. God giving power to become a son of God is the new birth.

Believing begins with regeneration. They are at the same time but the regeneration is the cause of the believing. There is no interval of time between them. Since reference has been made to the significance of the present participle in several verses, it is fitting to quote from a standard Greek Grammar. Writing concerning the significance of the present participle, Dana and Mantey state, "Simultaneous action relative to the main verb is ordinarily expressed by the present." A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, Dana, H.E.& Mantey, Julius R., p. 230, The Macmillan Company, Toronto, Canada, 1955. This is a common principle that is found in all the Greek grammars.

D. Acts 16:14.

Acts 16:14 says, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

Regeneration is spoken of here when it says, "the Lord opened" Lydia's heart. This is the cause of her attending to the gospel being spoken by Paul. Her attending to the message spoken is at the same time as God's opening of her heart. The Greek bears this out. Her attending to the message was her believing it.

E. Regeneration and Conversion.

Regeneration is the beginning of life and conversion is the beginning of life. Both terms refer to the beginning of life. They take place at the same time. Both refer to works of God within the person. However, to theologians regeneration is a word used of the work that the Holy Spirit does in giving life and conversion is used of the immediate response within the person to the regenerating work of the Spirit. This conversion response is repentance and faith. Even though the Spirit's work of regeneration is first and the cause of conversion they both come at the same time. There is no time period between regeneration and conversion. Because a person is born again he believes, he begins to live a righteous life, he begins to turn from sin, he begins to have Christian love. All of these qualities begin at the new birth. There is no time between the new birth and the qualities of the new life beginning. The new birth is the cause but these effects come at the same time. IJohn 2:29; 3:9; 4:1; 5:1, 4, 18.

F. Various Terms and Regeneration.

Different terms are used for the beginning of spiritual life in the New Testament. The Lord uses terms referring to natural life to teach us about spiritual life. These terms are used figuratively when used of spiritual life which means that only the point He is referring to in the

beginning of spiritual life is like the beginning of natural life.

Just because physical life has a beginning in the mother, that is, conception, and a beginning of coming out of the mother, birth, nine months later is no grounds to suppose that the soul receiving new life is like this. To read more into these terms is not correct. The context should determine our understanding of the new birth. These terms all refer to the beginning of spiritual life. The natural life and spiritual life are different in many ways. The time of the conception of natural life in a human being and the birth of the human being is nine months. There is no period comparable to this in the spiritual birth. The Scriptures we have noted make it clear that the passing from death to spiritual life is an instantaneous thing. Spiritual conception and birth take place at the same time. There is no nine months between them.

The Bible tells us that we who are saved will get a new body but this body is described as different from a natural body in a number of respects. For example our natural body is developed from infancy to maturity over a period of about twenty years. The new body has no period of development like this. It is changed from a natural body to a new body in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. It does not have to develop then over a period of time. Yet the same word for body is used for both but they are quite different. The context makes this clear. What is true of a new body is true also of a new birth of the soul.

Another difference between the natural birth and spiritual birth should be noted. The body and soul are both given at the same time in the natural birth but in the new birth our soul is regenerated in this time but our new body comes at the time of the second coming. Context determines this not the literal meaning of the words for the beginning of natural life. To make the beginning of the natural life to be a carbon copy of the beginning of spiritual life will lead one to many false doctrines and many flat contradictions of the Scriptures.

An example of what I am saying is found in John 3. Jesus used the Greek word *gennao* in John 3:3 for "born". Literally this word refers to the natural birth of a human being when his soul and body come from the mother into this world. This word is used in Luke 1:57 where it is translated "brought forth." It is referring to the natural birth of John the Baptist. It is a common word for the natural birth. For this reason Nicodemus thought that the birth Jesus referred to in John 3:3 would involve coming from his mother's womb, body and soul. But, Jesus showed from the context that he was using this word figuratively of the beginning of new life in the soul by the power of the Holy

Spirit and involved hearing about Jesus Christ and believing on Him as one's personal Saviour. The context makes this clear. To imagine this birth is a carbon copy of the natural birth is to completely misunderstand John 3. The word *gennao* can also mean "conceive," that is, the beginning of life in the mother nine months before birth, Matt. 1:20. It can also mean "begat" and refers to the begetting of the man, Matt. 1:2.

