

HOW CAN I BE SURE OF MY FAITH?

Introduction. As a child I loved Jesus, and God gave me some remarkable experiences, but I had some "faith distress," because of a lack of knowledge of God's Word. We read in Hos.4v6., "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." And 1Pet.2v2. tells us, "Like new-born babies, crave for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow up thereby unto salvation." See Heb.5v10-14. This study is an attempt to give knowledge of the way of salvation, and reveal through a study of the Scriptures, how we can be sure of our faith.

Faith in Jesus brings us into God's kingdom, and it is known as saving faith. Acts.16v30-34. Rom.10v5-21. N.B.v9.

God uses many ways to bring people to Jesus and saving faith. Jesus revealed Himself to Paul by open vision; God opened Lydia's heart when Paul preached, and the jailer's mind by an earthquake; God compelled many to believe by mighty miracles. Acts.8v5-13. 9v1-18. 16v14,30-34,40. Rom.15v18-21. Saving faith is personal faith in Jesus; it is miraculous in its effect upon us, for it brings us forgiveness and peace with God. Rom.5v1,2. In Lk.10v17-20., Jesus told the seventy evangelists to rejoice more over their saving faith in Him, which had written their names in Heaven, than over their miracle working faith that had produced miracles in His name. All the other gifts and blessings that come to us, are the result of this primary gift of salvation in Jesus. Eph.2v8,9. Rom.6v23. 8v32. 1Cor.8v9. 9v15.

1. WE MUST DISTINGUISH SAVING FAITH FROM OTHER KINDS OF FAITH.

a. Saving faith is obviously not a demon's faith.

We read in James.2v19., that demons believe that there is a God and tremble in apprehension of judgement, but they resist God's power, purposes and ministries. They tell men to doubt what they know is true.

b. Saving faith is not the faith of a Heathen, or an unbeliever.

The Scriptures tell us that the Heathen know there is a God and a judgement day, but this is not Christian faith. Rom.1v18-32. 2Thes.3v2. Unbelievers place their trust in worldly things, and they reject, and refuse to seek saving faith in Jesus.

c. Saving faith is not the fruit of faith.

The fruit of faith is the natural growth of the seed of saving faith; it is the extension of our faith in Christ's death, to faith in God in all the other areas of our lives. 1Pet.1v23. Rom.1v17. The fruit of faith mentioned in Gal.5v22., is speaking of both passive and active Christian faith. The fruit of faith is an attitude of mind that trusts God daily in every area of life, and this spiritual frame of mind is essential for a powerful exercise of spiritual gifts. Certain manifestations of the gift of faith can only take place through a prayerful, consecrated Christian who is at the peak of spiritual power through prolonged prayer, Bible study and abiding in Christ. Jn.15v7. 14v12-14. Mk.9v20-29. Paul declares in 1Cor.13., that we cannot divorce character from spiritual power without tragic consequences for ourselves and others; those who do so, end up either with a shallow ministry, or even in total spiritual shipwreck, as in the case of Judas and Demas. If our faith and love are transfigured through beholding the glory, love and goodness of God, we will never need to fear such a fate. 2Cor.3v18.

d. Saving faith is not the gift of faith.

The miraculous gift of faith is limited to the area of supernatural miraculous power, it is a temporary faith given to produce a specific miracle; whereas, saving faith is a continuous faith, and if we are faithful, an eternal faith, which like God's kingdom, endures forever. The gift of faith is speaking only of a special area of active faith; it is an occasional and temporary impartation of the Holy Spirit's faith and power to us, to fulfil a specific purpose of God. The gift of faith deals with the spiritual realm and areas where faith is necessary to see, it gives authority and power in the spiritual realm. The gift of faith needs the foundation of saving faith. 1Cor.13v2. The gift of faith also needs the basis of the fruit of faith, which is a quality of character. Great spiritual power inevitably bring great stresses and spiritual conflict into a Christian's life, and this demands some measure of Christian fruit and maturity. The more of the fruit of faith you have, the easier it is to manifest the gift of faith and the other gifts.

e. Saving faith is not the prayer of faith.

