

## FAITH OF JESUS OR FAITH IN JESUS

In the study of the Scriptures many times we pay little attention to how words and phrases are translated differently by the various translations available to us today. If one who believes “If it isn’t the King James Version it isn’t the Bible,” as was proudly stated on a well-worn bumper sticker, then little, if any, attention is given to how words are translated. We are not a great fan of the KJV, but admittedly, it is more correct in some passages than the modern translations such as the NASV and the popular NIV. (However, in the Scriptures we site from the KJV that translates “the faith of Jesus” the NASV has a marginal note translating it “the faith of Jesus.”). A case in point is the translation of the title we have chosen for this article: *Faith of Jesus or Faith in Jesus*. When used about our justification it makes an important difference. “Faith in Jesus” speaks of our faith as Gods reason for justifying the guilty. “Faith of Jesus” is what Jesus believed about himself and what his faith lead him to do, ending in crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. His faith, and not the faith of man, is the basis of God justifying the sinner. In Galatians 2:16 the KJV reads: “A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by *the faith of Jesus Christ*, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by *the faith of Christ*, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” The modern versions translate this as *faith in Christ*. Note Paul’s argument is we are not justified by the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. He adds “even we have believed in Jesus Christ” he then says the purpose of our believing in Christ is that “we might be justified by the faith of Christ.” We do believe *in* Christ, but it is not our faith that is the basis of our justification, but our belief in “the faith of Christ” as defined above. The faith of Christ is what he lived out in his life as a man, revealing the gospel of God and ending in the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. Robert Hatch in *Reflections of a Generic Christian* writes: “What Jesus believed and what his faith lead him to do—to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and as a result of its rejection, to die on the cross and be resurrected by his God, became both the instrument God uses to justify believers and the content of the Word. As such the faith of Jesus is the object of the Christian’s faith.”

Paul is making a distinction between the roles of “the faith of Christ” and “faith in Christ.” We have faith in Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. On this verse (Gal. 2:16) Prescott F. Jernagane in an article published in *the Biblical World* entitled: *The Faith of Jesus Christ* wrote: “Paul carefully discriminates between ‘faith in Christ’ and ‘faith of Christ.’ The former (we have believed in Christ) regards as the conscious effort of the believer, and the latter (that we might be justified by the faith of Christ), as the spontaneous utterance of the indwelling Christ. Christ here attributes justification to a faith that works through but not originate with man. Faith viewed merely as a conclusion of the intellect or voluntary act of the will might be regarded as a ‘work of the law.’ Guarding against this misconception, Paul contrasts with ‘the works of the law’ the ‘faith of Jesus Christ.’ Instead of using an expression emphasizing the human elements of faith, lest the faith would be supposed independent of the believer’s cooperation, he immediately adds: ‘we have believed in Jesus Christ.’ Yet again

to avoid the ascription of faith exclusively to human initiative he continues; this belief of ours is not a mere product of human volition, but the act of Christ in us that we might be justified by the faith of Christ. With Paul, then, faith is the combining of Christ’s gift and man’s effort.”

It is these facts that are the basis of our justification, not in keeping the law. The contrast is not between “the works of the law” and our faith, but between the works of the law and “the faith of Christ” as worked out in his life and ministry. In Philippians 3:9 Paul contrasts righteousness by the law and righteousness through the faith of Christ, this, he says is “the righteousness which is of God by faith.” In Romans 4:16 Paul speaks of “the faith of Abraham.” This is the same original Greek construction as “the faith of Jesus Christ” in Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:22. So the question is, are we justified by our *faith in Jesus* or by *the faith of Jesus*? To many we are “splitting hairs” and it really makes no difference, so why bother? We hope to show by this article it is important and does make a difference.

The question is: Why did Jesus have faith? Did he not have “all knowledge” from eternity before he was born? This question is based upon the conclusions the third and fourth century “Church Fathers” instituted when they exchanged the Biblical teaching of one God for a triune God and brought upon the church the confusing doctrine of the trinity in the Nicean creed that states: Jesus is “The son of God, begotten from the Father before all the worlds.” This contradicts and annuls the record of Luke when Mary was told by the angel she would have a son: “And Mary said to the angel, ‘how can this be since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered and said to her ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you and the holy thing begotten shall be called the son of God’” (Luke 1:35), (from the Greek text). Hebrews 1:5 quoting from Psalm 1:7 states: “You are My beloved son, today I have begotten you.” Note: “*Today*” (in this age) I have begotten you, not in eternity as the third century Bishops would have us believe. It is not reasonable, nor Scriptural to say a person can be begotten twice. As Alexander Campbell wrote in *The Christian Baptist (May 1827)*: “The name Jesus, Christ, or Messiah, only-begotten Son, Son of God, belong to the founder of the Christian religion, and none else. They express not a relation existing before the Christian era, but relations which commenced at that time. There is no Jesus, no Christ, no Messiah, no son of God, no only-begotten before the reign of Augustus Caesar. Jesus is called the Son of God, not because of an ‘eternal generation’ (which I conceive to be nonsense), but because he was born as the angel described to Mary.”