IV. Faith In Christ Is Caused by the Spirit and the Gospel.

A. John 3:5

Faith in Christ is caused by the Spirit and the gospel. The beginning of faith or the beginning of life or regeneration is caused by the Spirit and the gospel. Without the gospel or message of salvation by Jesus Christ coming to a person and the Spirit doing a work within the person, that person will not believe or be regenerated. The Spirit uses the gospel to regenerate the soul and produce repentance and faith.

Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again by the Spirit. John 3:5 says, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

"Water" is symbolic of the Spirit at times, John 7:38-39. The Lord emphasizes the absolute necessity of being born by the Spirit by mentioning a symbolic term "water" that represents the Spirit and then the actual term "Spirit". Water is used to bring life to dry ground when seed is planted. So, the Spirit brings spiritual life to a person when the seed of the gospel is sown in his heart. The word "and" in Greek can mean "even" and often does in the New Testament. John 3:5 can be translated, "Except a man be born of water even of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God".

The Lord goes on to reinforce this truth by saying in John 3:6-8, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said this unto thee: Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

B. A Logical Conclusion.

In the previous two chapters we have seen that faith in Christ is life and the beginning of faith is regeneration. Since this is true the gospel must come to the person or he will not begin to have faith or be regenerated. Rom. 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:14b says, "And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" The message about Christ must come or a person will not believe. And, there is no regeneration until one believes and lives spiritually. The beginning of faith or regeneration is caused by the Spirit empowering the message of Jesus Christ. The Lord gave the command to preach to every creature, to go into all the world and witness concerning Christ because God is pleased to bring people to faith in Christ by the Spirit and message of Christ. Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:21-24.

When a person receives new life his soul is purified. The blood of Christ is applied in the experience of regeneration. There is a cleansing or washing and a renewing. This is a two-fold work. Titus 3:4b brings this out. "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost, that is, the Holy Spirit must do this work.

1 Peter 1:22a says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." One aspect of regeneration is referred to by the words, "Ye have purified your souls." This is caused by the Spirit and the gospel. The gospel is spoken of as "the truth" here. Obeying the truth is believing on Christ to save your soul. To do otherwise for salvation is disobedience.

In the next verse the Bible teaches us that the gospel must come to a person before he will be born again. 1 Peter 1:23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." The message of the Bible is likened to seed which when planted and empowered by the Spirit which is likened to water will produce life, that is, belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour. Jesus likened the message of the Bible to seed in the parable of the sower. New life or regeneration didn't come in the parable until the gospel seed was planted. Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-29; Luke 8:4-15.

Jesus is called "the Word of God" in a few places in the New Testament for He is the subject of the Bible and reveals God and His salvation. One cannot know God but through Jesus Christ and one cannot know Jesus Christ today but through the Bible. In verse 23, "the Word of God" is referring to the Bible which is about Jesus Christ. The context makes this clear. Verse 25 explains what is meant by the Word ("logos") of God in verse 23. The "word" in verse 25 is "rhema" in the Greek. They ("logos" and "rhema") are synonyms when referring to the written word.

Since "rhema" is used it is obvious it is the written word that believers should preach to every creature which of course is about our Saviour Jesus Christ. But this verse goes on to be even more specific that it is the written word when it says, "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Peter 1:25b.

D. Acts 16:30b-31a.

The jailor at Philippi after hearing Paul and Silas asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16:30b-31a. In Titus 3:5b we are told, "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." These verses make it clear that regeneration and conversion come at the same time. God saves a person by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and a person is converted and saved when he hears the word and believes. One is not saved until the Spirit regenerates and one is not saved until one hears and believes the gospel message.