The prayer of faith is a manifestation of the fruit of faith, and the prayer of faith often precedes the operation of the gift of faith, and the other gifts of power. Saving faith, the fruit of faith, the prayer of faith, and the gifts of power, are all vital partners in Christian experience. Elijah's earnest prayers of faith brought into operation the power gifts of the Holy Spirit. We read that Elijah prayed "seven times," before the rain came in answer to his prayers. 1King.18v41-46. Elders should pray through for the sick like Elijah prayed for rain. James.5v14-18.

f. Saving faith is simple and uncomplicated personal faith in Jesus and His atonement.

Rom.5v1,2. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, v2. through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (NKJ) "Access" is "prosagoge," a word used for entrance into the presence of a king. Paul gloried in, and preached, a crucified Saviour. 1Cor.1v23. 2v2. Gal.6v14.

1Pet.1v17-19. "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; v18. knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, v19. but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Mt.1v21. "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (NKJ)

g. Salvation is a gift, and is of faith and not of works. Eph.2v8,9. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Rom.6v23. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul's testimony in 1Tim.1v12-17. "I constantly thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me trustworthy, putting me into service; v13. even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent violent aggressor. But I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; v14. and the grace of our Lord super-abounded, with the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. v15. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving unqualified full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost. v16. Moreover, for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate all His perfect patience, as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. v17. Now to the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen."

2. HOW YOU CAN BE SURE THAT YOU HAVE A GENUINE FAITH.

We will now show the foundations of faith, and how we can test, know, and be sure of our faith. You can be sure of your faith:-

a. When your faith is built on the foundation of genuine repentance. Mt.9v13. Acts.3v19.

Repentance precedes saving faith. Heb.6v1. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." (KJV)

Holman Hunt's picture of Jesus as the light of the World. One of these has been hanging in St Paul's Cathedral since June 1908. A door overgrown with ivy and weeds. The catch that opens the door is on the inside, it is opened by repentance. The foundation of true faith is repentance, which involves a change of mind and life, "metanoia." We become Christians, when we repent of our sins, and ask God to forgive us, and invite Jesus into our lives.

John Baptist preached repentance. Mark.1:4,5. "John did baptise in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. v5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptised of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

Jesus preached repentance. Matt.4v17. "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." **Mk.1v14,15.** "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, v15. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (KJV)

Peter preached repentance. Acts.2v38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (KJV)

Paul preached repentance. Acts.26v20. "But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." (KJV)

God longs that all should repent. 2Pet.3v9. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**" (KJV)

b. When you base your faith on the foundation of the Holy Scriptures.

True faith is founded on the Word and promises of God, not on our feelings. John Wesley learned the valuable lesson that our feelings can vary, but faith in the captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus, can, and should, remain steadfast.

2Peter.1v3,4. "His divine power has generously bestowed upon us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the full experiential personal knowledge (the noun "epignoseos") of Him who called us by means of His own glory and virtue ("arete"). v4. **Whereby there are generously given to us exceeding great and precious promises:** that through these you might become sharers of the divine nature, having escaped by flight the moral decay and corruption that is in the world through lust, covetousness, and greed ("epithumia")."

True faith in God's Word results in a relationship with God, not just a theory about God.

Knowing Jesus and the Father is the start of a transforming relationship. We read in John.17v3., "And this is eternal life, namely, that they might be having an experiential knowledge of you, the only genuine God, and of Him whom you sent on a mission, Jesus Christ." This is a correct translation, for the A.V. "should know," is "ginoskosin," the present active subjunctive of "ginosko," "should keep on knowing," a present continuous relationship and experiential knowledge of God. Knowledge of God the Father comes through Jesus. Jn.14v6-9.

c. When your faith is inaugurated, inspired and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness and judgement. John.16v7-11. "I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. v8. And when he is come, he will reprove and convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: v9. Of sin, because they believe not on me; v10. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; v11. Of judgement, because the prince of this world is judged."

The Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration and the rebirth of our spirits, which were dead through sin. Eph.2v1-3. James.1v13,14.

