

**07/23/06 – Exert from “Manna” - What direction does faith cometh?
Romans 10:17 by Larry White**

In reading the scriptures the word “faith” and “belief” are used many times, and this sometimes causes confusion. To help eliminate the confusion the context needs to be determined; sometimes faith does mean trust or belief in/on Christ but there are other times it does not. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen according to Hebrews 11:1. There are several different usages of the word faith in the New Testament, and I see the following:

1. The gift of faith : Gal 5:23
2. The faith(fullness) ***OF*** Christ
3. Having Faith ***IN*** Christ : Trust
4. The faith as in a belief system (Jude 3, Rom 3:3)

The preceding “faiths” must be applied correctly. What is faith? The gift of faith is the fruit of the Spirit. If a person doesn’t possess the Spirit of God, or if they are not born again (Rom 8:9), or not saved, then they have no faith. If faith is fruit of the Spirit, then if a person is not born of the Spirit they can not have faith. Experience and scripture do teach that not all men are born again:

2 Thessalonians 3:2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

All men may be able to trust chariots, horses, wealth, etc., but the scriptural use of the word “faith” always has God as the object; hence, you can trust in chariots and horses but you can only have faith in God and His Christ. Only those born again have the ability to trust Christ. Men by nature do not have the “gift of faith” and “natural faith” is not scripturally supported, and therefore natural faith is either speculation or heresy. Having faith in Christ or believing in/on the name of Christ is the EVIDENCE of faith or EVIDENCE of possessing the Spirit of God. Having faith in Christ is one of the EVIDENCES of eternal salvation - not the cause of it (See John 3:16, John 5:25, John 6:47 , 1st John 5:1).

John 3:16 John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 5:24 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.

John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

1 John 4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

1 John 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

In the previous verses, the parallel teaching expressed is believing is an evidence that a person is a child of God. God is already dwelling in him, and they are current possessors of eternal life. The preceding scriptures teach ASSURANCE of salvation - not the BASIS of salvation. One that believes in Christ is already born again and is just before God. The scripture doesn't say "If you will believe, then you will get eternal salvation," nor does it say "This is how to get eternal life." The Lord also has taught eternal life as a gift (John 10: 27-28, 17:3) not as an offer. The gospel is the invitation for those that have been born again to receive the teachings of Christ and manifest their position in Christ by their practices/lifestyle to glorify their Father which is in heaven. These righteous practices are always after being born again (John 1:11-12). The passage doesn't say, believe so you will get "saved" from the wrath of God. The text teaches that those that believe (present tense) have passed from eternal death to eternal life. This is ASSURANCE of salvation - not a way to "get" saved from hell. Please remember that belief is one of three scriptural evidences of possessing eternal life.

Belief is an Evidence of having eternal life, but what is eternal life? Eternal life (eternal salvation) is to "know" Jesus Christ (John 17:3). This knowing doesn't mean information about Christ, but having an intimate knowledge or relation to Christ. This comes by the new birth, which occurs apart from the preaching of the Gospel of the resurrection of Christ, because Jeremiah and John the Baptist were born again in the womb of their mother before they heard any preacher in either the OT or NT.

How does one believe? In John 6, the Lord said believing is a work of God, but a work nonetheless. There must be evidence given in order to believe. However, believing is a righteous work, and as a reminder we are NOT saved (delivered) from the wrath of God by our righteous works (cf. Titus 3:5, Rom 9:16). Before a person can understand the scriptural or spiritual evidences they must possess the faculties to discern them, and man by nature doesn't have these (cf 1st Cor 2:15-19) nor does he have the gift of faith. So before a person can believe they must be born again by God and the new birth is instantaneous (not a process) and ALWAYS precedes believing. When person is born again by the Holy Ghost, then that second they are fit to go be with the Lord regardless if they learn information about the life of Christ or not. The following two conditions must be true before belief in Christ can occur:

1. A person must be born again in order to have the gift of faith.
2. The scriptures (preached or studied) be blessed by the Spirit to illuminate the teaching

3. If the person is personally offended by the teacher, minister, instructor then they will turn the individual off and therefore will not listen. Therefore it is phariseeical to state “if they don’t believe me” then they go to hell.