E. The Raising of Lazarus and the Dry Bones.

The truth is seen in the raising of Lazarus. Jesus raised Lazarus and yet Lazarus heard and came forth. The power of Jesus enabled Lazarus to live and as soon as he had the power to live he heard the word of Jesus and came forth. There was no time between the giving of life by Jesus and the living of Lazarus by hearing the word of Jesus, John 11:39-44.

The living of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 teaches the same great truth. The Spirit gave life so that the bones might live but they didn't live until they heard the preaching of Ezekiel.

F. The Withered Hand and Other Scriptures.

Faith in Christ is caused by the Holy Spirit using the message of Christ. The Holy Spirit works within the person and someone tells the person about Christ and urges the person to believe on Him. When he believes on Jesus that is the very moment the Spirit gave the power for the dead sinner to have spiritual life. This truth is seen through out the Bible many, many times. Many miracles illustrate this. The man with the withered hand could not move his hand but Jesus spoke and said "Stretch forth thine hand." The man had no power to move his hand. Jesus gave the power to raise it like the Holy Spirit gives the power to have new life in Christ. Jesus spoke and asked him to obey at the same time he gave power to move his hand and he did and stretched forth his hand just as the gospel is spoken and the person is told to believe on Christ and he obeys by believing on Christ and at the moment he is born again. Mark 3:1-5.

Note a few other Scriptures and some comments concerning this subject. Romans 1:16 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. God in saving or giving the new birth to a soul uses the gospel message as His power. The one saved believes the gospel message by the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 5: 24 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." The word of God must be heard and believed for a person to have eternal life.

John 6:63 says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The Bible message is spirit, non material, and is life and produces life. God the Spirit uses it to bring forth life.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "for the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and

marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Bible message is quick, that is, living, and it convicts and brings life. It reveals all about us because its author, God, knows all about us, verse 13.

2Timothy 1:10 says, "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The gospel message tells about Jesus' life, death and resurrection and in doing so brings to light or our understanding what life and immortality is.

The gospel does many things: it saves, Romans 1:16; James 1:21; it brings life to the spiritually dead, John 5:24; 6:63; it brings understanding concerning life and immortality, 2Timothy 1:10; it comforts, it corrects, etc. These things are accomplished in an individual when the Holy Spirit uses the Bible to accomplish them. 1Cor. 2:14.

Faith comes by hearing the message of Jesus Christ. Rom 1:17; John 17:20; 8:30. 1Corinthians 4:15 says, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Paul in a figurative sense is the "father" of those that were saved through his ministry of the word. They were regenerated "through the gospel" he preached. Since God used him in the beginning of their new life, he is their "father" figuratively speaking. The Holy Spirit with the gospel causes new life. Philemon 10 says, "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus whom I have begotten in my bonds." The same truth is taught here as in 1Cor. 4:15.

V. Faith In Christ Is the Result of Election.

A. No Accident.

The believer in Christ is not saved by accident but according to God's eternal plan. Before the world was created, God chose to save the ones who are saved by grace, Eph.1:3-6. Not only were the persons chosen to be saved but also the means whereby they would be saved. The means are the gospel and the Holy Spirit, 2Thess.2:13. A person cannot take the attitude that if one is elected to be saved, he will be saved regardless of anything else. Election is not salvation but unto salvation. The elect are not saved or children of God in reality, until the plan of God is carried out. The elect are saved in God's plan but they are not saved in fact or in reality until they hear and believe in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although one may be elected to salvation and new life in Christ, he is lost and God's wrath is upon him until God's plan is carried out in his life. God's plan for the elect is that they might hear the gospel and believe on Christ as their Saviour by the power of the Spirit. We know that God's plan for the elect will be carried out. His faithfulness, power and knowledge make it certain. But, the plan must and will be carried out. God's people have a responsibility and have a part in God's plan as God leads us to witness to the lost everywhere. God's Holy Spirit will make the witness of God's Word effective in the life of every one of God's elect in His time. The witness is not to seek to figure out who the elect are and then preach to them but to witness to everyone and urge everyone to believe on Jesus Christ as Saviour. God will carry out His plan perfectly. That is His business alone. Many passages of Scripture teach this.