We say all this to show that Jesus was a normal human child, grew up in a devout Hebrew family and was taught the Old Testament Scriptures as was the practice in that day. It is said of the child Jesus “He continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom and the grace of God was upon him” (Luke 2:40). The thing that would have been unusual in his childhood is that at the age of twelve when he was taken to the temple, he was “sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers” (Luke 2:46, 47). He was also

aware that he was in “his Father’s house” (ver. 49), but “he went home with his parents and was in subjection to them...and Jesus kept increasing in wisdom, and stature and in favor with God and men” (ver. 51, 52). He having “increased in wisdom” shows he did not have it from eternity. All this says Jesus had faith based upon the Hebrew Scriptures before he began his ministry, because “faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the word” (Rom. 10:17). The faith of Jesus is seen when he began his ministry by quoting scripture from Isaiah 61, showing his ministry was the fulfillment of that scripture (Luke 4:17:21). During the course of his ministry the gospels show he quoted scripture from the Old Testament over 40 times from 24 different books, showing his faith in the Word. He believed the Old Testament to be divinely inspired, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). He referred to Scripture as the “The commandment of God” (Mark 7:8), and as “the word of God.” (Mark 7:13). When he was tempted by Satan, he did not use some “eternal power” inherent within him to answer Satan, rather he answered him with Scripture from Deuteronomy chapters 8 and 10. In fact Jesus did none of his mighty works because he was the son of God, rather as a man whom “God *anointed with the Holy Spirit and power*, and he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, *for God was with him*” (Acts 10:38). Jesus did not claim power as inherent within himself: “I can of myself do nothing, the Father that dwells in me does the work” (Jn. 5:30), “I have not come of myself” (Jn. 7:28), “He that sent me is with me” (Jn. 8:29), “I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak the things the Father taught me, and He who sent me is with me, I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (Jn. 8:28, 29). Jesus, as the son of man, had complete and unequivocal faith in his Father, which carried him through his ministry, his death, resurrection, and ascension. It is this faith Paul is contrasting with the works of the law as a means of our justification. So, Paul passes from “belief in Christ” to “the faith of Christ” (Gal. 2:16), and thence to the indwelling of Christ. “I live yet not I but Christ lives 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” (Gal 2:20). Another important scripture in Galatians is chapter 3:22: “But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by *faith of Jesus* might be given to all them that believe.” The modern versions translate this “...that the promise by *faith in Jesus Christ* might be given to those who believe” (NASV). If they are “those who believe” they already have faith in Jesus, so how could “faith in Jesus” be given to them? This makes Paul erroneously repeating himself. Since Jesus “had to be made like his brethren in all things” (Heb. 2:17), and he, being the “last Adam” (I Cor. 15:45), his response to doing the will of God (Heb. 10:7, 9) was a life of faith. This we think answers the question: “Why did Jesus have faith?”

Wherever the KJV rightly translates the term “*the faith of Jesus*” instead of our “faith in Jesus” it is in the context of our being justified, that is, being made righteous. Romans 3:21, 22: “Now the righteousness of God is manifested, even the righteousness of God, which is by *faith of Jesus Christ* unto all them that believe...” The faith of Christ that was demonstrated in his ministry, resulting in his death and resurrection has revealed the saving righteousness of God and is the reason for our justification. The scripture states: “there is none righteous, no not one” (Rom. 3:10). Yet of the believer it is stated: “By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God and *righteousness and sanctification and redemption*” (I Cor. 1:30). Further, II Corinthians 5:21: “for He made him (Christ) who knew

no sin to be sin on our behalf, in order that that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Also, Romans 5:19: “By the obedience of one (Christ) shall many be made righteous.” These two passages illustrate the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy when he stated: “He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one into his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:4-6). The reality of this is seen in Hebrews 10:12, 14,17, 18: “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God...for by one offering he has perfected (made righteous) forever them that are sanctified...and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more. For where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.” Philippians 3:9: The Apostle counted all earthly things as loss that he may “be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is by of the law, but that which is through the *faith of Christ*, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” This righteousness is credited to us on the basis of Christ, not on anything we have done. A parallel is seen in the life of Abraham: “And being fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform. And therefore, it was *credited* to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was *credited* to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be *credited*, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our offences and raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:22-25). The word “credited” is translated “imputed” in the KJV and translated “reckon” and “counted” in other versions, showing that we cannot be righteous (justified, made right with God) by anything we do, but God counts, or accepts, us as being righteous on the basis of the faith of Christ when we believe (Phil. 3:9). This affirms that neither Abraham nor we are righteous, but God accepts our faith and counts it as righteousness. This is, as Paul states, righteousness through the faith of Jesus Christ.

Having said all this, what does it mean, or should mean, to the believer to know they are righteous? We have used the word “righteous” and “righteousness” throughout this article, showing that the believer has been made righteous before God. Another word meaning the same as righteous is the word “justified,” both words meaning basically the same in the Greek language. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* shows both words coming from the root word “to be right with God.” Being “right with God” means we through Christ have “received the *reconciliation*” (Rom. 5:11). (Note: The KJV wrongly translates reconciliation as “atonement.”). What this means to the believer is we are accepted by God as being righteous, that is, “if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” and our sins are not “counted against us” (II Cor. 5:17, 19). We are “not justified by the works of the law, but by *the faith of Jesus Christ*” (Gal.2:16).

Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints who keep the commandments of God and *the faith of Jesus Christ*.” We are not only to “keep the commandments of God” but we are to “keep the faith of Jesus Christ.” That is, we must hold on to the facts revealed as *the faith of Christ*...his life of faith based upon the Hebrew Scriptures, his preaching “the gospel of the Kingdom for which he was sent (Luke 4:43), this gospel that led to his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to the throne of God, where the final step of our redemption was completed (Heb. 9:12-15).