If one of these three items does not happen then there will be no belief in the finished work of Christ. It is possible for a born again – “saved” individual to die physically without believing the testimony of Christ but remember eternal life is have intimate or relational knowledge of Christ which God teaches them Himself (Cf John 17:2-3, 6:45) For example if the minister doesn't present consistent evidence with the blessing of the Spirit, there is no belief on the name of Christ. That is why is critical to pray for the Holy Ghost to empower the minister and aid the listener to understand the scriptures.

You may say, that “I thought preaching was necessary for eternal salvation for faith comes by the preaching of the word?” The assumption I made for years was that in Romans 10, the deliverance under consideration was deliverance from the wrath of God, but it isn't. If you read the end of Romans 9 and the first part of Romans 10, you see that the deliverance needed is from confusion and self-righteousness, and in Romans 10:11 it states whosoever believeth shall not be ashamed. There is more than one “salvation” taught in the scriptures. In Romans 10, eternal salvation is NOT under consideration, but another salvation for the child of God to experience by being obedient and confessing Christ.

How does faith come by the preaching of the word? I used to believe that the Spirit would impart the gift of faith to the spiritually dead sinner by the use of the minister, in which the Holy Spirit would woo or take up “temporary residence” for a time, and if a person didn't choose correctly then the Holy Spirit would leave. I now find this to be an unscriptural teaching. If man is responsible for any part of eternal salvation, then the believer and/or preacher is also is worthy of worship and glory. When the Holy Spirit quickens a dead sinner to life in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:1), He creates the new man (Eph 4:13) – they are born again, and so shall they ever be! If it were true that the minister imparts the gift of faith to the dead sinner, then to be consistent with this teaching of “the Spirit/faith is imparted to a dead sinner by the preaching of the gospel” then you would be forced to believe one of the following choices:

1. Those who can't receive the preached word (mentally handicapped, babies, etc) are saved in a different way than others - but according to John 3:8 everyone must be born again the same way.
2. Those who don't believe the preacher go to hell.
3. The word “gospel” must be altered from its scriptural definition to justify the preceding choices.

The end of the matter is that those that hold to that the gift of faith is imparted by the preaching of the gospel basically state: No preached Gospel no eternal salvation.

But what does the scripture say? In context, Romans 10:8 states the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart. If this word of faith is in the heart, then that individual is already born of God and saved from the wrath of God. If the word of faith is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, then the preacher is too late to impart it to you! So the salvation (deliverance) under consideration is not to be born again, but to be delivered from self-righteousness and confusion, because that is found in the text. This salvation is obtained by a child of God believing in the finished work of Christ and declaring only Christ for his/her salvation. So, the two conditions that must be met before belief in Christ are still needed, but a person that has the word of faith in their heart is already born again, so now they need evidence. Hence the preacher role; The preacher comes and preaches the message of truth the word of faith, in which the evidence is presented from the scriptures, which confirms/agrees with the Spirit of God in the child of God that “that this is true”, and “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”

What is the direction of faith? Faith doesn't come into the dead sinner, so that he will believe to the eternal saving of his soul. But, faith (belief) comes out of the child of God when he declares the righteousness of his Savior and his Lord. That is the direction of the word “cometh” in Romans 10:17. The gift of faith doesn't come into the spiritually dead sinner to believe and is born again BUT the faith comes out of the child of God professing (exercising the gift of faith) faith in Christ. This person is then saved (delivered) from establishing and declaring his own righteousness, for they are now declaring the righteousness of Christ, and he then is delivered in his life from being confounded, ashamed, and declaring his self-righteousness.

This means that the only testimony that glorifies God is, “I was saved by Christ,” not, “I believed,” or, “I was baptized,” for even though these are righteous works. If we state what we have done, then we are still declaring our righteousness and not Christ's. The purpose of the Gospel is to teach and inform the children of God that Christ has saved them by grace, and for them to confess His righteousness -not their own.

The gift of faith is given by the grace of God in the new birth. Belief is the evidence of gift of faith, and therefore an evidence of being born again. Now this is why the promise/assurance of the believer in his salvation is spoken about repeatedly in scripture. No one ever does in order to become - we do because of what we are. This means a person doesn't perform righteous works such as believing to get, prove, or convince God to save us - but the righteous works prove to ourselves and assure us of our salvation, but our works are never the basis of our salvation. This assurance that comes by the gospel gives us hope in Christ, and the wonderful joy to rest in His great work of redemption that He accomplished, obtained, and secured for His people.