B. II Thessalonians 2:13b.

II Thessalonians 2:13b says, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." God's plan for the ones chosen is revealed in this verse. They were to be saved by the work of the Spirit and believing the truth.

C. John 6:37a; James 1:18a; Acts 13:48b.

John 6:37a teaches that the elect will come to Jesus. To come to Jesus in this passage means to believe on Him as Saviour. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." "All that

the Father giveth me" are those that God elected to come to Jesus. James 1:18a teaches that God willed or planned to give new life through the hearing of the message of the Bible. New life believes on Jesus as Saviour immediately. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Acts 13:48b reveals that everyone ordained to eternal life will believe in Christ. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." .

Our responsibility is to go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone. As far as we know all living at this time may be God's elect. Those who die in unbelief we know are not God's elect or they would have believed the gospel while in this life. God knows all whom He has elected. We only know them as they believe on Jesus Christ as their Saviour from sin.

Paul preached and suffered to get the gospel to the elect that they might "obtain the salvation" which is eternal. These people were chosen to be saved eternally but they did not obtain the eternal salvation until Paul preached the gospel to them and they believed on Jesus Christ as their Saviour. 2 Tim. 2:10. God has elected a people to be saved and has given us a responsibility to preach the gospel to every person. Those that believe on Christ do so because God elected them before the foundation of the earth. The plan is not carried out nor the salvation obtained until a person believes on Jesus Christ as his Saviour, Eph. 1:3-14.

VI. Faith In Christ Brings Great Blessings.

A. Great Blessings.

All of the blessings that Christ accomplished for us by His perfect life, death, and resurrection are ours by faith in Christ as our Saviour. Without faith in Christ none of these blessings are ours.

1. Life. John 3: 36.

2. Salvation. Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 1:16-17. Rom. 8:24 says, "For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

A person who believes in Jesus Christ is saved by faith. His soul is saved immediately but his body will be saved at the second coming of Christ when the Lord gives us a new body. The salvation we receive in Christ by faith is not complete until the second coming. The second coming with the completion of our salvation is our sure hope or expectation because the Lord has promised it and He cannot lie. We are saved completely by hope. This passage is speaking about the completion of our salvation, receiving our new body at the second coming. The previous verse makes this clear, verse 23. The word "hope" in verse 24a is dative and is more clearly translated "in hope". We are saved in the present in our souls by faith in Christ as the means, in hope or expectation of its completion in our bodies when Jesus comes again. The reason we have this sure hope is because we have faith in Christ to save us. Without faith in Christ we have no hope of a new body.

We have eternal life in our soul the moment we believe in Jesus Christ. We do not have eternal life in our body until the second coming of Christ. We are saved now by faith in Christ "in hope of eternal life" in our body at the second coming. This future hope is: sure because God cannot lie and He has promised it to all believers in Christ. Titus 1:2.

3. Adoption. Gal. 3:26-4:7.

4. Justification. Rom. 5:1; Gal. 3:24b.

5. Forgiveness. Acts 10:43; Rom. 3:25

6. Sanctification. Acts 26:18.

B. Only For the Believer.

None of these blessings belong to the unbeliever. If the unbeliever was chosen to be saved by God before the creation of the world then he will in time believe on Christ as his Saviour. But, until he believes in Christ these blessings are not his except in God's plan and only God knows His plan until it is revealed. The man who has a plan to build a house does not have a house with its blessings until the plan is carried out. So, the person God has planned to save before the foundation of the world does not have the blessings of salvation until God has carried out the plan in time. These blessings are only for the believer.