Nicodemus and Jesus. John.3v3-7. "Jesus answered and said to him, "I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." v4. Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" v5. Jesus answered, "I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. v6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again."

Titus.3v3-5. "For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. v4. But when the kindness of God our Saviour and {His} love for mankind appeared, v5. **He saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but because of His pity and mercy, by the cleansing bath of regeneration and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, v6. whom He bestowed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, v7. that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to {the} hope of eternal life.**" (NAS)

N.B. The Holy Spirit gives us the inner witness to our salvation and the certainty of knowing.

In. Eph.1v14., the Holy Spirit is said to be the "guarantee" of our inheritance. "Guarantee," is "arrhabon," a pledge, deposit, or down-payment, part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest, and which certifies that the full amount will subsequently be paid. **The baptism in the Spirit is a foretaste of Heaven, and a living experience of God.** We read in 1John.4v13., that the gift of the Holy Spirit makes a Christian conscious that God dwells in him, and is proof of our fellowship with God. "Given" is "dedoken," perfect active indicative here, though in 1John.3v24., the aorist "edoken" is used.

1John.5v9-15. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. v10. He who believes in the Son of God **has the witness in himself;** he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. v11. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. v12. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. v13. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **that you may know that you have eternal life,** and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. v14. Now **this is the confidence that we have in Him,** that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. v15. And **if we know that He hears us,** whatever we ask, **we know** that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

Rom.8v16. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

The Holy Spirit is "The Comforter," or better "The Encourager" and Guide of believers in Jesus.

John.14v16,17. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; v17. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (KJV)

John.16v12. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. v13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things so ever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. v14. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you."

Rom.8v28. "And **we know** that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose." (NAS)

The Holy Spirit gives us the desire to seek and thirst for God.

1. Our blest Redeemer, ere He breathed His tender, last farewell, A Guide, a Comforter, bequeathed with us to dwell.
2. He came in tongues of living flame, To teach, convince subdue; All-powerful as the wind He came, As viewless too.
3. He came sweet influence to impart, A gracious, willing Guest; Where He can find one humble heart Wherein to rest.
4. And His that gentle voice we hear, Soft as the breath of even, That checks each thought, and calms each fear, And speaks of heaven.
5. And every virtue we possess, And every conquest won, And every thought of holiness Are His alone.
6. Spirit of purity and grace, Our weakness pitying see; O make our hearts Thy dwelling-place, And worthier Thee.

d. When your faith is proved by a pure and holy life. Jn.17v17. 1Pet.1v15,16.

Crucified flesh. Gal.5v14-26. N.B. v24. Luke.3v8. "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (KJV)

Rom.8v13. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

In 1Cor.6v9-11. Paul remarks on the change of life of the Corinthians, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, v10. nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. v11. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (NKJ)

2Cor.5v17,18. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. v18. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."

Col.3v5-11. "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. v6. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, v7. in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. v8. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy language out of your mouth. v9. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, v10. and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, v11. where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all."

3. THROUGH JESUS WE CAN HAVE VICTORY IN OUR FIGHTS OF FAITH. Heb.4v14-16.

Jesus has been more severely tried and tempted than any of us.

His victories assure us of our victory in trial. 1Tim.6v12. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were called, and did confess a good confession before many witnesses."

Rom.5v3-5. "And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; v4, and perseverance, character; and character, hope. v5. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

Heb.6v12. "Be not slothful, but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

a. Tests and trials of our faith are allowed and ordained by God, and are more precious than gold. 1Pet.1v4-7.

God allows all Christians to experience trials of faith in order to improve our characters, deepen our faith, and give us qualifications for ministry. These trials of life, and conflicts with the powers of darkness, can be particularly expected, when we are seeking a deeper walk with God and a more effective ministry for God. We cannot avoid having battles of faith, and the pressures on our faith and the gloomy doubts that rise, are often not our own fault. They can be caused by the pressures of life that we cannot avoid, such as financial and health problems, difficulties in our home and work circumstances, bereavement, and the opposition and unbelief of the world. 1Tim.6v12. Pressure and problems can be exacerbated through false teaching and unscriptural tradition, and the lack of a Spirit-anointed fellowship, for this leaves us without the essential spiritual support that we need, when we are attacked by the insinuations and lies of the powers of darkness. However, God understands and sympathises with us in all these pressures and difficulties, and our Saviour's intercession and ministry are totally dedicated to us. He is the Author of our faith, and He will perfect and finish it; so let us cling to Him and seek Him with all our hearts. Heb.12v2. Rom.8v26-39. We can surely believe that the God, who gave His Son for us, will with Him also freely give us all things. Rom.8v32. Mt.11v27. 19v26. 21v22. 1Cor.3v21,22. Rev.21v5,7. But beware of roots of bitterness. Heb.12v12-15.

b. The strengthening grace of our Lord to us in our "faith distress."

Paul states that our faith should grow, "from faith to faith." Rom.1v17. However, our faith can at times be severely tested, as Abraham found out, when, "with no grounds for hope, Abraham sustained by hope, put faith in God." Abraham at 99 and Sarah at 90, both laughed in unbelief at the long delayed promise of God, when old age made the promise of a child seem ridiculous. They later embraced and received the promise of God through the gracious faith-building acts of God. A personal visit of the Lord caused them, Rom.4v20., to be "strengthened in faith," "enedunamothe tei pistei," the aorist passive of "endunamoo", to empower, to strengthen, the passive means "to be strengthened, to be empowered," God strengthened and empowered Abraham's faith to receive His promise.. Gen.15v4-6. 18v11-14.

God allows our faith to be tested, because faith grows through overcoming the trials that test it. We should also take great comfort from the fact that God not only takes great pleasure in our faith, He also delights to encourage and sustain it. Jesus was never hard on people with genuine doubts and problems; He treated Nathanael, Nicodemus, doubting Thomas, and multitudes more, with great grace and love; Jesus always met a sincere seeker's need. Jn.1v46-51. 3v1-21. 20v24-29. Mk.9v17-29.

The risen Christ restored the shattered faith of His apostles, and though He chided them for their ignorance of the prophetic Scriptures, and their consequent unbelief, **He was very gracious to them, and encouraged them with a benediction of peace.** Jesus also restored their faith by "showing Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs;" He "appeared to them repeatedly over a period of 40 days talking with them about the affairs of the kingdom of God." Acts.1v3. Lk.24v25-29,44,45. Jn.20v1-31. 1Cor.15v3-8. **We too can experience the strengthening grace of our Lord in our times of trial and "faith distress," and gain extremely valuable qualifications for an anointed ministry in love to those in similar trials.**

c. The difference between "genuine doubts," and "an evil heart of unbelief."

God never despises a genuine seeker who is harassed by doubts and fears. There is a great difference between a "genuine doubter" with "faith distress," and a person who has a spirit of scepticism and "an evil heart of unbelief," who does not want to believe, because of the demands that faith will make upon them. Heb.3v12-19. This is why Jesus severely censured the people who were still full of unbelief, and wilfully unrepentant, after seeing multitudes of signs and wonders from God. Mt.11v20-24. 12v31-45. The honest doubter may want to believe, but they may have real problems and difficulties that keep them from a clear faith. Genuine doubts can give us real distress, anguish and perplexity, for the very reason that faith and authentic experience are so earnestly desired. This longing "faith distress" will certainly lead to a positive and conclusive faith, and an abundant and satisfying experience of God. Every seeking heart in God's gallery of faith has known what it has meant to pray through from genuine doubts to a certainty of faith, and from barrenness to a blessed and fruitful experience. Even godly Enoch had a period of crisis before he started walking with God. Gen.5v21-24. Heb.11v5,6. Jude.v14,15.

4. GOD'S EVER PRESENT PROTECTING LOVE AND SUSTAINING GRACE IN OUR TRIALS OF FAITH.

a. Peter assures us of God's complete and continuous protection. 1Pet.1v4-7.