VII. Faith in Christ Is an Act of the Will.

A. Those with will.

The person who believes on Jesus Christ as Saviour wills to do so. The person who wills to believe on Jesus does so because of the power of the Holy Spirit. God gives life as a gift of grace through the Spirit and at that moment the person wills to believe on Jesus Christ whom he has heard about or is hearing about.. Those who hear the gospel and will not believe on Jesus Christ as Saviour will not do so. They will not because of their sinful nature. Rev. 22:17; Matt. 16:24; John 1:12-13; Phil 2:13; Rom. 9:16; John 5:40.

B. Those Without Will

When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden his sin affected all of his descendants and the earth over which God had given him dominion. Genesis 3:17-19. Romans 8:20-22 says, "For the creature was made subject to vanity, **not willingly**, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The earth cannot will to sin and yet because of its connection with Adam it received effects of his sin. The three words underlined in these verses are the same word in the Greek and all mean creation. Only one has been translated creation but all should be.

Because of the grace of God and the work of Christ the earth receives the blessings of Christ's salvation. The earth was not guilty of Adam's sin but it received the effects of it because of being associated with Adam. Christ was not obligated to the earth nor was the earth deserving of Christ's redemption and its blessings and yet by grace it received it. The earth received the effects of Adam's sin **without willing** the sin and its effects and it will receive the effects of Christ's righteousness **without willing** to receive them. Rom. 8:20-22.

Babies come into this world with the effects of Adam's sin. They have a sinful nature and some die before they will anything. Because they are associated with Adam they justly receive these effects, Romans 5:12-14. Yet, they did not will the sin of Adam nor its effects. If they die before they will any sin of their own they will receive the effects of Christ's work of redemption without willing to receive them. God deals with those without will as He does with the unwilling earth. They receive the effects of Christ's redemption by grace but without will.

When the baby comes to a time that it wills to sin then to be saved it must will to receive Christ as Saviour by faith. The gospel message is not addressed to those without will. We are not to preach to rocks, rivers, trees, etc. Nor are we to preach to new born babies. These are all without will. We should teach babies and children from the earliest age and pray for them so that they might trust Jesus as their Saviour as soon as they are able to will. When a child comes to the place that it wills to sin it has sins of its own as well as the sinful nature received at birth. The child should then will to believe on Christ as Saviour but he won't because of his nature unless God's grace is manifested toward him and enables him by the Holy Spirit to do so. God is not obligated to do this to anyone but He will have mercy upon whom He will. No one is treated

unjustly by God but those who receive of His mercy and grace will to believe on Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, Romans 9:14-18.

Those without will such as babies or those who never become competent to will even though physically mature have no sin of their own even though they have a sinful nature. Every sin is an act of the will. The Bible teaches us that the man who kills another man when the head of his ax comes off and hits him is not guilty of murder or sin because he did not will to do this. There was no penalty for this man for he did not sin because he did not will it. However he still was spared because he went to a city of refuge which is a type of Christ, Deut. 19:1-10.

All are born with a sinful nature and the effects of our forefathers are visited upon us but the penalty of our fathers' sins are not our penalty and we do not go to Hell for them. A person goes to Hell for his sins, the ones he willed. Ex. 20:5-6; Ezekiel 18; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Romans 1:18; Mark 7:20-23.

The Bible says, "All have sinned," Rom. 3:23a. The "all" here refers to all men that are capable of willing. The "all" does not refer to Christ as the Bible makes clear; He didn't will any sins. It does not refer to God the Father or the Holy Spirit. It does not refer to trees, rocks, rivers, babies, etc.

The Bible says, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John 3:36b. This refers to those who have will. This does not refer to rocks, birds, lakes, infants, etc. Rom. 1:18.