God has always given special protection to His children; believers in Jesus, "are always kept, protected and guarded by the power of God through faith." The word for, "are always kept" is "phrouroumenous," the present passive participle of "phroureo," a military term, Acts.9v24. 2Cor.v32., meaning, "to guard or garrison," from "phrouros," "a sentinel." **Vincent says, "The present participle indicates something in progress, a continuous process of protection."** Peter assures us that the heirs of God's heavenly kingdom are guarded as securely as our heavenly inheritance.

When Peter tells us in 1Pet.1v4., that our heavenly inheritance is "**reserved**" for us, he uses "teteremenen," the perfect passive participle of "tereo;" which signifies, "taking care of and keeping by guarding." Jesus uses the same word, "tereo," in Jn.17v11., when He prays and asks the Father to guard His disciples. He asks the Father, "**keep** in Thy Name those whom Thou hast given me;" "keep" is "tereson," the aorist active imperative of "tereo." Again, in Jn.17v12., our Lord said, "I kept them in Thy Name;" "I kept," is "eteroun," the imperfect active of "tereo;" "I constantly kept and guarded them." Also in v12, "Those whom thou gavest me I guarded;" "guarded" is "ephulaza," the aorist active of "phulasso;" Christ was their "phulax," their sentinel and guard, and He is still our sentinel and guard; He ever lives to protect us, and intercede for us. Heb.7v25.

In 1Pet.1v5., Peter assures us that Christians are protected and enveloped, "en dunamei theou," "**IN the power of God.**" See Phil.4v7., where "phrouresei," "shall garrison," the future active indicative of "phroureo," is used for the peace of God guarding our hearts. The peace of God can guard our hearts in every situation, because the power of God envelops, guards, and preserves us.

The protecting and transforming friendship of Jesus is a continuous and blessed reality.

Jesus said that no thieves or robbers, could attack our heavenly inheritance; and He assures us that the heirs of the heavenly kingdom are as securely guarded by God their Father as their heavenly inheritance. Mt.6v19-21. Col.1v5. **God cares more for the heirs of the kingdom of Heaven, than He does for the fabric of that kingdom. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His love for us will never pass away.** As God's beloved children we are assured of our heavenly Father's care and protection.

b. John assures us that Satan cannot grasp a born-again child of God.

In 1John.5v18., John writes, "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and **the Wicked One does not touch him.**" "Does not touch him," "ouch haptetai autou," is the present middle indicative of "hapto," **which means to lay hold of or to grasp rather than a momentary touch, which is "thiggano."** **John assures us that the Wicked One cannot lay hold of, or grasp a child of God.** John only uses "hapto," here in 1Jn.5v18., and in Jn.20v17., where Jesus asks Mary to "cease holding and clinging to me;" "me mou haptou" is the present middle imperative of "hapto." Mary was filled with joy at finding our Lord risen and alive, and did not want Him to go away Jesus told Mary that she could not keep clinging to Him, because He had to ascend to the Father. There was no prohibition against Mary touching or holding the Lord, for in Mt.28v9. the women took hold of our Lord's feet ("ekratesan") and worshipped Him. Jesus was so moved by the grief of the women, that His love for them compelled Him to come and comfort them before He ascended to the Father. **We can say with absolute certainty, that the Wicked One cannot grasp or possess a Christian.**

In 1John.5v18., John states that truly regenerated Christians do not live a life of sin, or keep on being dominated by continual sin. See 1Jn.3v6,9. **John is not speaking of an act of sin, which would be indicated by the aorist tense; but the continuous life of sin which is indicated by the present tense, for, "sinneth not," is "ouch hamartanei," the linear (continuous) present active indicative of "hamartano," "to sin."** We have victory over sin through the new birth, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ, this frees us from the law of sin and death. Rom.8v1-3.

{In the phrase, "he that was begotten of God," "ho geneses ek tou theou," "he that was begotten," is "geneses," the aorist passive participle of "going too," which only occurs in the second part of 1Jn.5v18. Some think it is equivalent to the, "he that is begotten of God," "ho gegennemenos ek tou theou," the perfect passive participle of "gennao," which is used in the first part of this verse and 1Jn.3v9., and refers to a Christian who is begotten of God. The perfect tense speaks not only of the act of birth, but also of its continuous present efficacy, from the point of birth up to the present.}

The Majority Text reading, "keeps himself," "terei heauton," means that it is referring to Christians. Others feel that the reading of the Critical Texts, of "terei auton," "keeps him;" makes, "He that was begotten of God," refer to Christ. The New English Bible reads, "It is the Son of God who keeps him safe." There is no problem here, both thoughts are true; we are to keep ourselves in the love of God and our Lord's devoted and continuous intercession for us, is a glorious and wonderful fact. Jude.v21. Jam.1v27. Heb.4v12-16. 7v25. Ps.121v3,4.

N.B. God's children are the apple of His eye.

In Zech.2v8., the prophet says, "He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye;" and Deut.32v9,10. tells us, "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is His inheritance;---He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye." What was true of God's Old Covenant saints, it is certainly true of God's New Covenant saints. Evil spirits believe in God and tremble, none of them would think of trying to hit God in the eye, and when they attack God's dear children they are in real danger. Many demons are in the abyss because they have tried to harm God's dear children.

c. We have a covenant relationship, legal protection, and authority in Jesus.

God has confirmed by an oath His covenant relationship with us, to give us an anchor for our souls. Heb.6v12-20.

We have authority and dominion over Satan and evil through faith in the name of Jesus.

Every knee must bow to the name of Jesus and recognise its authority. Phil.2v9-11. Rom.14v11,12., both from Is.45v23. Jesus said in Luke.10v19., "Behold, I give unto you the authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over ALL the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you." The seventy were not mature Christians, for in v21 our Lord calls them, "neepios," "none-speaking babes, "or" little children." The revelation of this power and authority had been hidden from the wise and prudent and given to babes, because it was good in the eyes of our heavenly Father. They were given complete authority over ALL the power of the enemy, and the powers of darkness were terrified at their coming. The 70 disciples returned with joyful surprise that demons were subject to them in the name of Jesus. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and are safe." Prov.18v10.

N.B. Our Lord definitely states, "nothing shall by any means hurt you." Lk.10v19.

Our Lord Jesus used a very strong triple negative when He said, "Nothing you, in no way shall hurt," "ouden humas ou me adikese." It is made up of, "nothing," "ouden;" "in no way," "ou me;" and "shall not hurt," "adikese," the aorist active subjunctive of "adikeo." "Adikeo," is made up of the negative prefix "a," and "dikos," which means, "to act unjustly, to do wrong, to injure, to harm." It is difficult to adequately convey the strength of our Lord's strong triple negative in English, unless we express it as, "Nothing, in no way, shall not hurt you,"

{The Majority Text has "adikese," the aorist active subjunctive of "adikeo," other texts read, "adikesei," the future active indicative of "adikeo." Both readings are theologically correct; the aorist tense assures us, that at

the point of conflict with evil angels, God will protect us from them; the future tense informs us that God will protect us from harm in any future conflict with the powers of darkness.}

In Mt.10v1., we see that God gave authority, "exousia;" and power, "dunamis;" to the apostles, even though Jesus describes them as "little children" in Mt.11v25,26. These Christian babes had authority over all the power of the Devil in the Name of Jesus. The source of this authority is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, as John tells us in 1Jn.4v4., "He that is in us, is greater than he that is in the world." We are proof against Satan's attacks through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

5. THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES AND LEVELS OF FAITH.

a. The difference between personal faith in God and a faith to minister to others.

The Centurion and the Syrophenician woman. Mt.8v10-12. & 15v21-28. Both of these people had a great personal faith in Christ; indeed, Jesus Himself said that their faith was "great." **Both had desperation of faith because of a deep concern for one they loved. Both had great faith and great love, but they were not able to meet the needs of their loved ones, it took Christ's faith and the gifts of the Spirit that were manifested through Him to meet their need.**

However, it is one thing to believe that God will meet your needs, or other's needs, but quite another thing to have the spiritual ability or faith to take or receive from God, the power to meet those needs. It takes even more faith, and a Divine call, to believe that God will give you the regular exercise of His power and love to meet other's needs.

b. There is the great possibility and opportunity of a real growth in faith, we can go "from faith to faith." **Rom.1v17.** "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith."

2Cor.5v17,18. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. v18. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."

2Pet.2v18. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

In Heb.11., we have a catalogue of the three kinds of godly faith; saving faith, the fruit of faith, and the gift of faith, Heb.11. speaks of faith in general, and shows us the three kinds of faith that please God, all are capable of growth. Heb.11v6.

c. Faith grows by communion with Jesus and the Father.

2Cor.3v18. "But we ALL, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "Transformed," is "metamorphometha," the present passive of "metamorphoo," to transform, to transfigure, in Mt.17v2. and Mk.9v2., it is translated "transfigured." In Rom.12v2., "Be ye transformed," is "metamorphousthe," the present passive imperative of "metamorphoo." **Faith comes by communion with God, not just by confession of truth.**

Heb.12v2. "Looking away to ("eis") Jesus, the author and Perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." "Looking away to," is "aphorontes eis," the present active participle of the verb "aphorao," to look away, it only occurs here and Phil.2v23. in the New Testament. "Eis," suggests we look not just "to," but also "into" all the inner beauty, perfections and glory of Jesus. After being encouraged by the faith of "the cloud of witnesses," we must fix our eyes on Jesus, for he was the one who inspired their faith. Heb.11v26. Jesus is, "the Author" of faith, "ton archegon," from "arche" and "ago," "the one leading off," here Jesus is described as the Pioneer who blazes the way of faith; and as a Leader or Prince in Acts.5v31., and as the Source and Author of life in Acts.3v15., any or all of these meanings can be applied to "archegon." Jesus is the Author and Pioneer of faith and salvation, our Elder Brother and Friend. Rom.8v29. All His life Jesus endured the most severe and unrelenting trials of faith in His conflicts with Satan and evil people, and His countless thousands of victories of faith out of pure love for us are quite beyond praise.

"Perfecter," is "teleioten," Jesus perfects our faith and brings it to the goal. This word is found nowhere else; Paul seems to have coined it from "teleo." In Heb12v3., "Consider," is "analogisasthe," the aorist middle imperative of "analogizomai," which means to reckon up, to count up, to compare, to weigh, it can include the idea of contemplation, it only occurs here in the New Testament.. We are to consider the victorious faith and triumphant endurance of Jesus over all the vicious slander, aggressive speaking against ("antilogian") and other opposition that came against Him. "Endured," is "hupomemenekota," the perfect active participle of "hupomeno," the same verb that is used in verse 2 to speak of our Lord's victorious endurance of the cross.

A similar thought is expressed in Heb.3v1., where we are told to "consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." "Consider," is "katanoesate," the aorist active imperative of the verb

"katanoeo," from "kata," and " nous," and so means to put the mind down on a thing, to fix the mind on as in Mt.7v3. and Lk.12v24. We are to fix our minds on Jesus and thoughtfully and attentively consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. **The epistle to the Hebrews was written to drive home to us, that considering, contemplating, and feeding on Jesus is the answer to all our problems, and the cure for doubt, fear, unbelief, weariness ("kamno"), feebleness ("ekluo"), and fainting in the Christian life.**

Let us be borne along by God to maturity. Be diligent, but rely on God to carry you forward, and not on self-effort. Heb.6v12.. **Heb.6v1.** "Therefore leaving the elementary doctrine of Christ, let us be borne on ("pherometha") to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God." The translations, "let us go on," and "let us press on," give the idea that the effort is all ours, but it is better translated "let us be borne, or carried on," for "pherometha," is the present subjunctive passive of "phero," to bear, to carry; the passive means, to be carried or borne along; so this should be translated, "let us be borne or carried on."

We read in 2Peter.1v20,21. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. v21. For prophecy never had its origin, or came, by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved ("pheromenoi," the present passive participle of "phero") (TEV "under the control," NEB "impelled," Phillips "inspired," NIV "carried along) by the Holy Spirit." "Moved" is the same verb as "came." Literally, "being borne along, "in Acts.2v2., "as by a mighty rushing, ["pheromenes"] wind." It is a favourite word with Peter, occurring six times in his two epistles. 1Pet.1v13. 2Pet.1v17,18,21. 2Pet.2v11. It speaks of someone being powerfully carried along, spoken to, and being used by God.

"Phero," is used in Acts.27v15,17., to describe the ship in which Paul was travelling being "driven" and being "borne along" before the mighty wind in the storm. In Acts.2v2., "phero" is used in the present participle, passive voice, to describe the "rushing" sound of a mighty wind, literally, "a violent wind borne along." The Pythagorean Schools used "pherometha" in the sense of being borne on to a higher stage of instruction, but this Scripture goes much further than instruction, it speaks of a deep experience of God.

God, through Paul, urges us to put up our sails, and allow ourselves to be borne along in the gale of the Spirit to maturity, to an experience of Jesus as our great High Priest. Heb.5v10-14. "Unto perfection," is "epi ten teleioteta," from "teleios," mature, adults, as in Heb.5v14.; it only occurs twice in the New Testament, here in Heb.6v1., and Col.3v14.. The writer appeals to us to leave Christian babyhood, and go on to be mature adult Christians, who are able to masticate solid spiritual food. Paul assures and promises us that the Divine energisings and powerful transforming and enabling gale of the Holy Spirit will impel and carry us along to Christian maturity and Christ-like character. See 2Cor.3v17,18. "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." RSV

CONCLUSION. "Faith which is energised, expressed and works ("energeo") through love," Gal.5v6..

We are saved by faith in Jesus, but love in action is the "more excellent way" to establish faith. **1Cor.12v31. 1Tim.1v19,20.** "Keeping fast hold on faith and a good conscience; which some having rejected and thrust from them have made shipwreck concerning the faith: v20. of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme."

Col.3v12-17. "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; v13. bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. v14. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. v15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. v16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. v17. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (NKJ)

1John.4v7-21. "Beloved, ("agapetoi," "Divinely loved ones." Weust. John uses this tender word three times in this chapter, v1,7,11.), let us habitually love one another, for love comes out of God, and everyone who habitually loves, out of God has been born, and knows God in an experimental way. v8. Whoever does not habitually love in this manner, has not come to know God, because God is love. v9. In this the love of God was clearly manifested to us, in that God sent His Only Begotten Unique Son into the world on a mission, so that we might live through him. v10. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

v11. Beloved, (Divinely loved ones, Weust), since God so loved us, we are under a moral obligation to be constantly loving one another. v12. No man has had the capacity to behold God, but if we habitually love one another, God lives in us and His love exists and is brought to its fullness in us. v13. We know experientially that we abide, live and remain in Him, and He in us, because he has given ("dedoken," perfect active indicative) us of his Spirit as an abiding gift. v14. And we have steadfastly beheld and contemplated, and are

bearing witness that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. v15. Anyone who confesses ("homologeo," the aorist active subjunctive) that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. v16. And we have known by experience and believe and rely on the love God cherishes for us. **God is love. Whoever dwells and lives in love, dwells and lives in God, and God dwells and lives in him.**

v17. In this (abiding communion with God) love is brought to completion among us, so that we will have boldness and confidence on the day of judgement, because as He is, so are we in this world. v18. There is no fear in love. But full-grown perfect love throws fear out and drives it away. For fear brings with it the thought of punishment, so the one who still fears has not reached the full maturity and perfection of love. v19. We love Him, because he first loved us. v20. If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother all the time, he is a liar. For the one who does not keep on loving his brother, whom he has seen, cannot, ("ou dunatai agapain" "is not able to go on loving") love God, whom he has not seen. v21. And this commandment we have from Him; that he who loves God, must love his brother also."

If we desire a true and living faith, we must have a faith which is energised through "agape" love, for as we walk on this "more excellent way," we will experience a deep knowledge and abundant experience of God and His gifts. **"God is love. Whoever dwells and lives in love, dwells and lives in God, and God dwells and lives in him." Gal.5v6. 1Cor.12v31. 1John.4v16.**

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