God has one plan of salvation which is by His grace through Jesus Christ. This salvation is applied to those with will when they believe on Jesus Christ as Saviour. This salvation is applied to those without will without believing on Jesus Christ. The soul of the one who dies in infancy goes to Heaven to be with the Lord because of God's grace and the work of Jesus Christ. This one will believe on Jesus when made capable in Heaven. The details of how God deals with these are not revealed but it is revealed that those without will are saved by the grace and redemption of Jesus Christ.

David knew his baby that died as an infant went to Heaven. He said inspired by the Spirit of God, "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," 23. 2 Samuel 12:22-23. David was a saved man and went to Heaven at death.

The Lord has revealed enough to us to know that those without will share in the salvation in Christ and infants who die as infants go to Heaven. This comforts us and we can praise His grace in this. We would desire to know more but he is not pleased to reveal more now, Deut. 29:29.

When does a child become responsible and commit or will sins? We don't know so we should seek to teach them very early the things of God. We do know though that when a child is born there are many things it does not have the capacity to do. The potential is there but not the capacity. An infant can not father a child or give birth to a child. It can not speak, read or understand. It does not have teeth. It also does not have the capacity to will a sin.

VIII. Faith In Christ Is Pictured by the Ordinances,

A. Baptism.

The two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper picture the believer's faith in Christ. Baptism is a likeness or picture of a person's faith in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection for him. Romans 6:3-5. Note the word "likeness" in this passage. 1 Peter 3:21. Note we are not saved by baptism literally. Baptism is a "like figure." Baptism does not put away the filth of the flesh, that is, our sins. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience. You must have the good

conscience first then that conscience answers that it wants baptism. You must be saved before you can have a good conscience, Heb. 9:14. Baptism is desired by the saved because the saved want to obey Christ and give a picture of their salvation.

After Paul was saved he was told to be baptized to "wash away thy sins" in Acts 22:16b. He was to wash them away in a picture since he was already saved and the blood of Christ had already washed away his sins. 1 John 1:7b.

B. The Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper pictures the believer's faith in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The body is pictured by the unleavened bread that is eaten. It is to remind one of the perfect sinless body of Christ that was nailed to the cross to suffer for his sins. The eating pictures the person's faith in Christ's body. The blood is pictured by the wine or fruit of the vine that is drunk. It is to remind one of the perfect blood of Christ that was shed to cleanse us from all our sins. The drinking pictures the person's faith in Christ's blood.

Matt. 26:26-30; 1 Cor. 11:23-34. Note that this is to be done "in remembrance of me" and it is to "shew the Lord's death till he come." These statements make it clear that it is only a picture of the body and blood of Christ and our faith in Him. The ordinances do not save or help save. They symbolize the person's faith in Christ.

Conclusion:

In conclusion we need to examine ourselves. These questions can help us in this examination. Am I saved according to what the Bible teaches? Am I teaching others the Bible way of salvation?

Some religious leaders had taught the people in Galatia a wrong way of salvation and Paul led by the Spirit of God condemned false plans of salvation in the strongest language. Note Galatians 1:6-9. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

The main problem in Galatia was not the facts of the Gospel, how Christ died and rose again but how one receives the salvation Christ procured. The false teachers said you must be circumcised and keep the law to be saved by Christ. Through the centuries there have been many false teachings concerning the way of salvation. Some have changed the facts about who Christ is and what He did to save us but many times the false teaching has been concerning how one receives Christ's salvation. Some have said you must be baptized and do good works. Others have said you must go through certain ceremonies, etc. Some have said you need do nothing to receive eternal salvation. If you are going to be saved you will be saved regardless of any one bringing the message of salvation to you and your receiving it by faith. The Word of God pronounces a curse on any one that changes the way of salvation in any way. It is well that each of us examine ourself to see that we have received Jesus Christ by faith to save us eternally. We need to be sure we are teaching others the truth concerning salvation. The Bible is clear; eternal salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ.