



# One Faith

---

*After 12 years of research and writing, it is with great joy that we complete this seven-book series with One Faith. Like the central stem of the Temple lampstand, the Faith is central to the Church's proclamation of the other six Christian Truths.*



*Tom Finken*  
Abuja, Nigeria  
August 2023

## Introduction

This book is about *the* Faith—faith with a capital *F*. It is about the basic beliefs of true Christianity—beliefs that unite us. With this book, we’ll identify the fundamental doctrines of the religion Jesus Christ established through the apostles, the same doctrines Christ’s Church declares to this day. You are reading a book that defines the set of teachings the Bible calls *the One Faith*—teachings to which all Christians can say ‘amen’ because we have them in common. Indeed, these doctrines are our *common Faith* (Titus 1:4).

But most who call themselves *Christians* do not know what the Faith is. Perform a poll among Evangelicals and ask whether anyone can name the original Christian doctrines. Most will be clueless. Can you go to a church today and expect to hear the fundamental teachings the Apostles handed down to us? Is there a denomination dedicated to the Faith, the original doctrine of the Apostles? Is there even a website or book that can instruct us?

The situation is disappointing. Indeed, any outsider (an atheist, a secular thinker, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist) would suppose that anyone calling himself *Christian* could easily define the basic Truths of Christianity—but that’s not the case. On the contrary, the Faith as defined for us in the Bible is consistently contradicted in churches around the World every day.

For example, most Evangelicals, when asked what orthodoxy is, will answer simply “the Trinity.” If that means “One God in three persons,” then they’re denying that the One God is the Father—the opposite of orthodoxy. In fact, if someone forms a religious group based upon a contradiction of a fundamental Truth of the Christian Faith, they are heretics. Heresy is a sin mentioned in the NT—specifically named with the Greek word *haireisis*<sup>1</sup> on the infamous list of *the works of the flesh*—sins which will keep people out of the Kingdom of God.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication... heresies... and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21; NKJV).

---

<sup>1</sup> Strong’s Concordance defines this word as “a self-chosen opinion, a religious or philosophical sect, discord or contention” (Retrieved on June 19, 2023 from <https://biblehub.com/greek/139.htm>). Many Bible translations translate this word as *factions* or *sects* in Galatians 5:20, but *heresies* works best.

## 1. Many Will Turn Away from the Faith

Observe how the Faith has become more uncommon as history has marched on. Jesus foresaw the demise of the Faith and warned us to be prepared for a time period called *the Apostasy*, a time when many people in the Church turn from the Faith. It will be a time of betrayal and cold-heartedness in which the primordial hatred of Cain will inspire many within the Church to turn against their brothers and sisters in Christ.

At that time [during the *Seals* of Revelation] many will turn away<sup>2</sup> from the Faith<sup>3</sup>  
and will betray and hate each other.  
(Matthew 24:10)

The Last Times<sup>4</sup> will begin with the Seven Seals, but universal hatred for Christians will begin before the first Seal is opened. That is, a persecution will have already begun prior to the Last Times. Jesus warned us of this, as you will see in the passage below. So, unfortunately, we will be hated by everyone in the World—even by friends and family members. You can tell that this persecution will take place prior to the Seals because Jesus said ‘before all this...’

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from Heaven.<sup>5</sup> But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you

---

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word here is from the root *skandalizo* (which sounds very similar to the English *scandalize* and carries a shade of that meaning). It is a future passive verb, so it is best translated *will be caused to fall away*, or *will be caused to stumble*. It’s very similar to the term *apostatize*. In fact, Jesus was referring specifically to the End Times Apostasy when he used the word *skandalizo* in the passage here.

<sup>3</sup> Although the NIV translation bolsters our argument, in all fairness we have to point out that the translators of the NIV did not give us a literal translation of the Greek in this verse. It’s a decent dynamic translation, but it’s not literal. The Greek does not have the words *the Faith*. A literal translation would read *and then many will fall away*.

The NASB translators chose to translate the Greek word as *will fall away*—and they added a footnote to their translation: *will fall away from the Faith*. In brief, to understand this passage as describing a falling away from the Faith is not the most literal translation, but it’s a very sound interpretation, and some of the top translations supply the expression *from the Faith* to indicate that the Faith is what people will fall away from.

<sup>4</sup> This term *the Last Times* is used in a variety of ways by different Bible authors such as Peter, John, and Paul—so it doesn’t have just one “cookie cutter” meaning. Our position is to use the term *the Last Times* for Daniel’s 70th Week (Daniel 9:24), the infamous 7-year period that starts with the arrival of the Antichrist and ends with the arrival of Christ. That period is defined by a chain of events: the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, and the Seven Bowls of Wrath. We use the term mostly the way Paul uses it, but differently than Peter and John.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus is referring to the Seven Seals and the Seven Trumpets here.

over to synagogues and put you in prison... You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death (Luke 21:10-12, 16).

Most Christians are greatly mistaken regarding the timing of the Rapture—and it's not because they don't understand the Scriptures. They twist the Scriptures and ignore many passages in order to draw the conclusion that we'll be raptured before the Tribulation. Their error stems from a deep-seated unwillingness to be present for the Seal and Trumpet judgments.

The preachers of this "Christianity Lite" or "easy-believism" would like to include the Apostasy among those things we will not have to experience. But the Scriptures are crystal clear on this point: We will not be raptured until after the Apostasy occurs. The following verse will eliminate any confusion you might have about the timeframe of the Rapture. The Apostasy will occur prior to the Rapture.

... the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him [the Rapture]... will not come unless the Apostasy comes first... (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3; NASB).

So, we must be prepared to suffer the Persecution. We must be ready to withstand the Apostasy. Jesus did not speak in vain when he warned us '... many will turn away from the Faith and will betray and hate each other' (Matthew 24:10).

## **2. Worthless in Regard to the Faith**

Besides the Last Times event of the Apostasy, there is also a general trend in Church history towards apostasy. In fact, that big event (*the* Apostasy) will be the culmination of the general trend, a trend in churches you can witness right now around the planet. So, the Apostasy (with a capital *A*) will be the end result of apostasy with a lower-case *a*.

Paul warned us that people who identify as Christians would eventually have nothing more than an appearance of religion. That is, a time will come when Christianity will be but a shell of what it once was. Paul warned us of the Apostasy.

... realize this, that in the Last Days<sup>6</sup> difficult times will come. For people will be... holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power; avoid such people as these. For among them are those who... captivate weak women... always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth.

Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the Truth, men of depraved mind, worthless [literally, *unfit*] in regard to the Faith.

But... their foolishness will be obvious to all...

(2 Timothy 3:1, 5-6, 8-9; NASB)

How will the Church arrive at such a pathetic state? How will it become so apostate so as to support people who ‘hold to a form of godliness’ but who ‘deny its power’—that is, a Church which encourages people to deny *the power of godliness*? Well, the passage demonstrates that the root cause of apostasy is false teachers in the Church. Paul says that these false teachers do at least three things:

1. They hold to *a form* of godliness while they deny the *power* of godliness.
2. They captivate weak women (who are unable to come to a knowledge of the Truth).
3. They oppose the Truth.

Notice the last two things these men do. They have no commitment to the Truth nor do they have the goal of bringing people to a knowledge of the Truth. Instead, they “minister” to gullible women who they can rob. Specifically, these teachers:

... slip into households and captivate idle women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth (2 Timothy 3:6-7; NASB).

---

<sup>6</sup> What does Paul mean by the term *the Last Days*? Peter used it regarding a time period that started at Pentecost and extends until the present time (Acts 2:17), much the way the author of Hebrews used the term in Hebrews 1:2, and James used it in James 5:3. However, Paul used the term for times he was not living in—times which would take place at the end of this present age, a.k.a., the Age of the Gentiles which began during Paul’s generation and will conclude at Armageddon.

They plug these women into constant Bible studies and feed them with an endless amount of reading material. These women are always learning, but due to the burden of sin that weighs on their conscience, they cannot hear the Spirit of God. Instead, they are misled by feelings of guilt.

Paul says that such pastors are *unfit in regard to the Faith*. That is, they are incapable of teaching the foundational truths of Christianity. These false teachers oppose the Truth and therefore are disqualified to teach the Faith. Indeed, the requirement for a deacon (and, by extension, a pastor) is that they be committed to sound doctrine. In fact, they must be tested to see if there is nothing against them before they serve as deacons. In other words, their holiness is the demonstration of whether they are truly firm in the Faith. See that here:

... deacons are to be worthy of respect... They must keep hold of the mystery of the Faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-10).

Have you ever visited a congregation where they are always learning but never coming to the knowledge of the Truth? Have you been in a church where they do lots of Bible study but have no real foundations? Churches with lots of theology but no Truths that transform? If you explain the Foundations (Hebrews 6:1-2) or the unity of the spirit (Ephesians 4:3-6) to the pastors of such congregations, you'll quickly discover how much they oppose the Truth.

In the main passage we're examining (2 Timothy 3), Paul said that certain teachers in the Church are *worthless*. The Church would be better off without them. If someone wanting to become a pastor or deacon cannot pass the test of blamelessness or being above reproach<sup>7</sup> (as required in Titus 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:2) then they disqualify for Church leadership—it's simple. And if they do not *keep hold* of the Faith, then they also disqualify. Those are the simple requirements for being a pastor, but how many pastors today subject themselves to the requirements?

### **Holding to the Faith with a Clear Conscience**

It would be very wrong for us to ignore a truth 1 Timothy 3 addresses: that deacons must hold to the Faith in a certain way. The *way* is with a clear conscience. That is, a deacon's commitment to sound doctrine must be demonstrated through a holy life.

---

<sup>7</sup> Paul gives us the meaning of being *above reproach* with the words *if there is nothing against them*.

The manner in which we hold to the Faith is not the intellectual way. It's not quoting theologians or confessions of faith to show off knowledge. We don't hold to the Faith mentally. We hold to it practically. If we really have it, the Faith will produce genuine results in our lives. It truly sanctifies us—and that's why some, by neglecting their conscience, have lost the Faith. They've run it aground. They've ruined it beyond repair.

This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping [the] Faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to the Faith (1 Timothy 1:18-19; NASB).<sup>8</sup>

### 3. The Mystery of the Faith

We've touched on 1 Timothy 3, but we skipped over a key idea from it. Now, let's return to it to consider why Paul specifically employed the expression *the mystery of the Faith*. What is the mystery Paul spoke of?

Deacons likewise must be dignified...  
holding the mystery of the Faith with a clear conscience...<sup>9</sup>  
(1 Timothy 3:8-9; LEB)

In our attempt to get the right interpretation of this passage, we'll first need to define the Greek NT word *mysterion*. There are 28 NT uses of this word in which it means “something that can only be known by means of a revelation.” There are no cases where the word means “something

---

<sup>8</sup> We'll look more closely at this verse in another chapter.

<sup>9</sup> Compare this to the passages below, which describe how effective the NC is for cleansing the conscience.

... keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Peter 3:16-18).

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the Living God? (Hebrews 9:13-14).

Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way (Hebrews 13:18).

Only sound Christian doctrine (the Faith) brings us the victory over sin characterized by a good conscience. No other system of belief can generate a lifestyle in which a clear conscience is the norm. For example, the religions of Islam and Judaism are able to produce repentance, but they cannot produce the outcome of a clear conscience.



that cannot be understood.” In other words, you can’t translate *mysterion* into the English word *mystery*.

Setting aside matters of Greek vocabulary, the exciting reality is that we will eventually understand all things. That’s why 1 Corinthians 13:12 tells us ‘then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known’ speaking of our life after the Resurrection. So the Bible is a revelation, and not a book of secrets. It was not written to emphasize things we don’t know, but to put emphasis on the things God has revealed.

We said that “something that can only be known by means of a revelation” is a Biblical definition of the word *mysterion*, but where do we get this definition from? Do we get it from a Greek lexicon or a seminary professor? Must we be experts in ancient Greek to obtain an accurate definition? No, we get it from a simple reading of the Bible. Look at how the word *mysterion* is defined by Paul here:

... my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the Everlasting God, for obedience to the Faith... (Romans 16:25-26; NKJV)<sup>10</sup>

We’ll come back to what it means to obey the Faith in a later chapter. For now we’ll focus on how this passage speaks of *the revelation of the mystery*, a mystery that was *kept secret... but now made manifest* and *made known*. What this passage tells us is that the mysteries of the Bible can be understood through God’s revelations. Other Biblical examples of how the word *mysterion* is used include the *mysterions* of: Christ (Ephesians 3:4; Colossians 2:2; 4:3); the Gospel (Ephesians 6:19); godliness (1 Timothy 3:16); marriage (Ephesians 5:32); the Kingdom (Matthew 13:11); the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51); and God’s will (Ephesians 1:9). Each of these were once hidden, but are now revealed to us—and that’s precisely what the Bible means by *mysterion*. See the word defined again here:

My goal is that... they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God... (Colossians 2:2)

---

<sup>10</sup> You may notice that although it contains the words *the Faith*, we are not asterisking (\*) this passage, but that’s only because we count it later in the book. Here we’re only using it to explain what a Biblical mystery is.

At present, Christians have the potential to understand *all* mysteries (1 Corinthians 13:2)—a level of understanding unmatched in history. Neither the patriarchs nor the OT prophets had such knowledge, knowledge which has qualified us to be ‘stewards of the mysteries of God’ (1 Corinthians 4:1). So, in conclusion, we are mystery-handlers. NT believers like us manage mysteries, and one of those mysteries is the mystery of the Faith!

Because we know exactly what the Faith is, we administer it. It’s only by knowing a mystery that one becomes apt to minister it to others. Prior to the Apostles, the Faith was hidden. But it was delivered unto the saints (at Pentecost) once for all, and we have become stewards of it.

#### **4. Acquiring Boldness in the Faith**

So, what we must understand from the passage at hand is that to be a deacon,<sup>11</sup> you must hold firm to sound doctrine. In other words, you need to be firm in the Faith, the teachings of the Apostles as outlined in the NT. Rightly dividing this passage, you can see that there are two other aspects we need to address: the *good standing* and the *great boldness in the Faith* deacons may attain.

Deacons likewise must be dignified...  
holding the mystery of the Faith with a clear conscience, and these also must be tested first... those who have served well acquire a good standing for themselves, and great boldness in the Faith that is in Christ Jesus...  
(1 Timothy 3:8-13; LEB)<sup>12</sup>

The passage says that after a deacon has served well, he or she acquires *a good standing* in the Church. That is, the deacon or deaconess who holds to the Faith earns a good reputation. They merit respect and honor from the brethren. Additionally, deacons acquire *great boldness* in the Faith.

What does it mean to acquire *great boldness*? It’s being able to declare the sound doctrine valiantly. It’s being free from fear as we declare “there is One God, the Father” in the midst of

---

<sup>11</sup> A deacon is someone who administers material resources in the Church so that the pastors will be able to instruct in the Word. Think about it: Someone who does not teach in the Church needs to treasure the sound doctrine in his heart. That’s how precious the sound doctrine must be to us.

<sup>12</sup> Admittedly, this is the second time we are including this passage in the book, but this time we are placing the emphasis on a different use of the term the Faith, so we’re asterisking (\*) it as an independent text.

Trinitarians. It's being able to declare "baptism now saves you" among proponents of faith alone. It's explaining who the Dead are and where they are—and how Jesus will resurrect them—to the brainwashed believers of "we die and go to Heaven." Boldness is quoting the Bible verses 'we will all stand before God's Judgment Seat' and 'each of us will give an account of ourselves to God' (Romans 14:10, 12) to a congregation that only hears the messages "we're saved" and "God loves us."

#### 4. Turning Someone from the Faith

The Faith has faced opposition from the start. We won't only encounter opposition to it during the Apostasy. Since the very first missionary journey of Paul, opposition to the Faith has been rigorous. Paul arrived at the island of Cyprus with his companions Barnabas and Mark and they preached the Scriptures to the island's Roman political leader, the proconsul. That's when they ran into a Jewish false prophet named *Elymas*. Elymas was a sorcerer and attempted to turn the proconsul away from the doctrine of the missionaries, a doctrine called *the Faith*.

The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the Word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the Faith.

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, 'You are a child of the Devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?

Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.' Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

(Acts 13:7-8, 12)

Are you able to recognize that the Scriptures here equate *the Faith* with four other things: *the Word of God*, *everything that is right*, *the right ways of the Lord*, and *the teaching about the*

*Lord?* These expressions are synonymous with *the Faith*. Thus we have found a passage which offers abundant evidence that the two simple NT words—*the Faith*—are packed with meaning.

## **Blindness**

Back to Paul's encounter with Elymas the sorcerer. Did you notice that God's punishment for enemies of the Faith? Blindness. Because those who oppose the Faith are spiritually blind, darkness rules their hearts, so God gives them a nice taste of darkness. People who hate the light deserve the discomfort of darkness. God does this in order to draw them towards the light.

The blindness of Elymas was more than a personal punishment, it was also a testimony to the proconsul. Without this sign, the proconsul may have heeded the voice of Elymas, but God ordered blindness as a sign to demonstrate how dangerous Elymas was as a guide. And so, God pressed the proconsul and others to ask the question:

Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? (Luke 6:39)

Another important observation on what happened is that although the proconsul witnessed a sign, and saw God's power in Paul, he put his trust in the doctrine. That is, the proconsul's belief rested upon what Paul *said* more than what Paul did. The proconsul was a wise man because he set his mind on doctrines and not on circumstances. He received *the Faith*.

## **The Task of this Book**

Let's probe more deeply into the meaning of *the Faith* one Bible passage at a time. We just examined four passages (Matthew 24; 2 Timothy 3; 1 Timothy 3; and Acts 13) that speak of *the Faith*. Now let's continue to explore exactly how *the Faith* is used in the NT. We'll look at a total of 45 passages that use the specific term *the Faith*. With a number that high, the Faith is unquestionably one of the most oft-mentioned Truths of the New Testament (NT)!

## **5. Churches Strengthened in the Faith**

Paul continued his missionary journeys with a new partner, Silas. These two shared the instructions given by the Apostles (all 12 Apostles were living in Jerusalem then) with churches around the Roman Empire. The instructions of the Apostles consisted of four prohibitions: not to eat food sacrificed to idols, to abstain from sexual immorality, not to eat the meat of strangled

animals, and not to drink blood. The Scriptures tell us that by following these four orders, the churches were strengthened in *the Faith*. In addition, they grew numerically!

As they [Paul and Silas] traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So, the churches were strengthened in the Faith and grew daily in numbers.

(Acts 16:4-5)

Now, what kind of faith does this passage refer to? Is this (1) the faith a person puts in the Gospel to be saved, is it (2) the *sound doctrine* Faith, or is it (3) the faith that moves mountains? Whichever one it is, avoiding four sins make Christians strong in that *kind* of faith. And the result of such strengthening was a pattern of day-to-day numerical growth. The Church was getting bigger as a result of *being strengthened in the Faith*.

Hmmm. Why would refusing four particular sins strengthen a congregation in the Faith? Does the same list apply to us today? Each of those specific sins was common in Paul's day, but only fornication is common today.

The one thing these four sins have in common is that each one is diametrically opposed to the Gospel. And that's the key to how to apply the passage to us today: We must vehemently avoid the sins which are diametrically opposed to the Gospel.

We will understand *diametric opposition* to the Gospel only after we define the Gospel, so let's define it. The best Biblical definition of the Gospel is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, was raised, and appeared to many.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Observe the involvement of different parties in the Gospel: men, angels, God, and Jesus. How thorough! How complete! When Jesus died it was an act of men. When he was buried it was an act of angels [angels carry the righteous down to Paradise as per Luke 16:22]. When Jesus was raised it was an act of God, and when he appeared to many, he did it himself. Four distinct parties are involved in the ministry of the Gospel.

But you may wonder why it's part of the Gospel to recognize that Jesus appeared to many. That's an uncomfortable question. The answer challenges us to the core because it puts the responsibility of salvation squarely in our hands. Jesus sought out people like you and me, and delivered the ministry of the Gospel to us. Now it's incumbent on us to faithfully transmit what we know. Now the great questions are *who* will preach, and *who* is sent?

How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?  
(Romans 10:14-15)

Now, brothers and sisters, I [Paul] want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you... By this Gospel you are saved... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve... (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).

Now, a believer in the Gospel participates in Christ's death and life—correct? And how do we participate in his death and life? Eating his body we nourish ourselves on his death, and drinking his blood we nourish ourselves on his life—*spiritually* (see John 6:62-63). If anyone is in Christ, the Lord's body and blood have become their spiritual food and drink—so how could they partake of food sacrificed to idols? After eating at the Lord's Table, will we turn around and eat at the table of a demon? How could we consume any other blood? Hasn't Christ's blood become our life?

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's Table and the table of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21).

Did you get that? If we eat food sacrificed to idols, eat the meat of strangled animals, or drink blood, we 'cannot have a part in... the Lord's Table.' That is, anyone who does these things has separated themselves from Christ, and has violated the terms of the New Covenant (NC)—at least temporarily. So, the apostles through their edict from the Council of Jerusalem, the first Church Council in history, were essentially commanding believers everywhere to cherish the NC.

Participation in sexual immorality is another sin contrary to the NC. Sexual sin makes us unworthy of participating in the Lord's Supper because someone who does not honor marriage dishonors the bond between Christ and the Church. Marriage is a revelation of a mystery hidden for ages: the covenant between Christ and the Church. Because it's one of God's most powerful revelations of the covenant between Christ and his Bride, we must honor it.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral (Hebrews 13:4).

---

I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' He said, 'Go' (Isaiah 6:8-9).

‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31-32).

At this point you should be able to see the common thread between Paul’s delivering ‘the decisions reached by the Apostles’ of refraining from four sins and the churches being ‘strengthened in the Faith.’ The common thread is the NC. Faithfulness to the NC, which is holiness and a clear conscience, is a component of being in the Faith. Strengthening churches in the Faith happens when church members keep away from sin, because it says ‘churches were strengthened in *the Faith*’ (Acts 16:5).

Participation in the NC will strengthen us in the Faith. That is, avoiding the sins that are diametrically opposed to the Gospel, will strengthen us in something which goes beyond sound doctrine—the Faith. The Faith is both knowing sound doctrine and doing the things which are fitting for it. It’s doctrine in action.

... as for you, proclaim the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, self-controlled, sound in the Faith... Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips... so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible... Likewise urge the young men to be sensible... (Titus 2:1-6; NASB).

### **Modern-Day Application**

Now, let’s apply the teaching of Acts 16:4-5 to ourselves in the modern world. If in the times of the Apostles, Christian were not allowed to eat food sacrificed to idols, were to abstain from sexual immorality, and were not to eat the meat of strangled animals, or to drink blood—then today’s believers should avoid:

- a. *fellowship with idolaters.* We should not eat with people who ascribe spiritual value to a material object and worship it, which is idolatry. We must remember that the Age of the Gentiles, the current period of human history in which we live, will conclude with widespread idolatry. That is, the World will set its eyes on the image of the Beast, an image which will speak!

Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and many other leaders have built images of themselves (Kim Jong Un in North Korea has one now), but none of these images speak. A universally-visible image that speaks to everyone on the planet is now possible through satellite and digital technology, the technology available on a common cell phone.

Nearly every human being on the planet will love the Antichrist's image because it will grant them the freedom to buy and sell. That includes buying food and clothes. It also includes participation in business. For example, those who receive the number of the Beast will be able to sell on the marketplace. How critical that will be in the midst of a chaotic world turned upside down? When war, scarcity, and supernatural catastrophes prevail, people desperately seek for a solution. The Antichrist will offer them one.

b. *sexual immorality*. Knowing God's judgments, you have already turned from pornography, adultery, and fornication. But even if you don't commit these sins, and disagree with the abomination of homosexuality, God will condemn you for giving approval to those who practice it—so be warned!

- Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things [homosexuality] deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:32)

c. *foods with blood in them*. It's quite often that we see a piece of chicken, turkey, or fish with a bloody vein in it. You may note a splotch of blood in a joint, near an organ, or on a bone in your steak or chicken. Sometimes a restaurant can serve meat too raw and the ground beef (minced meat) you buy with red juice in the tray will need to be cooked well.

Blood sausage is common in Northern Europe (it's called *morcilla* in Latin America and *blood pudding* in Great Britain). In Scandinavia they eat what they call *blood pancakes*, in Southern China they eat blood tofu, and there are many different kinds of blood soups popular around the world such as *yahuarlocro* in Ecuador.

What do we do when we're tempted to eat food with blood in it? We should refuse it. But why? Our refusal is for the same reason we refuse meat sacrificed to idols—as a matter of conscience. These decisions are primarily for the sake of our conscience. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable, but the sin of consuming blood has forgiveness. Our basis



of not participating in blood is because ‘the life is in the blood’ (Genesis 9:2-4; Leviticus 17:14). Since our life source is the blood of Christ, our conscience rejects any other source of life.

- d. *drinking blood*. There are scant few populations in the modern World who drink blood. Some tribal peoples of Africa and fetish vampire groups exist, but these don’t warrant our attention, being such a miniscule part of the global population. Blood transfusions, on the other hand, do warrant our attention.

In the United States and Canada, one out of every seven people who are admitted to a hospital will require a blood transfusion during their stay. Over 4.5 million people need a blood transfusion at least once a year in these countries.<sup>14</sup>

The Jehovah’s Witnesses (JWs) say that transfusions are prohibited by the Bible. This religious sect has gained notoriety in the medical community because they refuse to receive blood transfusions—but is their position justifiable? What if a JW mother dies due to blood loss while giving birth, refusing a transfusion? What if a child of JW parents is hemorrhaging after a car accident, a paramedic offers a transfusion, and the parents refuse it on the spot, leading to the child’s death? Are the JWs justified in refusing transfusions?

### **How Serious are These Sins?**

Let’s address the consequences of violating any of the four rules established by the Apostles. First of all, we need to know that eternal condemnation is not the effect of committing any of these sins. They can all be forgiven. For example, the man in Corinth who committed sexual immorality with his father’s wife repented. Paul states ‘nothing is unclean in itself’ (Romans 14:14) when speaking of the act of consuming meat sacrificed to idols. In other words, consuming such meat is not in itself a sin. Paul argued that if his eating meat sacrificed to idols caused someone with a weak conscience to stumble, then he would be guilty of sin by virtue of acting without love. However, eating meat sacrificed to idols is not a sin when it involves no one else.

---

<sup>14</sup> Received from <https://healthresearchfunding.org/38-donating-blood-statistics/> on June 14, 2023.

... if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols?' (1 Corinthians 8:10).

So the command not to eat meat sacrificed to idols was based entirely on the principle of not putting a stumbling block before a brother or sister. Paul said that if eating such meat causes a brother or sister in the Lord to violate their conscience, then Paul 'will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall' (1 Corinthians 8:13). Paul put the Law of Love above every other law—and rightly so. It is Jesus' new commandment.

### **Love is Part of the Faith**

We conclude that *the* Faith—a set of doctrines best expressed through a lifestyle—includes love. In fact, if our knowledge is not undergirded with love, it counts as nothing. Love is indispensable.

If I... know all mysteries and all knowledge... but do not have love, I am nothing (1 Corinthians 13:2; NASB).

We need to temper our doctrinal knowledge with love for the brethren. Obedience to Christ's command to 'love one another' (John 13:34) is part of living in the Faith. We are strengthened in the Faith through our love for the brethren, obeying Christ's commandment 'love one another.' This is the love the apostles insisted upon when they issued the four demands to the churches, demands that would demonstrate our firmness in the NC.

### **An Example: Sexual Purity**

Remember how avoiding fornication was one of the commands? What does that have to do with our obedience to Christ in the NC? It would contradict the Truth of One Body. I cannot be joined to Christ and then join my body (the temple of the Holy Spirit) to a prostitute because human marriage is an illustration of the NC. Fornication is, in essence, a denial of the NC between Jesus and the one Body, the Church.

... do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For it says, 'The two will become one flesh.' But the one who joins himself to the Lord [someone who has been baptized in Jesus' name] is one spirit with him.

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a person commits is outside his body, but the one who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God (1 Corinthians 6:16-19)?

### **Grounded in the NC and Love**

So, in order for us to become strong in *the* Faith—a lifestyle based on sound doctrine—we must be grounded in the NC and in love. We get established in the NC through baptism, and keep ourselves in it by loving the brethren. Hence, the apostolic tradition of the Lord's Supper is another important factor of the Faith. A NC believer eats the body of Christ and drinks his blood. He keeps a clear conscience, the Christian victory against temptation and sin.

But the activity of eating Christ's body and drinking of his blood is more than keeping a clear conscience, it's also called *discerning the Body*—meaning it is an exercise in spiritual perception. We must be able to detect that we are in the presence of the Body of Christ as we share communion. That is, we must be keenly aware of what the Church is. And we observe that the requirements for fellowship—both for ourselves and for those with whom we are breaking bread—are being fulfilled. We are living in love and holiness. We are in Christ. We discern that we truly are the Church!

... those who eat and drink without discerning the Body eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment (1 Corinthians 11:29-31).

Did you see in the passage how *discerning the Body* is synonymous with *discerning ourselves*? That's because we are the Body.<sup>15</sup> We are the Church of Christ, the one Body, the Body of Christ.

---

<sup>15</sup> This passage has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic lie of transubstantiation, their teaching that a priest transforms the Lord's Supper bread into the very physiological flesh of Christ. The false doctrine of transubstantiation was invented to give glory to priests, not to God. Catholic priests can have their hocus pocus magic trick, but God will accomplish something incomparably greater: He will make us the Bride of Christ.

## 6. Stand Firm in the Faith

As Paul continued in his ministry of building up churches, he wrote to the Corinthian church that they should remain firm in *the Faith*.

The Corinthians had sound doctrine already. Having been founded by Paul, the congregation had a remarkable doctrinal foundation; but they needed to persevere in it. Paul's exhortation to them teaches us that it's not enough to have the Faith. Courage dictates that we must remain firm in it.

Be on your guard; stand firm in the Faith; be courageous; be strong.

(1 Corinthians 16:13)

There are many forces opposing the Faith: Satan, demons, the Antichrist, false prophets, false religions, philosophies, worldly systems, secular and religious educational systems, heresies, and apostasy. Those spiritual forces try to intimidate us. They will knock down our beliefs if we let them, so we have to stand firm like soldiers, and hold our ground. Our ground is the Faith. The Faith is our *foundation*.

## 7. Test Whether You are in the Faith

A test is available to anyone who wants to know whether they are in the Faith—the test of a clear conscience. You can either administer this test to yourself now, receiving God's mercy, or Jesus himself will test you with fire (Luke 3:16; Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15) and you'll render an account of your sins to God (Romans 14:10, 12), suffering loss. Either way, you will be put to the test.

God will determine whether you are in the Faith or not. Just as gold must be placed into a crucible and purged of any dross before it's sculpted into jewelry, we will not be fit for the Kingdom until we have been subjected to the test of the Faith.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the Faith; test<sup>16</sup> yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

(2 Corinthians 13:5)

---

<sup>16</sup> The Greek word for test is *dokimazo*, a word which has the same root as the last word in this verse "fail the test" which in Greek is *a-dokimos* (the prefix *a-* makes the word negative, like it often does in English; i.e., gnostic/a-gnostic or normal/ab-normal).

We aim to understand the expression ‘examine yourselves to see whether you are in the Faith.’ In particular, what does it mean to be *in the Faith*? To understand the verse properly, you need understand Hebrew parallelism. The parallel idea to *being in the Faith* is *having Christ Jesus in you*. But if that’s not enough for you, simply read 2 Corinthians 13 in conjunction with 1 Corinthians 11, another passage in which Paul exhorted the Corinthians to test themselves:

... whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a person must examine [*dokimazo*] himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not properly recognize the Body (1 Corinthians 11:27-29; NASB).

This last passage proves that *being in the Faith* signifies that after having tested and examined yourself, you may safely conclude that you are keeping the NC. And the Biblical concept of having *Christ Jesus in you* is precisely that. *Being in the Faith* is *having Christ Jesus in you*. These two spiritual realities are parallel to eating Jesus’ flesh and drinking his blood—the actions we take in the Lord’s Supper—actions which demonstrate the spiritual reality that Jesus is our life!

‘I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from Heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the Living Bread that came down from Heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the World... my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them (John 6:48-51, 55-56).

At this point, if you need to review the passages again, please do so, but we hope that you’re able to see that eating Jesus’ *flesh* and drinking his *blood* mean that you are in Christ and *Christ is in you*. Furthermore, you should now be convinced these actions are synonymous with *being in the Faith*.

If we say that Christ is in us, what we mean is that the Holy Spirit lives within us. Now, the Spirit of God, being sent by Christ, is also justly referred to as the Spirit of *Christ*. Hence, you can understand what *Christ in you* means. It means the Holy Spirit is in you, and verses like this next one should make more sense to you:

God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery [something not previously understood, but which has now been revealed], which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

But, let's say that you're of those who doesn't keep a clear conscience. Let's say that you're someone who turns back to sin, then what? Well, you're not in the Faith. You're not spiritually feeding off of Christ's flesh or drinking his blood. And Christ is not in you. That is, the Holy Spirit has withdrawn from you.

If that's the case, then on whichever day of judgment corresponds to you—you will either have Christ Jesus as your *foundation*, or you will not. Observe how clearly Paul defines this *foundation*. He says it is Jesus Christ. Is he again speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus?

I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day [of Judgment] will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

We are to understand the foundation of *Jesus Christ* to mean *the Faith*. That is, a sound understanding of the Lord Jesus is the foundation which saves your soul. In case you haven't noticed, there are very few people in churches who have a sound understanding of the Lord Jesus. That's because the only sound knowledge of Jesus originates in *the Doctrine of Christ*, and this doctrine is not being taught. In fact, it's being denied!

... do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus [the Jesus of the Bible] is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist (1 John 4:1-3).

... many deceivers have gone out into the World who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh... Whoever runs ahead and does not abide in the Doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the Doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this Doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him (2 John 1:7, 9-10; NKJV).

... leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and... [another 6 foundations] (Hebrews 6:1).

For what the Law [of Moses, the OT] was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the World... my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them (John 6:51, 55-56).

Note that the exact same word *foundation*<sup>17</sup> utilized in the Seven Fundamentals passage (Hebrews 6:1-2) is used in the passage which says:

I laid a foundation as a wise builder... no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-11).

From this use of the word foundation, we can deduce that the Doctrine of Christ is the basic principle of all fundamental doctrines. The Doctrine of Christ activates these doctrines, making them so practical that they challenge us to live our lives like Christ. The living out of those

---

<sup>17</sup> The word in Greek is *themelion* which simply means *foundation*—the solid base in the structure of a building. Since the Bible is only concerned about spiritual matters and not architecture, the word *foundation* is a metaphor for sound doctrine. Paul used it in a way that stated that Jesus was the most important part of our foundation, the corner stone.

... God's household... [is] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-20; NASB).

Our Lord also enjoyed using *foundation* as a metaphor, telling stories about how wise and foolish men constructed their houses. In Luke 6:48-49 he spoke of a man who 'laid the foundation on rock... it was well built...' contrasting him with another man who 'built a house on the ground without a foundation ...' Then, in Luke 14:29 he spoke of a man who became the object of scolding 'after he laid the foundation, and was not able to finish' (NKJV).

fundamentals is what we call *the Faith*. In other words, the Faith is codified through the Foundations. The Faith is defined by the Foundations.

... not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and [the foundation] of faith toward God, [the foundation] of the doctrine of baptisms, [the foundation] of laying on of hands, [the foundation] of the Resurrection of the Dead, and [the foundation] of eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1-2; NKJV).

Now, are both passages speaking of the same Foundations? Yes. The author of Hebrews wrote of the Foundations, making them equivalent to ‘the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ’ (NKJV).<sup>18</sup> So, the Foundations are all based on Christ Jesus. That’s why in both passages, with two different apostles speaking, we get two different definitions of the Foundations, but with each apostle focused on one person: Jesus Christ.

So, the Jesus of the Gospels—the Jesus who came in the flesh—is our primary Foundation. That’s different from speaking of Jesus as the One Lord, a Truth. He is now and forever will be our Lord. He is a reality and a Truth. But the fact that he came to us in the flesh is a doctrine, a Biblical teaching that we must understand in order to rightly interpret the rest of the Bible.

## **8. Some will Apostatize from the Faith**

As history rolls on, and prior to the Rapture, a portion of people in the Church will lose the Faith. The tendency of falling from the Faith is called *apostasy*—something that’s going on right now—but there will be a definitive historical event (called *the Apostasy* [NASB] or *The Falling Away* [YLT and NKJV]) prior to the Abomination of Desolation, the revelation of the Antichrist.

For it [the Rapture]<sup>19</sup> will not come unless the Apostasy comes first, and the Man of Lawlessness [the Antichrist] is revealed [at the Abomination of Desolation] (2 Thessalonians 2:3; NASB).

We’re not entering an advanced study here since this book is part of a series on the basic Truths, but it suffices to say that the Apostasy will occur sometime prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> Seal, and the

---

<sup>18</sup> In Greek, the words are *arches tou Christou logon*, which literally mean “the elementary logic-word of the Christ.”

<sup>19</sup> The *it* refers to *the Day of the Lord* which is Paul’s terminology for the Rapture. We know this because he considers this day to be ‘the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him’ (v. 1).



Antichrist reveals himself at the 6<sup>th</sup> Seal. Because of this, and because the Seventh Seal is the preparation of the seven angels who will blow the Seven Trumpets, the Rapture cannot occur until the Seals have ended and the Trumpets begin. This all makes sense to those who know that the Rapture will take place at the sound of a trumpet (Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 14:14-16)—the *Last* Trumpet, in particular (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), which is the seventh.

The degrading of Christian doctrine is happening now. The tendency to water down the doctrine of the Apostles gets progressively stronger—to such a degree that the religion common to believers today is but a shadow of the Christianity that existed during the Early Church period.

The Spirit clearly says that in Later Times some will abandon [lit., will *apostatize* from] the Faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars... They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods... [but] nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving... If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words [*logois*] of the Faith and of the good doctrine [*didaskalias*] that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales...

(1 Timothy 4:1-7)

Notice how this passage states that Christians can *fall away* (lit. *apostatize*) from the Faith. That means that the Faith is something that you can lose. But how is it lost? If you loosen your grip on it, you will fall away from it. When someone falls out of a tree, the tree stays put. It's fixed and secured at the roots. If the roots are healthy, the trunk is firm, and so are the branches. But once you let go of a branch, you will fall. Likewise, sound doctrine itself is firm. People fall away from it. It does not fall away from us.

As the passage says, the way to resist the natural tendency towards apostasy is: 1) For pastors to remind their congregations that nothing is prohibited (marriage, foods, or drinks) as long as we receive these things with gratitude, and 2) That we nourish ourselves on *the words of the Faith*—that is, on sound doctrine—completely avoiding fantasies, myths, and stories (think TV and movies). For how many people the sum of their knowledge of the Bible comes from TV shows or movies?

The parallel idea to *the words of the Faith* is *the good doctrine* Timothy had followed. Timothy was a disciple of the doctrine of Paul, and there's little doubt as to what Paul taught since most of the NT books contain samples of his teaching. Once again, we have indisputable evidence that *the Faith* refers to the Doctrine of the Apostles as it is manifested in the NT.

## 9. Some Have Departed from the Faith

At the time of the Apostles, there was a movement in Christian churches called *Gnosticism*. *Gnosis* means *knowledge* in Greek, and the Church groups which defected from sound doctrine and adopted Gnosticism taught that there was an enlightenment that...

- ... emphasized personal spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) above the orthodox teachings, traditions, and authority of religious institutions.

This textbook definition of Gnosticism goes on to say:

- Gnostic cosmogony generally presents a distinction between a supreme, hidden God and a malevolent lesser divinity (sometimes associated with the Yahweh of the Old Testament) who is responsible for creating the material universe.

Consequently, Gnostics considered material existence flawed or evil, and held the principal element of salvation to be direct knowledge of the hidden divinity, attained via mystical or esoteric insight. Many Gnostic texts deal not in concepts of sin and repentance, but with illusion and enlightenment.<sup>20</sup>

College is where young people get indoctrinated into the so-called “sciences” and it has become a laboratory for modern-day Gnosticism. In the lecture halls of universities professors seduce young minds with their veiled display of human wisdom using philosophy, psychology, political science, and sociology to turn young people from the Faith. Professors have the appearance of wisdom with their diplomas, research publications, and prestigious titles [like *adjunct* professor, or professor *emeritus*]—but the Bible calls those who showcase their worldly knowledge *fools*. Their talk is nothing more than empty words—*godless chatter*.

---

<sup>20</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Gnosticism> on October 28, 2022.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called “knowledge” which some have professed and in so doing have departed from the Faith.

(1 Timothy 6:20-21)

What did the Holy Spirit entrust to Timothy’s care? The Faith. Paul says *guard what has been entrusted to you*—and the context proves that Paul was speaking about *the Faith*. So, we have to guard the Faith, but how? What action do we take? Paul says we must *turn away from godless chatter* and *opposing ideas*.

We don’t need to attack the theory of evolution, an idea which opposes the Gospel. We don’t need to attack the Prosperity Gospel, *Sola Fide*, the Trinity, Marianism, idolatry, Islam, or Mormonism. We simply turn away from them. The principalities and powers behind them have picked a fight with the wrong opponent. They have challenged the Truth. Standing against invincible sound doctrine, they are defeated by it. A simple candle will dissipate all the darkness in a room.

We read here that some once-Christians have *departed from the Faith*. Sadly, old friends of ours who once professed *the Faith* now profess something different. Most of them fall into religious error, the most common error of all. The majority of people, to appease their guilty conscience, participate in some kind of religion, so that they at least feel good.

Others allowed themselves to be brainwashed by liberal ideas in college. Many of these, upon graduation from college, were subsequently seduced by the worldview of the company or government office that employed them. Whatever their background, they’ve fallen into worldly thinking. Most have been seduced by one of the five worldly ideologies below:

- a) **humanism**: The philosophy that man is the center of the universe and that we should make our decisions based on what best benefits human beings. It declares man the master of his own destiny, and makes his perspective supreme.
- b) **naturalism**: The notion that there is no spiritual realm (no God, angels, demons, spirits/ghosts) and that all beings function exclusively according to the laws of physics and chemistry—with even the human brain being a mere group of nerves and synapses governed by chemical reactions. The Big Bang Theory fits into this ideology.

- c) **evolution:** The theory that the physiological adaptation of animals reaches beyond what biologists call *families* in the taxonomic classification of animals. Creationists recognize that adaptation exists within what the Bible calls a *kind—kinds* being the approximate equivalent of what today we call animal *families* (e.g., from wolves to Chihuahuas we have the canine family and from Siamese cat to tiger the feline family).
- d) **materialism:** The Bible has a word for this, *idolatry*. It encompasses the love of money, faith in technological devices (cell phones, computers, wi-fi, etc.), and confiding in pharmaceuticals and modern medicine more rather than God’s healing power.
- e) **leftism:** This includes left-wing politics like wokeism, socialism, communism, or any position in support of the political agendas of those who reject conservative, traditional, Bible-based, or simple family-based values.

One way or another, these defectors *profess* that they have some special understanding. They might, for example, proclaim to be *woke*.<sup>21</sup> Or maybe they’ll declare their confidence in the “science” that supports evolution and the Big Bang.

Regardless, the most dangerous kind of Gnosticism today is not found in universities or government institutions. It’s found in the Church. Indeed, it is so popular in churches that it has become the standard for what most church leaders will call “orthodoxy.” We’re talking about the belief that the One God is three Persons, a being these people have denominated *the Godhead*—and whom they refuse to recognize as simply the Father. They deny that the One God is the Father.

The people who hold to the belief that the One God is three Persons call their One God “the Trinity.” To avoid discussion or an open forum, they will declare that the unity of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit is a mystery, singlehandedly shutting down any arguments to the contrary. They are a people who silence speech. They are a people who have successfully imposed their human theology on God’s Church, denying a fundamental Truth of Christianity.

If you believe that the Spirit and Jesus are equal in authority to the Father, then you’re a Trinitarian. Only they dare to say something as absurd as the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit

---

<sup>21</sup> *Woke* is a term which began to be popularized in the U.S. somewhere during 2014-2018 to indicate support of feminism, African-American entitlement, and the gay agenda (including special rights for homosexuals such as gay marriage).

are “co-equal” (a word they invented). For them, Jesus is not subordinate to the Father, nor is the Spirit subordinate to Christ. They contradict so many Bible verses!

They influence the Christian music industry greatly. You’ll notice that worship songs they compose are intentionally ambiguous. That’s because Trinitarians delight in feeling spiritual just as the Gnostics delighted in their intellectual uniqueness—they were certain that they had a special insight into the mystery of God.

To avoid departing from the Faith, a believer can do three things (according to this passage):

- Put great value on the Faith, treating it like something confided to you.
- Turn away from empty and vain conversations which disregard God.
- Turn away from any supposedly Christian teaching which, although pastors call it “knowledge” or “science,” does not align with the fundamentals.

### **Three Kinds of Faith**

This book is about sound doctrine, but sound doctrine is just one kind of faith. The sound doctrine faith is the one the Bible calls *the* Faith or *the One* Faith. It is the body of doctrine Christians share among ourselves, and it is indispensable for Christian unity. We cannot exist as a people without it.

However, Christians have at least two other *faiths* which in this book we spell out with a lower-case *f*. Of those is the one which describes the opposite of *unbelief*. The Bible often uses Abraham as an example of someone who had this kind of faith as we see in the famous verse:

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; NKJV).

Do you remember what Abraham’s faith accomplished? It got him a credit. Abraham’s faith, with which he believed in God, was credited to him as righteousness. He had saving faith, like the one Paul preached:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9; ESV).

It's also the same kind of faith we prompt people to exercise when we evangelize them. For example, consider what Paul said to the Philippian jailer.

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).

If you let the familiar notion of “having faith” overshadow the importance of *the* Faith, you'll read the Bible and will skip over all the references to that body of doctrine, the summary of basic Christian Truth which is called *the Faith*—and that would be tragic. Unfortunately, this is easy to do since Bible translators make little distinction between different kinds of faith.

We *do* make a distinction between the different kinds of faith. For example, in this book we use a capital *F* for the One Faith. But you're not going to see that distinction made in any modern translation of the Bible. Only the context of the verse will clue you in to the meaning. Whatever you do to mark a difference, the ability to distinguish between the three different kinds of faith will make you an approved worker—a genuine interpreter of the Bible.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15; NKJV).

### **Eleven Passages to See in a New Way**

There are at least eleven passages you'll see in a completely new light once you see *the* Faith in them. What we mean is this: Once you recognize that these eleven passages have a definite article (*the*) before the word *Faith* in the original Greek, you'll understand what they really mean, and your eyes will be open to the great importance of the Faith, that is, the sound doctrine.<sup>22</sup>

God willing, and with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, you're going to understand these and many other Bible passages in a new light. You'll experience a special freedom. Once you've moved beyond human interpretations of the NT, the One Faith will be revealed to you. The consequence of leaving a word like *the* out of a translation is that the Faith has been concealed.

---

<sup>22</sup> Try not to feel resentful with the translators who unjustly removed a very important word from your Bible. They were misled, causing them to mislead others. Forgive them and move on.

But with the examples that follow, that is, with a rectification of modern Bible translations—putting the *the* back where it belongs, we trust that *the* One Faith will be revealed.

## 10. Will Jesus Find the Faith?

The Lord Jesus posed a question he meant it to be rhetorical. In other words, we're supposed to dwell on the question. We're not supposed to answer it. We're supposed to reflect upon it.

...when the Son of Man comes, will he find the Faith on the Earth?

(Luke 18:8; NASB)

Jesus' question is a tool for personal examination. It doesn't require a verbal response. So, why did Jesus ask '...when the Son of Man comes, will he find the Faith on the Earth?' You have to understand what he's asking about to know why he's asking.

Once you understand that *the Faith* is sound doctrine, you'll understand what Jesus meant. Jesus wants us to ponder whether we will be holding firmly to sound doctrine when he returns. Since the Church is destined to pass through an unprecedented Apostasy, and the deception of the Antichrist is like no other deception the Church has ever faced in its 2000-year history, it's very unlikely that any pastor will be preaching sound doctrine when Jesus comes back. On the contrary...

...the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3).

Since that's the reality we have to face, Jesus is inviting us to strengthen ourselves in sound doctrine—*the Faith*. If we do, when the Apostasy comes, we'll be able to escape its grip.

## 11. By the Faith You Stand Firm

... it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord over the Faith of yours, but we work with you for your joy,

because it is by the Faith you stand firm.

(2 Corinthians 1:23-24)

Is it by *faith* that we stand firm, or by *the Faith*? The original Greek says *the Faith*. Although saving *faith* makes us firm, spiritual maturity comes by being grounded in sound doctrine and

that's what the Bible refers to when it speaks of being *firm*. Once we have been established in sound doctrine, we cannot be shaken. In it, we are spiritually stable.

## 12. The Shield of the Faith

... above all, having taken up the shield of the Faith,  
in which ye shall be able all the fiery darts of the Evil One to quench.  
(Ephesians 6:16; YLT)

You may have heard this passage a million times, but never knew that it was talking about *the Faith*, the sound doctrine of the apostles. That's because most translations cut out the article *the*. However, only with the *the* does the passage make sense. And the passage needs to make sense if it's giving us a general principle! Paul lists many weapons for our spiritual warfare, but *above all*, we need to utilize the shield of the Faith. It's indispensable. The best offense is a strong defense!

Sound doctrine is the Christian's protection against heresies, false teachings, error, and apostasy—the diverse lies the Devil hurls at us. Without a shield in battle, a soldier is exposed, vulnerable, and susceptible to any flying object. The Devil, the father of lies, is capable of destroying us if we do not purposefully hold up the sound doctrine, as heavy a lift as that might be.

## 13-14. True Sons in the Faith

The Epistles to Timothy are filled with references to the Faith because men like Timothy, who pastor churches, have the solemn duty of overseeing the teaching in churches. The job of a pastor is to feed Christ's sheep. The quality of the sheep's spiritual food is the responsibility of the pastors.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus... to Timothy my true son in the Faith  
(1 Timothy 1:1-2).

This passage opens the epistle, setting the tone by placing great importance on the Faith as the basis of unity between two pastors, Paul and Timothy. And why would that be the most essential bond of unity between two men who teach? Because it's the essence of what a pastor does.



Furthermore, what could be more important to a pastor than the spiritual food he supplies to Christ's sheep? Didn't Jesus say to Peter (the man upon whose shoulders Jesus would build his Church) 'Feed my lambs... Take care of my sheep... Feed my sheep' (John 21:15-17)?

Paul used this same emphasis in his introduction in his epistle to Titus. The reason? Because Titus was also serving as a pastor, and directing doctrine in the Church.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the Faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the Truth that leads to godliness...  
to Titus, my true son in our common Faith.  
(Titus 1:1, 4)

We cannot ignore that, in addition to his affectionate bond with Titus through *the common Faith*, Paul's salutation to Titus also contains the term *the Faith of God's elect*. So, Paul is making a direct reference to our *common Faith*—but through parallelism, we deduce that this *Faith of God's elect* is also *the Truth that leads to godliness*. In other words, these terms are all synonymous.

Remember: The seven Truths of *the unity of the spirit* (Ephesians 4:3-6) are the great Truths of the Universe—and the *one Faith* is one of those seven Truths. It is the one particular Truth that leads to godliness. It is Christianity. With this clarification, a concise definition of the *One Faith* could be:

The doctrine that all believers have in common, the original doctrine delivered to us by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles—a teaching sound enough to produce godliness in those who believe. It is the Truth which will set us free. Jesus prophesied that it was on its way:

...you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free (John 8:32).

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the Truth (John 16:12-13).

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you (John 14:25-26).

The inefficacy of the OT in sanctification causes us to marvel at the efficacy of the One Faith. One system did not work. The other *works*. The OT Law never completely purified the hearts of its adherents. On the other hand, the NT sanctifies us completely. Grace prevails over Law.

Grace frees us from sin in a way the Law never could. That's why Peter without reservation stated that what he taught was *the true grace of God*. The Faith contains the doctrine (based on the Biblical Jesus—who came in the flesh) that really saves because it's based on grace, not on the Law.

... standing firm in the Faith... I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it (1 Peter 5:9, 12).<sup>23</sup>

### **The Rock: Obedience**

Now you should be able to interpret the famous parable of the house built on the rock. If you read the parable closely, you'll notice that the rock is obedience to Christ. Contrary to popular opinion, the rock is not Christ. It's putting the word of Christ *into practice*.

[Jesus said] As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete (Luke 6:47-49).

The rock is us taking action and doing what Jesus says. Anything short of obedience is not salvation. Anything short of obedience is ruin. That's why Jesus said that his true family consists of those who hear him *and* obey him.

Someone told him, 'Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.' He replied, 'My mother and brothers are those who hear God's Word and put it into practice' (Luke 8:20-21).

---

<sup>23</sup> We'll look more closely at this passage later in the book.

## 15. Furthering the Faith

Hold on. We still have not finished dissecting the passage at hand, Titus 1. Here it is verse 1 again:

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the Faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the Truth that leads to godliness...  
(Titus 1:1)

This is the first verse of a very important epistle, the Epistle to Titus, a pastor. To understand it, we need to ask ourselves, "How do we *further* the Faith?" The answer is: "By declaring it boldly!" Paul said:

I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Paul did not shrink away in cowardliness to announce any and all of God's counsel because he had boldness. Boldness is something we need to ask God for. Note that the first church in history prayed for boldness. In Acts 4:29 they cried out: '... enable your servants to speak your Word with great boldness.'

And that's the way to get boldness, by asking for it. With boldness from God, we can advance the impact of the Faith because we *speak* the Word of God with authority. So, let's strengthen our Biblical arguments, ask for boldness, and speak with authority.

... the crowds were amazed at his [Jesus'] teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the Law (Matthew 7:28-29).

... some... disputed with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he was speaking (Acts 6:9-10; LEB).

Saul was increasing in strength even more, and was confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that 'this one is the Christ' (Acts 9:22; LEB).

## 16. Wandering from the Faith

The sin of avarice causes some to stray from sound doctrine. Why? Because there's easy money in corrupt Christianity. There are impressive monetary benefits for those who will twist doctrine to say what people want to hear. Innumerable preachers of these twisted human doctrines draw people to their churches every weekend.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money,  
have wandered from the Faith...

(1 Timothy 6:10)

You wouldn't say that a Christian wanders from *faith*. If someone were to do that, it would be because they were resorting to a works-based salvation. For example, someone who converts to Judaism, recurs to the Law, and begins to follow the OT lifestyle of Sabbath-keeping, Jewish holidays, and kosher food. Instead of walking in the Holy Spirit by faith, they would live under the OT Law. Instead of following Jesus, they would follow Moses.

But that's not what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about pastors who become false teachers—pastors who do not hold fast to the Word of God. They exchange truth for riches. They become high-heeled church leaders, seminary professors, or maybe even missionaries (with generous incomes). These men and women are eager for money.

They are supported by Evangelical musicians, Christian bookstore owners, and online retail outlet salespeople who sell Christian products. Together, they have turned the ministry into a business, commercializing the Faith. That is obvious. What is not obvious is even worse: Their *love of money* has caused them to *wander from the Faith*. They get to the point where they only see dollar signs, and they cannot remember what apostolic doctrine even sounds like.

### **17. The Good Fight of the Faith**

A fight that's worth fighting is *apologetics*—the defense of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But who can describe what the basic doctrines even are? Who can define them biblically? Think about it: If we cannot define them, how could we possibly fight for them?

Fight the good fight of the Faith.

(1 Timothy 6:12)

This verse, in the original Greek, says *the* Faith. It does not just have the word *faith*. The only way to explain this passage as meaning “fighting for faith” [with no *the*] would be to interpret it as entering the legal battle to defend the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, freedom of religion. If that is your battle [and it's a righteous cause], you're going to have to defend Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists right along with Christians. You're going to become increasingly busy in courts defending religious people.

But that's not what Paul was telling Timothy. No such law such as the First Amendment existed in his time. Rather, he was exhorting Timothy to battle for a body of doctrine. To do that, you and I must debate with others. We must defend the Faith by preparing sound arguments. Do you have any good arguments? Paul's missionary team did. He said:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

## 18. Contend for the Faith

Are you ready to fight? We are under orders to *contend for the Faith*.

I considered it a necessity to write to you to encourage you to contend for the Faith  
delivered once and for all to the saints...

(Jude 1:3; LEB)

A soldier has two things which improve his skills as a warrior: his weapons and his training. Taking this metaphor, your weapon is a sword, the Word of God. Your training depends upon how often you engage with others in battle—that is, how often you debate with others with Scriptures. To train, you must prayerfully study the Word of God, you should handle the Scriptures in different versions, and you need to be bold. Bravely confront false doctrines wherever you are, and with whomever God has put into your life.

Follow the example of Jesus. He spent a great part of his teaching ministry sparring with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers of the Law. Speak with people who know the Bible. Follow in the footsteps of Paul, that great debater. Prepare yourself for the future Apostasy by polishing your understanding of sound doctrine because when the Antichrist comes, you'll discover that Jesus' Last Times warning 'Do not be deceived!' was in earnest.

## 19. Build Yourselves Up in the Most Holy Faith

If there are any doubts that Jude was talking about the *sound doctrine* kind of Faith in verse 3, then identifying the *most holy Faith* he mentions 17 verses later should resolve those doubts.

... you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy Faith, by praying in  
the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God...

(Jude 1:20-21; LEB)

Indeed, Jude continues to exhort believers to strengthen themselves in the Faith. How do we know that? Well, whatever the most holy Faith is, it has to be something in which we can build ourselves up in. What are some ways we can build ourselves up in the sound doctrine? We can study the Bible, quiz ourselves on the fundamentals, memorize Bible verses, decorate our homes with Bible passages, and attend teachings—or even teach!

The passage is saying that if we do these things and pray, then we will be kept in the love of God. In other words, we'll remain on his good side. Here's the passage in context:

... [today's false teachers] follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, 'In the Last Times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.' These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy Faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life (Jude 1:16-21).

Can you see the context? Do you understand the contrast Jude is making? He's saying that as we face the Last Times and the slew of false prophets that will gather followers to them, that we should use two means to deal with their scoffing, flattery, boasting, and divisive doctrines. We should build ourselves up in the Faith, and pray. In other words, we should regress to the focus of the first Christians:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42; NKJV).

## 20. Keeping the Faith

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the Faith.

(2 Timothy 4:7)

This Bible passage has become *cliché*, and in becoming so, it's almost now bereft of its original meaning. When people say "Keep the faith" these days, it's like saying "Keep your chin up," or "Maintain a positive attitude." But Paul was not encouraging Timothy to simply keep a positive

attitude. Languishing in a jailcell in Rome, as his career as an apostle was waning, Paul declared to Timothy that he had stayed true to sound doctrine.

Paul had fought *the good fight*. He had finished *the race*. His excruciating efforts at staying true to sound doctrine had paid off. He accomplished something great. He hadn't thrown in the towel. Rather, he remained loyal to God's Word. This continues to be a big accomplishment for any believer today. With so many false teachings and bad theologies abounding, to be able to traverse this life without slipping into error is equivalent to a World War I soldier looking behind him to discover that he had crossed a minefield, a no-man's land.

## 21. Firm in the Faith

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the Devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.  
Resist him, standing firm in the Faith... stand fast in it.  
(1 Peter 5:8-9, 12)

The Devil is not just any old foe. He is the father of lies and an expert at deception. He even quotes the Bible to deceive us, like he did with Jesus when he said:

He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone (Luke 4:10-11).

The Devil lifted that passage out of context and used as a temptation—it would not have been an act of faith in God for Jesus to jump because it would have been a “show off” miracle. Jesus wouldn't have performed the sign-miracle for the glory of God. Following the example of Jesus, we resist the Devil by being *firm in the Faith*.

We have to be so firm in the sound doctrine that we do not allow his misinterpretations of the Bible to trick us. Grounded in the Word of God, firm in the framework of the Faith, we cannot be swayed by the Devil. We live in a state of alertness. We keep a sober mind.

## Two Other Kinds of Faith

We've identified the Faith as the one that comes with the direct article *the*, and which speaks of sound doctrine, but what of the other uses of *faith* in the Bible? The most basic faith is saving

faith in the Gospel (i.e., believing in God through his Son Jesus). This is the faith that saves a person from their sins.

And then we have the faith by which we live—the faith with which we can move mountains, a faith which produces good works. This latter faith—if it's a special anointing from the Holy Spirit—can be a spiritual gift. Paul mentions the gift of faith here:

... to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

In contrast to the previous 20 passages we have examined, the following verses contain the word *faith* without the definite article *the* in the Greek. In English, we should always use a lowercase *f* for these. You'll probably recognize many of them. They can be categorized into either: a) saving faith in God or his Son Jesus, or b) the faith by which we live—that is, the faith that produces fruit.

The saving kind of faith is the kind that Abraham was famous for. He believed in God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. It's the faith of people who turn from sin to Jesus for salvation. It's synonymous with *trust* or *belief*. We are justified by this kind of faith, so it's extremely important.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9; ESV).

The faith that produces good works, instead of being contrasted with works, is aligned with them. As James quipped:

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds (James 2:18).

Both of these lowercase *f* kinds of faith are different from the One Faith. The apostles use the word faith in three distinct ways: faith that saves, faith that works, and the Faith—the sound doctrine. Here are a few more examples of the former two kinds of faith:



## Faith that Saves

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen... without faith it is impossible to please him, for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:1, 6; NKJV).

For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the Law (Romans 3:28).

## Faith that Works

For we live by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

## Harder Passages to Interpret

With the distinctions clear, let's perform a word search of *faith* in the Bible, and with the dozens of passages that pop up, discern whether they speak of *the Faith* (the One Faith), or of one of the two lowercase *f* faiths (saving faith or the faith that works). A cursory reading normally yields an interpretation of one of the lowercase *f* kinds of faith—but we'll often discover that a passage is speaking of *the One Faith* when we read carefully. That is, if you examine closely, you'll often find that verses with the word *faith* are referring to the body of basic Christian Truths. A big hint that *the Faith* is the correct interpretation is that the direct article *the* is in the original Greek, as we have seen, and also in the case of the passages that follow.

## 22-23. Obedience to the Faith

So the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the Faith.  
(Acts 6:7)

If this passage is speaking about faith in Jesus, how do we obey it? Isn't faith in Jesus the same thing as trust in Jesus? You can't obey trust, but you can obey *the Faith* if it's a set of doctrines. Doctrines include instructions and traditions. Some of the traditions include: baptism, the laying on of hands, and sharing the Lord's Supper. Some of the instructions are repenting of sins, using

the gifts of the Holy Spirit, preaching the Gospel, and obeying everything Jesus commanded us, like forgiving our enemies, praying for them, and loving one another.

... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).

Living in *obedience to the Faith* means that we love one another. But, how do we love one another? We use the gifts in service to one another, we help one another to resist temptation, and we provide for one another's needs by giving food, drink, clothes, and shelter to the brothers and sisters according to their needs.

Obedience to the Faith is also mentioned in Romans 16, a passage we looked at briefly in another chapter, but without analyzing its instruction regarding the Faith. Let's analyze it now.

Now to him who is able to establish you according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the World began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the Everlasting God, for obedience to the Faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever.

(Romans 16:25-27; NKJV)

What do we see in this passage? That the goal of the Gospel is to make us obedient to the Faith. That is, the mystery of who the Messiah is has been revealed in Christ Jesus, and now all nations know it, so that they might obey *the Faith*. Again, the basic doctrines and the traditions require action. The most basic doctrine is that Christ came in the flesh. We obey that doctrine by following his example, making no excuses for our own flesh.

Saving faith demands action. Anyone who believes upon Jesus must demonstrate the fruit of repentance and be baptized. Sound doctrine (*the Faith*) demands action too. The Faith calls us to practice a spiritual gift, to act in love, to lay hands on someone, to participate in the Lord's Supper, to do good to our enemies, to give to the poor, to go forth and proclaim the Gospel, to pray, and so on. There is work to be done for those who will obey the Faith!

## 24. Remaining True to the Faith

Then they [Paul, Silas, and Timothy] returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the Faith.

(Acts 14:21-22)

How do we remain true to the Faith? First, we have to have the Faith. You can't remain in something you're not already in. Are you in the Faith? Are you walking on the Way? Are you devoted to the doctrine of the Apostles, persevering in it?

Now that you're in the Faith, you remain in it by avoiding false doctrines, apostate teachings, human theologies, and worldly influences. If you stop your ears when sermons contradict the Fundamentals, you are remaining in the Faith. There are many lies being preached in churches everywhere, tempting us intellectually. And there is also a lot of confusion and ambiguity in worship music, tempting us emotionally. Once we waver and deviate from the sound doctrine, we've weakened ourselves. We have to remain true to what we've learned so that we won't fall into sin, or regress to our old ways.

## 25. Strength and Encouragement in the Faith

The Faith of the Romans was being proclaimed in all the World. Does that mean that Christians from other churches went around bragging about how much faith the Romans had? Or does it mean the doctrine the Romans believed was the same doctrine Paul and other churches preached? It's the latter because Paul says that the Faith of the Romans was *mutual*—it belonged to both him and the Romans.

First, I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because the Faith of yours is being proclaimed in the whole World...

I desire to see you, in order... to strengthen you, that is, to be encouraged together with you through the Mutual Faith, both yours and mine.

(Romans 1:8-12; LEB)

The bottom line is that we can *be encouraged* with other believers through the Faith, those great teachings which we all have in common, and which we all share. We can *strengthen* other churches through the Faith also, as Paul wished to do with the Romans.

## 26. Preaching the Faith

Paul preached the Faith. Did he preach *faith*? “To you, oh Romans, I declare faith!” No. We’re not called to preach faith. We preach faith in God, yes. But we do not preach “faith alone.” That doctrine, known as *sola fide*, is a contradiction of the Word of God which says ‘not by faith alone’ (James 2:24).

The faith Paul mentions when giving his testimony to the Galatians is the Faith with a capital F, the set of doctrines we call *Christianity*. Paul preached Christianity after his conversion. Prior to his conversion, he lived to destroy it!

They only heard the report: ‘The man who formerly persecuted us  
is now preaching the Faith he once tried to destroy.’  
(Galatians 1:23)

Before he was converted, Paul tried to destroy believers. He loved to see them in jail and even killed. But he could not eliminate the Faith. You cannot kill Truth. As Jesus told him, ‘It is hard for you to kick against the goads’ (Acts 26:14). The goads are the true doctrines Paul had such difficulty contradicting. So, Paul stopped persecuting Christians, and began to teach what he previously resisted—for example, that Jesus is Lord and Christ!

## 27. Unity in the Faith

With the assistance of its leaders, the Church strives for *unity in the Faith*. Parallel to this unity in the Faith is something called *unity in the knowledge of the Son of God*. These goals, along with *the unity of the spirit* (Ephesians 4:3) are goals every Christian should strive for. Every believer should aim to be joined closer to other believers, and these are the manners in which we draw closer. For the sake of this study, we’re most interested in the goal of *unity in the Faith*. See it in this context:

Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the Faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves,  
and blown here and there by every wind of teaching

and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

(Ephesians 4:11-14)

This passage is a roadmap to maturity. Bible terminology for maturity here is *the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*. We attain to this *whole measure* by being equipped by Church leaders: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. These four kinds of ministers equip each member of the Body of Christ for service. How do they do that? By teaching us the Word of God, guiding us in obedience to Christ, and correcting every deficiency.

A strong congregation is strong in doctrine. A strong church will identify the *scheming* of false teachers. Spiritual instability is letting ourselves be carried away by *winds of doctrine*, and falling into the *cunning and craftiness* of false teachers. These things impede spiritual growth, leaving certain believers spiritual babies their whole lives.

The bottom line is that false doctrines are the enemy of *the Faith*. To combat such doctrines, *unity in the Faith* works to guarantee the maturity we'll need—maturity that will protect us from falling away from Christ. So, sound doctrine strengthens the Church so that we mature enough to avoid apostasy.

### **28-29. Progress in the Faith... Striving for the Faith**

What does *progress in the Faith* look like? When Paul was with the Philippians, he worked with them to increase both their progress *and joy* in the Faith. To do so, he prayed with them, taught them, ministered with them, and fellowshiped with them. That's what Paul calls *striving together as one for the Faith*. This striving along with other Christians involves striving *against* those who oppose us: religious, political, and societal forces that contradict the Christian Faith.

I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the Faith... conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ... I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the Faith of the Gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

(Philippians 1:25-28)

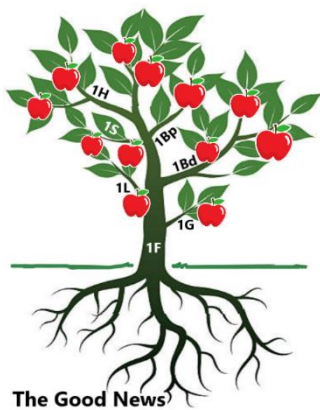
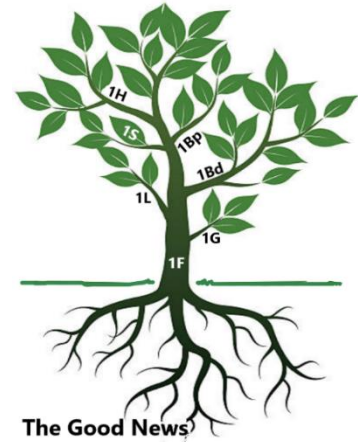
This passage reveals that another name for the sound doctrine is *the Faith of the Gospel*. What does this alternate name for *the Faith* tell us? The preposition *of* means “coming from a source.”

So, *the Faith* comes from a source, the Gospel. The Faith is *of* the Gospel. That is, the roots of the sound doctrine we call *the Faith* are the Gospel.

So, what is the Gospel? Paul breaks it down into four (4) parts:

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this Gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:

1. that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
2. that he was buried
3. that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures
4. and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).



In sum, the Good News is that Jesus was crucified, was buried, got resurrected, and appeared to others. Those constitute the four primary “roots” of the Faith. Observe that each of these four roots are Jesus-focused (which is why we say that ‘no one can lay any foundation other than... Jesus Christ’ [1 Corinthians 3:11], why Paul preached ‘Christ and him crucified’ [1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2], and why the Doctrine of Christ is so indispensable [Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 1:7-11]). We put our faith in Jesus, the man who made salvation available to all of us. Faith in him and his message save.

Only the Gospel sustains the *trunk*—which is *the Faith*. This second kind of faith—the Faith—branches outward into each of the basic truths/realities. These are truths we learn from the Faith (that there is one Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one Baptism, and one God)—but these are still distinct from the one Faith because they are Truths, not doctrines. They are the tree branches in our illustration. When a tree’s roots, trunk, and branches are healthy, the tree will produce fruit quite naturally. Likewise, the fruit of faith (love and good works) come very naturally to someone who has exercised faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in sound doctrine.

The fact that faith starts with the Gospel and finishes with a lifestyle of righteousness is described in this famous passage:

... in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’ (Romans 1:17).

This verse starts by presenting us faith in the Gospel, the kind of faith that saves. This is the kind Paul describes in Ephesians 2:8 when he says ‘... it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...’ The saving grace we receive in the Gospel matures into the doctrine of the apostles—the Faith—in the mind of a believer, by hearing sound teaching. And when that same person is established in the Faith, their life becomes characterized by a faith that works—a faith that *moves*... even mountains!

... if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you (Matthew 17:20).

... in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love (Galatians 5:6; NASB).

### **30. Jesus Dwells in our Hearts Through the Faith**

In a profound prayer of Paul, he asks God to make Jesus dwell in our hearts *through the Faith*. Although most English translations write *through faith*, the original Greek says through *the Faith*. So, what does it mean for ‘Jesus to dwell in our hearts’ and how does sound doctrine lead unto this experience?

Firstly, ‘Jesus dwelling in our hearts’ is having the Holy Spirit living within you constantly. To have the Spirit dwell within you indicates your firmness in the Covenant. The constant presence of the Holy Spirit is the experience of mature believers.

Now that you understand how important having the Spirit dwell in our hearts is, let’s look at how it is the experience Paul wished for the Ephesians, and how he knew that it would only happen *through the Faith*.

We already know that the expression *the Faith* refers to sound doctrine, but we need to also know that the Faith is something to which only mature believers cling. These days, very few start their Christian life with it, and even fewer, after they’ve heard it, cling to it. When someone is

fortunate enough to be grounded in sound doctrine, they become firm enough to obtain the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

... [I pray] that the [the Father] may grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through the Faith (you having been firmly rooted and established in love), in order that you may be strong enough to grasp together with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.  
(Ephesians 3:16-19; NASB)

### Five Steps to Maturity

Paul's style is complicated, but if you are able to 'rightly divide' this passage, you'll see his five-step plan for spiritual maturity. Paul's signature style is expressing magnificent depth of thought combined with his characteristic pathos. His five points are:

1. God strengthens believers with power through his Spirit.
2. We get firmly rooted and established in love.
3. Christ dwells in our hearts *through the Faith* for a reason: in order for us to become strong.
4. How strong do we need to be?
  - a. Strong enough to grasp what is 'the breadth, and length, and height, and depth'—that is, the wonders of the Kingdom!
  - b. Strong enough to know the love of Christ for us. If God loves Jesus by giving him his glory, then Jesus loves us by giving us his glory.
5. We become filled to all the fullness of God.

Peter said of Paul that his writings 'contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort' (2 Peter 3:16), but that doesn't mean that Paul's prayer here is indecipherable. The starting point (step 1) of his prayer is discernible enough, and we can begin our interpretation with it: Paul thanks the Father for granting believers the privilege of being *strengthened with power through his Spirit*.



Being *strengthened with power through God's Spirit* is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit happens to us right after we're baptized in water. It's when we first get a spiritual gift. It's our initiation into the Christian life. So Paul prayed for a start to life in Christ—but he did not stop there.

Paul also prayed for the goal of spiritual growth: that we *be filled to all the fullness of God* (step 5). That is, he prayed for our transformation into resurrected heirs of the Kingdom! Precisely, that's what happens when we get *filled to all the fullness of God*—we are resurrected and become heirs of the Kingdom.

Paul's prayer goes from the starting point to the goal of the Christian life. But let's review each part of his prayer. Let's look at steps 2, 3, and 4.. In God's plan for the life of a believer, step 2 is what Paul calls being *firmly rooted and established in love*. To be firm in love is to be free from any resentment, hatred, or selfishness. A loving person is a forgiving person, and one who seeks the well-being of others. Firmness in love is the capacity to bless those who persecute and slander us. It is being patient with all people at all times.

We should always remind ourselves that *love one another* is the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. Being firm in love is obedience to him. Firmness in love is a characteristic of a true Christian and it is the second step of anyone on the path to spiritual growth. We can only love with the power of the Holy Spirit, which is why being *firmly rooted and established in love* comes after being *strengthened with power through God's Spirit*.

We're now on step 3 of the five-step process to Christian maturity: that Christ dwell in our hearts. If a Christian has developed the discipline of keeping a clear conscience—a discipline we maintain in the *breaking of bread*—Christ will dwell in their heart. He promised he would.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them (John 6:56).

The word *remains* is synonymous with *dwells* or *abides*. Why is it so important that we understand the meaning of the word? Because Paul prays that Christ would dwell in our hearts through *the Faith*. The Faith is the topic of this book. It's also one of the seven great Truths of Christianity.

We must understand what God means when he says *through*. He means that the Faith (the sound doctrine) *causes* Christ to remain in us. *Through* is a preposition indicating cause, like the

expression *by means of* or simply *by*. Behold how vital sound doctrine is to say that Christ dwells in our hearts through *the Faith!* As Jesus says in the passage below, having his words in us is equal to remaining in him!

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (John 15:5-7).

With this, we've arrived at the part of the passage we must interpret rightly in order to define which *faith* Paul was talking about when he wrote that the abiding presence of Christ is in us *through the Faith*.

### **The Right Interpretation of the Faith**

How should we understand *faith* here? Was Paul speaking of the *belief* faith, as in “believing in Jesus”? If so, we should render the text ‘that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.’ On the other hand, was Paul speaking of *the Faith*—the sound doctrine delivered unto us by the Apostles? If so, we should render the text ‘that Christ may dwell in your hearts through the Faith.’ Greek grammar would allow for either of the two translations, but there are good reasons to believe that the second is the best.

One reason is because the original Greek uses the article *the*. Leaving the article out of the translation would be grossly negligent. But that's not the only reason to put *the Faith* in the translation of this verse. The context and flow of the text also guide us to this interpretation—that Paul is speaking of *the Faith*.

The next step (in the Christian experience of maturity Paul is describing) grows out of this *abiding of Christ in our hearts through the Faith*—and it is precisely the step when fortitude and perseverance kick-in to make a Christian strong. The flow of Paul's prayer is ‘... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through the Faith... in order that you may be strong enough to grasp... what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth...’

So, after we've been baptized in the Spirit and have learned to love, and have learned to keep a clear conscience, Christ dwells in our hearts through *the Faith* (Ephesians 3:17)—that is, the

same *Faith* Paul calls the *One Faith* just 10 verses later (in Ephesians 4:5)—one of the Seven Great Truths of Christianity.

### **A Transition from *faith* to *the Faith***

Consider well the context of our focal verse, Ephesians 3:17. It's located right after three verses that speak of *faith in Jesus* and before three verses which speak of the *One Faith*. Observe that Paul is transitioning to the concept of *the Faith* right in this verse (3:17), and that Paul is proving a very important point—that *the Faith* has its origins in faith in Christ. That is, the Faith evolves out of faith in Christ. This is further evidence that the Doctrine of Christ is the most elementary teaching of the Church. It proves something we've repeated again and again, that Christ is our foundation!

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on him [Jesus] will by no means be put to shame' (1 Peter 2:6; NKJV).

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone (Psalm 118:22).

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-20).

<b>Ephesians transition: From saving <i>faith</i> to <i>the Faith</i></b>						
<i>saving faith</i>			<b>transition</b>	<i>the Faith</i>		
<b>1:15</b>	<b>2:8</b>	<b>3:12</b>	<b>3:17-18</b>	<b>4:5</b>	<b>4:11-13</b>	<b>6:16</b>
... ever since I heard about <u>your faith in the Lord Jesus</u> and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you.	... it is by grace you have been saved, <u>through faith</u> ...	In him [Jesus] and through <u>faith in him</u> we may approach God with freedom and confidence.	... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through <u>the Faith</u> ... <u>in order that you may be strong enough to grasp</u> ... what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth...	... one Lord, <u>one Faith</u> , one baptism...	Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people ... until we all reach <u>unity in the Faith</u> ...	In addition to all this, take up <u>the shield of the Faith</u> , with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the Evil One.

Let's try to comprehend what Paul means when he says '... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through the Faith... in order that you may be strong enough...' (Ephesians 3:17). He means that when the Holy Spirit is consistently living in us through the sound doctrine—that makes us strong! This abiding presence of Jesus is the consistent presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The key to maintaining this presence of the Holy Spirit within us is holiness. Indeed, he's called *the Spirit of Holiness* (Romans 1:4) for that reason: He dwells in holiness.

How do we grow in holiness? It is the result of our being firm in the New Covenant (NC). Devoting ourselves to sound doctrine, sharing in fellowship, consuming the blood of Jesus, and prayer (Acts 2:42) are the four key actions of the NC. Devotion to those four things is essential to experiencing the Foundations (Hebrews 6:1-2). Furthermore, we must base our standard of

fellowship on the unity of the spirit (Ephesians 6:3-6). That is, we can only have friends with whom we share the Seven Truths. If we follow these parameters, we'll be strong enough to grasp deeper, broader, and higher truths regarding the Kingdom of God.

But it doesn't stop there. We will also come to know the love of Jesus—something which *surpasses knowledge*. Let's remind ourselves of the passage we're studying:

... [I pray] that the [the Father] may grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through the Faith (you having been firmly rooted and established in love), in order that you may be strong enough to grasp together with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God.  
(Ephesians 3:16-19; NASB)

What exactly is this knowledge of *the love of Christ*? According to another statement of Paul, we only come to know Jesus by sharing in his sufferings. In other words, we get a friend-to-friend knowledge of Christ when we experience persecution in his name. That's what Paul means when he writes about *knowing* Jesus here:

... that I may know him [Jesus] and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death; if somehow I may attain to the Resurrection from the Dead (Philippians 3:10-11).

But the process of maturity is not completed and we still haven't reached our goal even with an intimate knowledge of Christ. Paul says God grants us the privilege of knowing Christ so that we might attain a higher goal: to be filled with all of God's fullness! That's exactly why the objective of Paul's prayer (which is, at the same time, an outline for Christian maturity) is getting a divine nature!

If you reread the Philippians 3 passage above, you'll notice that Paul mentions the Resurrection twice. So, the last step in the long process of Christian growth is the Resurrection. Why? Well, because in it we obtain the divine nature. Once you have the divine nature, you have no more need to mature.

No one is exempt from having to obtain their own resurrection. Obtaining his resurrection was the last step in the process of maturity of the Lord Jesus himself—and yes! He had to mature too.

... in Christ all the fullness of the divine nature [*deity, godhood*] lives [the present tense indicates that this is only now—it was not fulfilled during Jesus' life in the flesh] in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

... heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him [Jesus] so that we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8:17; NASB).

### 31. How Does the Faith Come to Us?

So, the Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word about Christ.

(Romans 10:17)<sup>24</sup>

The context of this verse is Israel's unbelief, the prophets God sent to them, and the stark reality that no one will believe unless they hear from a messenger sent from God. With that, most people suppose that this is a passage about faith in the Gospel. But is it? Is that the kind of faith Paul is talking about?

We challenge the traditional interpretation that this is about Gospel faith, firstly on the basis that the original Greek has the article *the* before the word *faith*. So, it's right to translate the passage *the Faith*—but how can we be sure that it's *the Faith* with a capital *F*? Is Paul's intention to tell us how to get *the Faith*? Is he speaking about sound doctrine—something broader than the saving faith we exercise in the Gospel? To get the answer to that question, we have to resolve a translation issue.

The best translation of the text is the one based on the oldest Greek manuscripts, not the King James or any version which translates the second half of passage as 'the Word of *God*.' The Bible translators with the best textual criticism always translate the second half as 'the Word *about Christ*.'

---

<sup>24</sup> The King James Version has maintained popularity throughout many generations, so much that many of us have memorized this verse as 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.' However, the KJV is based on manuscripts that date from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, not on the oldest manuscripts available, some which go back as far as the 5<sup>th</sup> century. All of the older manuscripts affirm that hearing comes from 'the message/word about Christ.'

So then, what is this *Word about Christ*? This verse has a parallel in Hebrews 6:1-2 which demonstrates that the Foundations emanate from the Doctrine of Christ, the most fundamental doctrine of Christianity—which affirms that Jesus came in the flesh (2 John 1:9). So, Paul is saying that once someone hears that Jesus came in the flesh, the human nature of sin, and believes, they have a basis for all sound doctrine. The Doctrine of Christ is the basis for the Faith.

... many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh... Whoever runs ahead and does not abide in the Doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the Doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. [i.e., that person has both the Truth of One God and One Lord down pat] If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him... (2 John 1:7-10)

... let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the Dead, and eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1-2).

To conclude, *the* Faith comes by hearing the Doctrine of Christ. That is, all sound doctrine has its origins in the one truth that Jesus came in the flesh. The Faith comes to people's hearts by knowing the Jesus of the Bible.

### **32. If You Continue in the Faith**

... although you were previously alienated and hostile in attitude, engaged in evil deeds, yet he [Jesus] has now reconciled you in his body of flesh through death, in order to present you before him [God] holy and blameless and beyond reproach—  
if indeed you continue in the Faith firmly established and steadfast, and not shifting from the hope of the Gospel that you have heard.

(Colossians 1:21-23; NASB)

Once again we have a Bible passage that speaks of *the* Faith. The original Greek has the direct article *the*, and no translator has any license to leave out a word from the Scriptures. Jesus said:

... until Heaven and Earth pass away, not one tiny letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the Law until all takes place (Matthew 5:18-19; LEB).

This is clearly not a Bible passage about saving faith, but about sound doctrine. What must we do with sound doctrine? We must *continue in* it, meaning that we already have it. We receive it from the start of our Christian life. We must be *firmly established* in it—that's because it has become our foundation. And we must be *steadfast* in it, not wavering or allowing ourselves to be influenced by the teachings of men, churchy trends, or the doctrines of demons.

Any honest teacher will point out that the passage uses the word *if* to indicate a conditional clause. And here's the condition: that *if* we are in *the Faith*, then Jesus will present us before God *holy and blameless and beyond reproach*.

On the other hand, if we are not sitting under the sound doctrine, the Doctrine of the Apostles, then Jesus will *not be able* to present us before God holy, blameless, and irreproachable. Why not? Not because of any deficiency in Christ, but our own doctrinal deficiency will weaken us so much that we won't be able to keep a clear conscience. Not having taken advantage of the doctrinal resources at our disposal, we will have failed to strengthen ourselves spiritually and will be disqualified on the Day of Judgment.

### 33. The Faith as you were Taught

... continue to live your lives in him [Christ Jesus], rooted and built up in him, established<sup>25</sup> in the Faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this World.  
(Colossians 2:6-8)

This passage speaks of sound doctrine, calling it *the Faith* in which we were *established*. This Faith of which Paul writes is something passed down to us through teaching because we believe in it *as we were taught*. In other words, the Faith is a teaching. It is a *pattern of sound words* (2 Timothy 1:13) to which we must adhere.

---

<sup>25</sup> The LEB, NASB, and NKJV say *established*. The YLV says *confirmed*.



Have you noticed this *pattern of sound words* in your readings of the Scriptures? There is a doctrine, a set of teachings handed down to us by the apostles which strengthens us against *empty* and *deceptive philosophy*. A philosophy is a thought system. It's an intellectual framework. The World has many ideologies, and no one is prepared to combat against these without first being established in the Faith.

Without the Faith, we will be *taken captive* by the thought systems of this World. What is the origin of the Faith? The Word of God. What is the origin of the thought systems of this World? Paul says that they come from *human tradition* (anything based on holidays, organized religions such as Judaism/Catholicism/Islam, cultural myths/legends) and *the elemental spiritual forces of this World* (such as witchcraft, drug use, zodiac, astrology, New Age religions, ancestor worship).

### **34. Not everyone has the Faith**

... [pray] that we may be delivered from evil and wicked people,  
for not all have the Faith.  
(2 Thessalonians 3:1-2; LEB)

The Lexham English Bible (LEB) gives a footnote here in which they report that the literal translation is *for not of all is the Faith*. What do these words mean? Frankly, not all who call themselves *Christians* have sound doctrine. It's more important now than ever to recognize this since we're on the verge of a worldwide Apostasy. We'll be betrayed by brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and friends precisely because *not of all is the Faith*.

So many people have been let down by their church, but you will not be disappointed if you know what to expect. Jesus warned us of the betrayal, slander, and cold-heartedness to come. The Apostasy will bring out the worst in those who, although they've been in the Church, never received the love of the Truth—people who are Christians in name only. That percentage of people among us who *do not have the Faith*.

### 35. Shipwreck of the Faith

I am setting before you this instruction, Timothy...  
in order that by them [prophecies given to Timothy] you may fight the good fight,  
having faith and a good conscience, which some, because they have rejected these,  
have suffered shipwreck concerning the Faith.

(1 Timothy 1:18-19; LEB)

At the end of this passage, the Greek does not say *their* faith (the NASB clarifies in their footnote that the word *their* should actually be *the*), and we have modified the LEB above to read as per the original Greek, *the Faith*. So, the original text speaks of ‘shipwreck concerning the Faith.’ Such shipwreck occurs when a believer fails at holding fast to the great doctrines of Christianity.

Some men start out as preachers of the Gospel and end up as liars. Some begin with Scriptures and end with old wives’ tales—but nobody moves from one extreme to the other overnight. Preachers do not experience spontaneous spiritual shipwreck. There are two things that they *reject* before they get shipwrecked.

1) They reject debates. They stop fighting *the good fight*. That is, they cease to hold Biblical arguments. They give up on apologetics, forgetting that Jesus was always up for a good fight. He debated with priests, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees without fear. Paul first went to synagogues when he traveled, and he went there because it was the place where someone could argue from the Scriptures. He argued for the Gospel in synagogues, in public spaces, and even on Mars Hill in Athens. With that lifestyle, he could finish his life with the words ‘I have fought the good fight... I have kept the Faith’ (2 Timothy 4:7-8). By making this statement, Paul made it clear that *fighting* the good fight and *keeping* the Faith are synonymous.

2) They *reject faith and a good conscience*. These are the pastors who preach faith alone. They do not preach faith and a good conscience. They say all we need is faith. It’s true that Christians trust in Jesus completely for salvation, and not in themselves. It’s not by our works of righteousness that we’re justified. But salvation is not by faith alone (James 2:24).<sup>26</sup> Salvation is

---

<sup>26</sup> You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone (LEB).

faith plus baptism (Mark 16:16).<sup>27</sup> Salvation is through the washing of rebirth (Titus 3:5).<sup>28</sup> The immediate response to faith in Christ is baptism (Acts 9:17-18)<sup>29</sup> because baptism is the washing away of one's sins (Acts 22:16).<sup>30</sup>

The Scriptures state clearly that faith alone is a false theology, declaring that justification is 'not by faith alone' (James 2:21, 24-25).<sup>31</sup> The Biblical doctrine is to believe and be baptized (Acts 2:38)<sup>32</sup> with the result of receiving a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21).<sup>33</sup>

### 36. Denying the Faith

Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the Faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

(1 Timothy 5:8)

Unrighteous acts are a demonstration that a Christian has denied the Faith. The Faith is not a group of ideas we agree with, but also it's a level of righteousness we live out. That is, the Faith always produces good works. Consequently, good works demonstrate that a person has sound doctrine while evil deeds prove a person has denied the Faith.

John expressed the principle that the fruit of the Faith is righteousness when he wrote to the Church to avoid those who do not teach the Doctrine of Christ. People had to avoid the teachers who were not teaching the Doctrine of Christ because when someone does not hold to sound doctrine, there can be no doubt that they are sinners.

---

<sup>27</sup> Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

<sup>28</sup> He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>29</sup> Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized.

<sup>30</sup> ... what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.

<sup>31</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ... a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And likewise was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers...? (LEB)

<sup>32</sup> Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

<sup>33</sup> ... baptism now saves you, not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience (LEB).

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine [the Doctrine of Christ], do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds (2 John 1:10-11; NKJV).

### 37. The Pattern of Sound Words in the Faith

Hold fast to the pattern of sound words which you heard from me,  
in the Faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

(2 Timothy 1:13-14; LEB)

The command in this passage is to *hold fast*. That means to *grab on* to something or, as it says in the parallel complementary verse, to *guard* something. What do we need to *grab on to* or guard? Not just sound words, but specifically *the pattern* of sound words which Paul preached. Paul is an apostle sent by Jesus. What did the pattern of his words look like? They were words that expressed *the Faith* and the *love* that are in Christ Jesus. Those are two complementary realities. First, the Faith that is in Christ Jesus. Then, the love that is in Christ Jesus.

We don't need to spend much time describing *the Faith* because this book is devoted to defining it. The interesting thing is that we have something more specific than *the Faith* here. Paul calls it *the Faith that is in Christ Jesus*. What is that? It is the teaching that our Lord came in the flesh. It is the most essential doctrine of Christianity. The Bible calls it the Doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 1:7-11).

#### The Love that is in Christ Jesus

We've considered the Faith that is in Christ Jesus, now let's consider the love. There is a kind of love Jesus exemplified for us. Notice how he used the word *as* in this command: 'Love one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34-35). How did Jesus love the apostles? His love was no mushy hugs and kisses love. Rather, it was the love of a pastor for his sheep.

I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father (John 10:14-16).

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand (John 10:27-28).

The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul (Psalm 23:1-3; NKJV).

He guided the disciples towards righteousness, protected them from sin, and ultimately gave his life for them.

I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13).

He asserted himself as their Lord, but he treated them like friends.

You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am (John 13:13). I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:15-16).

With these passages, do you have a better idea of what the love of Christ is? Hopefully so. And, remember that living in this love is part of our life in *the Faith*.

### **The Good Deposit**

Notice that another term Paul uses for *the Faith* is *the good deposit*. Why does Paul use the term *paratheke*,<sup>34</sup> deposit? Because God deposited *the Faith* in us when we first believed—an experience we call the *illumination*. So, this *deposit* is the enlightenment we first get from the Holy Spirit when we are converted from sin to holiness, from darkness to light, from the World to the Kingdom. It's what happens when we first trust in Jesus.

... those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age (Hebrews 6:4-5).

... remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings... (Hebrews 10:32; NASB)

---

<sup>34</sup> Strongs Concordance defines this word as: a deposit, a trust or thing consigned to one's faithful keeping (Vulg. *depositum*): used of the correct knowledge and pure doctrine of the gospel, to be held firmly and faithfully, and to be conscientiously delivered unto others (Retrieved on August 3, 2023 from <https://biblehub.com/greek/3866.htm>).

And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:3-4).

In him [the Word, Jesus] was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John [the Baptist]. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the World (John 1:4-9).

... giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the Kingdom of Light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves (Colossians 1:12-13).

This enlightenment is not only a *deposit*, it’s called the *good* deposit because *the Faith* is good in contrast to the other alternative: theological deception. We avoid the bad if we hold fast to what is *good*. We guard this good deposit *through* the Holy Spirit *who lives in us*. That is, we cannot maintain the Faith through our own power. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit are we able to maintain it.

It is the Holy Spirit who helps us to guard the Faith—in particular, he helps us to keep it in its original apostolic *pattern*. What does that pattern look like? It’s a pattern of *sound words*—that is, it’s a coherent and rational collection of cohesive truths. If the pattern of sound words becomes jumbled, the Faith is lost. Doctrine ceases to be sound doctrine when it doesn’t make sense, as is the case of Trinitarianism, or the notion that Jesus came to us in the divine nature. These things simply do not make sense. They’re illogical.

Doctrine also ceases to be sound when it doesn’t produce the fruit of right living (that is, the fruit of *righteousness*). If the doctrine a person preaches does not produce godliness, then we must reject it. The teaching must be what Paul calls *the doctrine conforming to godliness*. It must consist of what Paul calls *sound words*.

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a sick craving for controversial questions and disputes about words, from which come envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant

friction between people of depraved mind and deprived of the Truth... (1 Timothy 6:3-5; NASB)

### 38. Jeopardizing the Faith

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of Truth.

But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the Truth, claiming that the Resurrection has already taken place; and they are jeopardizing the Faith of some.

(2 Timothy 2:15-18; NASB)

Hymenaeus and Philetus were teachers in the Church at the time of Paul. They had been good teachers, but they strayed from the Truth. How? They taught erroneously regarding the Resurrection of the Dead. If someone's *talk* (as Paul calls it) contradicts a fundamental doctrine (Hebrews 6:1-2), they *jeopardize* people's Faith. That is, they put their thoughts and their actions at great risk. What these teachers do is already ungodly, but their *chatter* guides God's people to *further ungodliness*.

Conscientious of the peril doctrinal error produces, Paul commands Timothy to be diligent, but in what? He exhorted him to be diligent with the way he handled the Bible. God evaluates every Christian teacher on the basis of how they treat the Scriptures. Does a teacher handle the Bible *accurately*, or not? A teacher can *go astray* from the Truth. A teacher can slip into error and become a blind guide to the blind. If that happens, the end result is catastrophic—both fall into a pit.

### 39-40. Be Sound in the Faith

He [an overseer/pastor] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. One of Crete’s own prophets has said it: ‘Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.’ This saying is true.

Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the Faith and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the Truth.

(Titus 1:9-14)

The opposite of those who are *sound in the Faith* are those who *reject the Truth*. That antithesis demonstrates that *the Faith* and *the Truth* are synonymous. Indeed, isn’t the One Faith one of the seven great Truths?

Paul was concerned that due to a culture renowned for its indiscipline, the Cretans would fall prey to the false teachings of those who were spreading *meaningless talk and deception*—false teachings that had been spread by Jewish rabbis. Paul’s solution was for the head pastors to sharply rebuke Cretan Christians who lent an ear to the false teachers. Those who paid attention to Jewish myths and human commandments needed to be warned sternly.

In Titus’ congregation, the most important issue was that the men who led in the Church had to be able to teach sound doctrine. They had to be equipped in what Paul called *the message* and *sound doctrine*. That’s why Paul starts with an exhortation about how a senior pastor (that’s what overseer/bishop means) ‘must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught.’ The word *as* implies that the *message* was taught a certain way by the apostles.

Pastors must hold firmly to the message and meaning of the apostles. Paul gives two reasons: 1. to ‘encourage others by sound doctrine’ and 2. to ‘refute those who oppose it.’ A little later in the same letter, Paul broadens the purview of his exhortation, insisting that all the older men, not only the senior pastors, should be *sound in the Faith*.



Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled,  
and sound in the Faith, in love, and in endurance.  
(Titus 2:2; NIV modified to reflect the original Greek with *the Faith*)

#### 41. Love in the Faith

Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the Faith.  
(Titus 3:15)

What a beautiful expression: to “love someone in the Faith.” What is it? It is to share Christian brotherhood with someone. Such fellowship, fellowship in the Faith, is based on shared ideas. In fact, such brotherhood based on thinking the same way; that is believing the same doctrines. It’s unity in the soul, the soul being the part of our being which encompasses our minds (along with our volition and emotions). It’s not quite the unity of the spirit (Ephesians 6:4-6), which is more completed, but it’s unity mind. It’s what Paul pleaded for the Philippian believers to accomplish in another passage, *being of the same mind* (Philippians 4:2; NASB). Along that line of thought, Paul said that his goal with the Roman congregation was:

... that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:6).

#### 42. Fellowship in the Faith

I pray that your fellowship in the Faith may become effective in the knowledge of  
every good thing that is in us for Christ.  
(Philemon 1:6; LEB)<sup>35</sup>

Fellowship is normally based on a common culture. Churches around the world bring people together under distinct ethnic, socio-political, and linguistic rubrics. That’s natural, and not necessarily wrong. People feel good being with those who speak their language, who are in the same social strata, and who have the same world view. But there is something greater than these natural bonds: fellowship in *the Faith*. True brotherhood existed on the birthday of the Church, at

---

<sup>35</sup> This is the LEB translation and we added the article *the*, since the article is found in the original Greek. What you see here is similar to the NIV translation: ‘your partnership with us in the Faith.’

the first Pentecost, in the midst of a diversity of languages and cultures. Fellowship in the Faith bound them together.

The Christians in that first church were devoted to four things: The doctrine of the apostles, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). The order of these four commitments matter—you can't be a spiritual brother to someone who does not agree with your fundamental beliefs. That's why they were devoted to doctrine first and foremost. Secondly, they were committed to fellowship—sharing life experiences. Those first Christians started with common truths and they moved on to common experiences.

Back to Paul's prayer. What did Paul ask God to produce out of Philemon's fellowship in the Faith? He prayed that it would 'become effective in the knowledge of every good thing...' So, that fellowship was going to have an effect. It would produce knowledge, and not just some knowledge. It would produce *complete* knowledge. It would produce 'the knowledge of every good thing that is in us for Christ.'

Here's what we must gather from this passage: A fellowship grounded in sound doctrine leads us to higher levels of truth. It leads us to the knowledge of everything that is good, which is a lot of things! A fellowship based in sound doctrine will lead us to a broad knowledge of the Kingdom, of righteousness, of judgment, and of the will of God. Fellowship *in the Faith* will lead us to the heights of knowledge. When you build on strong foundations, the sky's the limit.

### 43. A Faith as Valuable as Ours

Simon Peter... to those who have obtained a Faith equal in value to ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord...  
by applying all diligence, supply with your Faith<sup>36</sup> excellence of character, and with excellence of character, knowledge, and with knowledge, self-control, and with self-control, patient endurance, and with patient endurance, godliness, and with godliness, brotherly love, and with brotherly love, love.  
(2 Peter 1:1, 5-7; LEB)

Note firstly here that the apostle Peter didn't direct his epistle to just anybody. He directed his letter specifically to people who had obtained a Faith equal in value to the Faith he and the original apostles had. In other words, Peter was writing to those who had *the Doctrine of the Apostles* (Acts 2:42). Those are the people you should direct your ministry to also—and for a good reason: with them, you have unity. With them, you share Truth, the unity of the spirit.

Peter reinforces this idea, the idea that he was directing his words to people based on the fact that they shared Truth with him by highlighting that they had obtained their blessings through:

1. the knowledge of God and of Jesus (v. 2)
2. the knowledge of the One who called us (that's Jesus, v. 3)

Did you notice that these are two essential realities—God and Jesus the Lord (Ephesians 4:3-6)? Knowing them is indispensable. Even Jesus said so:

'You do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied. 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also' (John 8:19).

... anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me (John 16:2-3).

---

<sup>36</sup> Let it be known that the word *Faith* is accompanied by the article *the* in the Greek. Nonetheless, since it doesn't translate well to say 'the Faith of yours,' we have kept it the way most Bible versions have translated it, but with a capital *F* in *Faith*, since the intent of Paul was to speak of *the Faith*.

#### 44. Contend for the Faith

We're now at the penultimate passage on the Faith, a verse that shows what we should do with the Faith. We should contend for it, and contend *earnestly* (NASB, NKJV, KJV)!

I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the Faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.  
(Jude 1:3; NKJV)

We observe from Jude that the Faith is:

- a. Something for which we must *contend* earnestly.
- b. Something which was delivered *once and for all*.

How does one go about *contending* for the Faith? Well, you could start by preparing arguments. Then, you would have to be ready and willing to debate with other people over doctrines by using the Scriptures. You should use the armor of God, with the one offensive weapon of 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God' (Ephesians 6:17).

Now, to *contend* means to fight, so we have to be tough. We have to show manliness because we're going to take some blows. We can't give up. That's why Paul exhorted in another epistle:

Be on the alert, stand firm in the Faith, act like men, be strong (1 Corinthians 16:13; NASB).

#### How, When, Who?

Now, if the Faith was delivered once for all, when precisely did that historical moment occur—and who delivered the Faith at that historical moment? Did Jesus deliver it? No. Jesus never wrote a book or gave a conclusive doctrinal statement. The Lord—whose ministry was directed exclusively to the Jews—assumed that his hearers already had the basic foundations in One God, one Spirit, and one Hope. That's why, speaking of the new birth in the Spirit, he said to Nicodemus:

'You are Israel's teacher,' said Jesus, 'and do you not understand these things?' (John 3:10)

What did Nicodemus not understand (to the chagrin of Jesus)? That the Spirit moves as he wishes and gives new life (a new birth) to whom he wishes so that they may enter the Kingdom.

In other words, Nicodemus did not have a basic understanding of the Holy Spirit or the Hope. Jesus went on to tell Nicodemus:

... no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit (John 3:5-8).

Jesus supposed that anyone teaching in Israel would understand that the Spirit comes and goes as he pleases. Jesus supposed that anyone familiar with the Bible would know that the Spirit decides who gets life and when they get it. Jesus spoke of the Spirit and the Kingdom in the same breath on another occasion, demonstrating that these are OT basics.

... if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you (Matthew 12:28).

Indeed, Christ presumed that his proclamation of the Kingdom was understood by all the Jews who heard him. Why? Because the one Hope was already a basic reality of Israeli culture. The hope of the Kingdom was the heart of Christ's message, a message well-received by the Jewish people to whom he preached.

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God... 'The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the Good News!' (Mark 1:14-15)

Jesus also presumed that everyone listening to him would at the very least feign a knowledge of God. When he rebuked them for not knowing God, he was not saying that they were believers in Baal, Moloch, or Dagon. He meant it in the sense that they did not know the Father in an intimate way. In other words, they didn't love God despite knowing in their hearts, even though it was common knowledge among the Jews that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the One True God.

My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him (John 8:54).

[The Pharisees said:] 'The only Father we have is God Himself.'

[Jesus responded:] 'If God were your Father, you would love me...' (John 8:41-42)

Jesus' teaching method was colorful and diverse, although he specialized in parables. Master teacher he was, he did not use doctrinal summaries. As we just saw, he reinforced the fundamental truths of One God, one Hope, and one Spirit—but three of while he hinted at the truths which would soon complete the Seven Truths when the New Covenant was established. Those three new Truths (that Christ is Lord, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the Church) would be fulfilled at Pentecost.

Knowing that these three had not been fulfilled yet, Jesus didn't make any references to the Faith except as a future phenomenon. How could he if the Faith had not yet become complete yet? If the one Lord, one Body, and one Baptism had not become realities yet?

Jesus would not speak of the Faith, the central column of the Seven Truths, unless all of the Truths had become established as realities. But Christ hadn't yet been declared Lord, the Church had not yet been born, and the Holy Spirit baptism was not yet granted. So, Jesus asked about the future status of the Faith:

... when the Son of Man comes, will he find the Faith on the Earth (Luke 18:8)?

We conclude that the Lord Jesus did not officially deliver unto us the Faith during his earthly ministry—but who was it then? It's someone Jesus told us about. It's someone Jesus said would deliver the Faith to us—none other than the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth!

... when he the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the Truth... the Spirit will receive from me [Jesus] what he will make known to you (John 16:13, 15).

### **The Spirit through Peter**

Sound good? The Spirit came and guided the Church into all Truth. But precisely *how* and *when* did the Holy Spirit deliver the Truth to the Church? The *how* is through a man because God's revelation always comes through a prophet. God uses us as his instruments—and to make us holy, he moves us by his Spirit.

Surely the LORD God does nothing unless he reveals his secret to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7-8).

... know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Peter 1:20-21).

More precisely, the Faith was delivered to us by an Apostle named Peter. The Spirit of God delivered the Faith on a day recorded for us in Acts 2, the Pentecost when Peter preached a message that brought more than 3,000 people into the fold. The birth of the Church was not only a result of Peter's preaching, it was the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in which he declared that Peter would be *the Rock* upon which our Lord would build his Church. The doctrinal content of Peter's sermon in Acts 2 was the bedrock of Truth the Church would stand upon from that point onward!

### **Synonyms for *the Faith***

We just looked at 41 passages which use the term *the Faith*, and there's still another (#45) for us to examine. However, there are plenty of many Bible passages which describe the Faith without using the expression *the Faith* itself. Some use different modifications of the word *Faith* such as *your most holy Faith* (Jude 1:3), *our Faith* (1 John 5:4),<sup>37</sup> or *your Faith* (2 Peter 1:5). Still other passages use alternate words to express the One Faith, words like: confession / profession, elementary principles, the pure milk of the Word, the faithful Word, or the Doctrine of the Apostles.

#### **a. confession / profession**

The words *confession* and *profession* are used synonymously with *the Faith* in the NT. A *confession* or *profession* occurs the act of publicly declaring the Truths a Christian believes. Such an act is not for the faint-hearted. It requires bravery and boldness to state the Truths of the Christian Faith in the midst of opposition.

In the following passages, the Greek word *homologia* is used, a word which Strong's Concordance defines as: *a common confession*. Strong's says that *homologia* 'can refer to

---

<sup>37</sup> Literally: *the Faith of us* [Greek, *he pistis hemon*]. The direct article *the* is there, it just doesn't translate well into English, so no Bible translations use it.

the collective agreement of Christians about what God loves and hates – and the courage to proclaim it!’<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, holy brothers, sharers in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, who was faithful to the One who appointed him (Hebrews 3:1-2; LEB).

Therefore, because we have a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens [that is, since Christ has guaranteed our access to God who dwells in the Third Heaven], Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession (Hebrews 4:14; LEB).<sup>39</sup>

... others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 9:13).

---

<sup>38</sup> Retrieved on May 31, 2023 at <https://biblehub.com/greek/3671.htm>

<sup>39</sup> If you profess the Kingdom, that is called a *confession*. Such a confession is not a general profession of the Faith. That is, it's not a declaration of the complete set of doctrines we know to be the Doctrine of the Apostles. Rather, it's a declaration of just one of the Truths we hold to. A great example of a *confession* is what Jesus said in the presence of Pontius Pilate:

My Kingdom is not of this World (John 18:36).

Indeed, even Paul affirmed that this declaration our Lord made before Pontius Pilate was a *confession*. Furthermore, Paul associated this confession with today's fight the Church still wages for the Faith.

Fight the good fight of the Faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession... (1 Timothy 6:12-14)

Like Jesus, you will experience moments when the pressure of the World upon you is so strong that you are forced to declare your Kingdom hope. The moment will arrive when we must decide whether we will or will not declare our hope in the Kingdom of Heaven in the presence of our enemies.

... may we hold fast the unwavering profession of the hope... (Hebrews 10:23; YLT).

... always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15; NASB).

The NIV translators did not use the word *confession* in the verse at hand, but instead translated the Greek *homologias* as 'the Faith we profess.' That reflects how close the term *confession* is to *the Faith*.

Therefore, since we have a great High Priest who has ascended into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the Faith we profess (Hebrews 4:14; NIV).



## **b. elementary principles / beginning elements**

... although you ought to be teachers by this time, you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements [*elementary principles*; NASB] of the oracles of God (Hebrews 5:12; LEB).

## **c. the pure milk of the Word**

... you have need of milk, not solid food. For everyone who partakes of milk is unacquainted with the message of righteousness, because he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature (Hebrews 5:12-14; LEB).

... like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Peter 2:2; NASB).

## **d. the faithful word**

... the overseer must... [hold] firmly the faithful Word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it (Titus 1:7-9; NASB)

## **e. the Doctrine of the Apostles**

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42; NKJV).

## **f. My (Paul's) Doctrine**

What made Timothy a great pastor was that he followed the ministry of the apostle Paul. Paul complimented Timothy for following him—particularly for following what he called *my doctrine*. This clearly indicates that every pastor has his own doctrine, his interpretation of the Scriptures for which he is responsible before God. This is much different from havingIf he's a true servant of the Almighty, he won't have a *private* interpretation (2 Peter 1:20; KJV), which is prohibited. There cannot be a doctrine a)—that is, something that the teacher would ever want to copywrite or put his name upon.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, a pastor's teaching belongs to him. Undeniably,

---

<sup>40</sup> Examples of this are what Luther and Lutheranism, Calvin and Calvinism, John Wesley and the Wesleyan church, or Menno Simmons and the Mennonite church.

it. He decides what it will be and is responsible for its effect. His doctrine, even if it's straight from the Bible, passes through the filter of his own mind before he shares it with others.

Paul's doctrine is first on his list of things he transmitted to Timothy, a list which also includes Paul's faith. Although in the original Greek, there is an article [*the*] before *faith*, it's best not to translate it as *the Faith*, but rather, *my faith*. The list of items begins with the possessive *my* so that each item should not get the article *the* in English, but the possessive pronoun *my*. The most natural reading is this:

You, however, have closely followed my doctrine, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings... (2 Timothy 3:10)

This passage is different from others we've examined. Although the words *the faith* appear in the original Greek, they should not be translated as *the Faith* (with a capital *F*). They should be translated as *my faith*. We'll explain why in a moment, but first we need to recognize that the first item on Paul's list, that which he calls *my doctrine* is actually *the Faith*. In other words, Paul lauds Timothy for following Paul's *teaching* which was, in fact, *the Faith*. It's indisputable that Paul taught the same doctrine of the Apostles, the sound doctrine of the NT, as evidenced by the fact that 13 of the 27 books of the NT were authored by Paul). He verified that his doctrine was inspired by God and in accordance with the Doctrine of the Apostles on a visit to Jerusalem:

... when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother... (Galatians 1:15-19)

To clarify what Paul meant by *my faith*, he was speaking of his own fruit-producing faith, not of the One Faith. James likewise spoke of a personal fruit-producing faith. James challenges others:

Show me your faith without the works and I will show you my faith by my works (James 2:17).

Fruit-producing faith is very important. Without it, we are useless. But this book is about *the Faith*, the sound doctrine, and we wouldn't have you miss sight of the Faith in this passage—again, it appears as what Paul calls *my doctrine*.

#### 45. One Faith Among Seven Truths

Now we've come to our final *the Faith* passage, a Bible passage that showcases *the Faith* like no other. But first, we've got to pause momentarily to recognize a challenge to the proper interpretation of this passage. These vital verses, which define the Faith, have One Faith as a component. Observe that in your reading, please:

Being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Body, and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one Hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all...  
(Ephesians 4:4-5; NASB)

Anyone should admit that defining the Faith as “seven truths among which is One Faith” is a circular definition—a classic error in logic in which one defines a word by using the word itself. It's like saying that the definition of a motorhome is “a home with a motor.” The definition of the Faith cannot include One Faith.

How do we reconcile the fact that on the list of the great Truths of Christianity, a list which we presume to be the Christian Faith, the term *one Faith* is found? Certainly, the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures, did not commit an error when he put *one Faith* on this list. Rather, he did something wise, revealing to us what the one Faith really is: a Truth among seven great Truths.

Ephesians 4:3-6 lays out for us the essential Truths like no other Bible passage. In one concise statement, Paul presents the great realities all believers share. For example, we share one God. All believers have one God in common. We also have one Hope, the Kingdom. We pursue that hope together—seeking first the Kingdom of God.

If we share all seven realities (the one Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and the one God), that makes for what the Bible calls a *bond of peace* among us. We default to these seven truths. Anyone who is truly Christian will not argue about them. We only argue *for* them. We do not argue *about* them. In fact, anyone born of God will handle these Truths with love. As the famous saying goes: charity in all things.

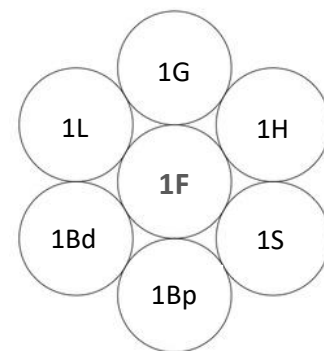
In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.<sup>41</sup>

Paul (in Ephesians 4:3-6) affirms that every Christian must diligently labor to *preserve* this bond of unity. Jude goes one step further and states that we must ‘contend for the Faith’ (Jude 1:3). So we preserve these truths and contend for them. But we also must preach them. See that here:

... preach the Word... with careful instruction... [because] the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

### Receiving the Seven Truths

Four of the seven realities were established from ancient times: One God, one Spirit, one Hope, and one Faith. Those truths can be seen from the early chapters of Genesis. For example, God and the Holy Spirit are in the first two verses of Genesis. God delivered Earth into the hands of Adam, establishing the rule of man on the Earth—the Kingdom Hope. Then other realities only came to light on the day of Pentecost: one Lord, one Baptism, and one Body.



Indeed, that first Christian Pentecost, the one that occurred after the Resurrection of Christ, was the day the one Lord was announced, the day the one Baptism was given, and the day the one



Body was created! On that day, the long-awaited promise of a New Covenant became real to a group of people destined to be known as *Christians*.

As an illustration of what a true Christian congregation is (see Revelation 1:20) and an illustration of what it means for such a congregation to hold forth the Seven Truths, God ordered the design of the lampstand.<sup>42</sup> Observe it well, noticing in particular that it consisted of three arms on one the left, a central stem, and three arms on the right.

---

<sup>41</sup> This quote cannot be attributed to Augustine of Hippo, as is the custom of many who cite it. Rather, it can be traced to a Dalmatian Archbishop who unfortunately never earned a good reputation, a man by the name of Marco Antonio de Dominis, d. 1624.

<sup>42</sup> Retrieved on June 2, 2023 at [https://clipart-library.com/images/LT\\_dd96aac.jpg](https://clipart-library.com/images/LT_dd96aac.jpg).

The Church is the light of the World (Matthew 5:14). We are the stewards of Truth to people everywhere. Indeed, the Scriptures say we are the pillar and foundation of the Truth (1 Timothy 3:15)—a designation that does not belong to universities, research institutions, or world governments. The only matter to resolve is how to rightly divide the Truths we hold forth—but the lampstand holds the secret to this enigma. There are seven great Truths. Three have their origins in the OT, and three have their origins in the NT. One binds them together.

Consider what Jesus said about the scribes (Jewish teachers of the Law) who become NT disciples, and how they are to manage things both new and old.

... every scribe who has become a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure new things and old (Matthew 13:52; NASB).

The old Truths we manage are one God, one Spirit, and one Hope. The new truths from our treasure are one Lord, one Baptism, and one Body. The stem of the lampstand is unique. It is not a branch. Rather, it's the central column from which all branches emanate. All Truth is found in it, although each Truth is independent from it. It is the one Faith, delivered once for all to the saints at Pentecost courtesy of the Holy Spirit.

Consider how our God lives independent of the Faith. Consider how our Lord and even the Hope of the Kingdom (although they can be clearly identified in Christian doctrine), stand independent of the Faith. Jesus will be the Eternal Lord regardless of whether people believe in the Bible. The Kingdom will come whether or not people know sound doctrine. Likewise, the Spirit, his baptism, and the Church all exist independently of sound doctrine. They can all be explained through doctrine, but they are not doctrines. They are not teachings, they are realities! They are, along with the one Faith, the Seven Great Truths.

### **The Lampstand = A Congregation**

The lampstand represents a Christian congregation. Jesus walks in the midst of all congregations today. They belong to him. He tends to them.

... after turning I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a Son of Man... As for the mystery of... the seven golden lampstands... the seven lampstands are the seven churches (Revelation 1:12-13, 20; NASB).

God did not task the members of the first church in history, the church at Jerusalem, with making anything up. Nobody invented the Seven Great Truths of the Christian Faith. However, there was a man who announced them for the first time, the apostle Peter.

### **The Rock Upon Whom the Church was Built**

Peter was the Rock upon whom Jesus built his Church. Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2 authoritatively laid out the Faith. He gave particular emphasis on three new truths essential to the New Covenant.

#### 1. That Jesus is Lord.

Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him... you... put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the Dead... God has raised this Jesus to life... let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:22, 23-24, 32, 36).

#### 2. That we must be baptized in the Spirit.

... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the Last Days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy... Exalted to the right hand of God, he [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear (Acts 2:17-18, 33).

#### 3. That we are Christ's Body, the Church.

The effect of Peter's message was that the Church was born. The Jerusalem congregation was the first church in history, with a membership of more than 3,120 people on its first day. The believers dedicated themselves to four things: the Doctrine of the Apostles, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer.

Simplicity, power, holiness, and (most importantly) love characterized their fellowship. The Jerusalem church had no bank account, no building, and no worship team. It became famous by word of mouth, not by advertising. Its reputation was impeccable. People who knew them were witnesses of the power God had granted them.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the Apostles' doctrine and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer... Every day they continued to meet together in the Temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:41-42, 46-47).

### **Salvation in the First Church**

Every day Jesus added to the number of people in the church, and that number was called 'those who were being saved' (Acts 2:47). So lots of people got saved through that first church! Indeed, the message of salvation was a major part of Peter's proclamation.

'... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved...' With many other words he [Peter] warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' Those who accepted his message were baptized... (Acts 2:21, 40-41)

A New Covenant was established when people were baptized in the name of Jesus—a new path to salvation.

God expected the first Christians to conserve the unity of the spirit, and they did a great job conserving it. The question now is, will *we* conserve it? Or, more pointedly, does your local congregation even *have* unity in the first place? Jesus spoke of 10 virgins and only 5 of them had the oil necessary to keep their lamps lit in order to enter into the wedding feast. How many congregations have enough anointing to illuminate their path to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb?<sup>43</sup>



### **Where the One Faith Fits In**

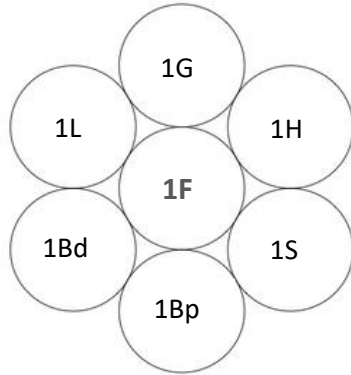
God commissioned the first Christians with ministering three new Truths, and they did so. They became the Body of Christ, announced the lordship of Jesus, and they administered the baptism

---

<sup>43</sup> Retrieved on June 2, 2023 at <http://get drawings.com/ menorah-drawing>.

of the Holy Spirit. What a milestone in human history! They proclaimed the Faith—reinforcing it with the OT Truths of one God, one Spirit, and one Hope.

Don't forget: Three other realities had already been established long before Pentecost. Ages



before the Church ever existed, one God (monotheism), one Spirit, and one Hope constituted the religious foundations of the Jewish people. Christians were to conserve these along with the new truths: The one Lord, one Body, and one Baptism. So, we've identified the origins of the seven realities: three are from the NT and three were ancient. Another way of picturing them is in the illustration to the left in which you can see how every Truth is connected to the one Faith.

### **The Unity of the spirit**

Every Christian automatically has the seven realities in common with every other Christian because these realities are what unite us—but in what way do we share them? In what dimension are they shared among us? Well, we certainly don't share the seven realities *bodily*. That is, these seven realities are called the unity of the *spirit* for a reason. We don't share these realities on a physical plane, but on a spiritual plane.

We also don't share the Seven Truths on a merely intellectual or emotional plane. The intellectual and emotional dimensions of our existence belong to the soul. The Bible does not call the Seven Truths the unity of the *soul*. They are the unity of the *spirit*. We share these truths in the deepest part of our being: in our spirit. That is, we believe them with all our heart.





Once again, we must view these Seven Truths as those truths which constitute the *spiritual unity* a Christian has in common with fellow Christians everywhere—in any other part of the World. These truths overcome the limits of space.

These Seven Truths also surpass the limits of time—those who lived during other periods of World history are one with us. Some other time periods include: the generation of the Apostles, the generation of the apostolic fathers (believers who lived through the

Roman persecutions), Byzantine Christians, and Medieval believers are also one with us. Reformation believers, Renaissance-period believers, and Christians who lived during the Industrial Revolution who held to these truths are one with us. The believers of the Colonial Period, the Modern Age, and the Postmodern Age (including the World Wars) who held to these truths are one with us. We are bound to believers from every generation! You and I live in a time of mind-boggling technological advances—a digital revolution. It sometimes makes us feel so unique in history, but we are connected to believers from generations past through this unity we share in the spirit.

Bodily unity is reserved for married couples and those who share the same genes (parents, siblings, and children). Unity of culture or feelings is reserved for neighbors, those from one's home town and people with the same affinities, like fans of the same sports team. Those constitute soul-based unity. However, the unity we share in the deepest part of our being—in the *spirit*—is established on the basis of the Seven Realities. The spiritual truths which bind us together spiritually are one Faith, Body, one Spirit, one Hope, one Lord, one Baptism, and one God.

## **Conclusion: How it all Fits Together**

**The Faith** is sound doctrine (summarized in the Doctrine of Christ and the Doctrine of the Apostles as seen in their writings in the NT) plus actions such as the *traditions* (like baptism, home prayer groups, and the Lord's Supper) and every good action that stems from the Fundamentals (Hebrews 6:1-2) such as repentance, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the laying on of hands. Proper behaviors among males and females, young people and old, children and parents, husbands and wives, subordinates and bosses, are also part of the Faith.

Note that the Fundamentals are all activities, the first five of which God expects us to experience in this life (repentance from sins, hearing God's Word with faith, getting baptized in water and the Spirit, and receiving or giving the laying on of hands). The last two Fundamentals, the Resurrection of the Dead and the Final Judgment, are activities every human being who has ever existed will experience in the next life.

Current activities God has assigned to the Christian Church are based upon the Doctrine of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). A commitment to those doctrines, to which the people of the first church dedicated themselves, inspired three other commitments: fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. These basic activities, inspired by sound doctrine, also constitute *the Faith*.

The Faith is one of the Seven Great Truths. Together, these truths produce perfect spiritual unity even though each one is an independent truth. That is, each one can stand alone. We have the Faith, but the other six are realities independent of the Faith. The Faith is a Truth, just like they are, but the Faith consists of doctrines. The other six truths are not doctrines.

- God is *not a doctrine*. He's the Creator.
- Jesus is *not a doctrine*. He's a man.
- The Holy Spirit is *not a doctrine*. He's a spirit-being.
- The Hope is *not a doctrine*. It's a future government.
- The One Body is *not a doctrine*, but a fellowship.
- The baptism in the Holy Spirit is *not a doctrine*, but an experience of new birth!

## Ten Keys

There are ten keys to the Christian life. They work in conjunction so that the doors of God's grace open for us: the Doctrine of Christ, the Gospel of the Kingdom, the New Covenant, the Doctrine of the Apostles, the Fundamentals, the traditions, the Faith, the unity of the spirit, virtuous living, and our calling. Building upon these one-by-one in order to access God's grace is the secret to the abundant life Jesus promised.

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly (John 10:10; NKJV).

1. The **Doctrine of Christ** – Regarding salvation, there's no more basic truth. If we follow in the footsteps of the man who was like us in every way but without sin (Hebrews 2:17; 4:15) we can be saved from sin. This doctrine lays the only groundwork for a right interpretation of the life of the Jesus of the Bible. Such a groundwork can be stated in 5 simple words—Jesus came in the flesh.

With this doctrine, we know that we can follow Christ's example of walking in the spirit even while we are in the flesh. It means that we need the baptism of the Spirit just as he did. It means that being born a human does not make us sinners.

But here's where the rubber hits the road: The Doctrine of Christ means that we can be made perfect in our conscience, just as God made Jesus *perfect* (Hebrews 2:10; 5:9). In fact, God has always had the aim of making us *perfect in conscience* (Hebrews 9:9; NASB), and now we have the means to accomplish this goal, through the blood of Christ—as given to us in the Lord's Supper.

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

When Paul expressed that he lived with a clear conscience, men hated him for it! To this day, it's one of the Christian truths that the false shepherds and corrupt religious leaders most hate.

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, ‘My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.’ At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth (Acts 23:1-2).

I have hope in God... that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a blameless conscience toward God and men (Acts 24:15-16; NKJV).

2. The **Gospel** of the Kingdom – Paul defines the Gospel as having four parts: Christ was crucified, was buried, was resurrected, and appeared to Peter, the Twelve Apostles, and many other credible witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:1-6). These four statements prove that Jesus paid our sin debt with God, suffered death for us in Hades, was vindicated by the Father, and has left a trustworthy testimony. How is this the good news of the Kingdom? In that if we crucify our sins, and die with him, we will also be resurrected with Christ unto a Kingdom hope. In other words, Jesus has laid the legal groundwork for us to inherit eternal life!

3. The **New Covenant** (NC) – This is God’s contract with anyone who believes in Jesus, a contract that has signs. The Old Covenant in Moses had the sign of circumcision, but the NC in Christ has the signs of water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Sincere participation in these activities indicates that we are on the road to the Kingdom. With them, we remain in Christ, giving us the guarantee that we will be saved.

4. The **Doctrine of the Apostles** – Acts 2:42 tells us that the first commitment of the first Christian church in history was to the doctrine of the Apostles. That church was the mother of all churches, having received the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit and having been pastored by the Twelve Apostles. Their teachings have been conserved for us in the 27 books of the New Testament (from Matthew to Revelation).

5. The **Fundamentals** – These seven experiences are defined for us in Hebrews 6:1-2, and they constitute what the Bible calls spiritual *milk* (Hebrews 5:12-14) because understanding these experiences is for new believers, babes in Christ. The first five Fundamentals are the basic experiences every new believer must have now (repentance, faith in God, baptism in water, baptism in the Spirit, and the laying on of hands). The last two are experiences we’ll have in the

future (be resurrected and be judged according to our actions). Sincere pastors will teach these to new believers.

6. The **Traditions** – There are at least three Christian traditions: water baptism, the laying on of hands, and the Lord’s Supper. Every church in the World practices these traditions to one degree or another, with varying degrees of frequency; and with different degrees of faith. Some congregations also perform the washing of feet in remembrance of what Jesus did to the Twelve Apostles the night before he was crucified.

Other traditions are the meetings in homes, the giving of offerings, meeting together on Sunday (the Lord’s Day), and the *Lord’s Prayer* (i.e., the *Our Father*)—a prayer modeled after the one Jesus taught his disciples. Note that all of the traditions are simple, free of financial investment, and easy to understand.

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught, whether by spoken word or by letter from us (2 Thessalonians 2:15; LEB)

7. The **Faith** – This is one of seven great Christian Truths or *realities*. In other words, it’s a real set of doctrines God has instructed all people to believe. The Faith is an undeniable reality, and you can find it in a certain place: the New Testament.

When the Bible says that there’s one Faith, that means there are not two, three, or four options for what we should teach. Different theologies are a lie. The doctrines of men are a deception. Rather, there is one set of doctrines which all true Christians have in common—a baseline we call the Faith or the *Christian Faith*.

The Faith consists of doctrines, but not only doctrines. It is a Truth that transforms. It’s the successful application of the Gospel, sound doctrine, the traditions, and the righteousness of Christ to a person’s life. The Holy Spirit produces Christ’s righteousness in us to the degree that we live according to sound doctrine. We think well, speak well, and act well if we’re in the Faith. And that’s because if we’re in the Faith, we’re in the New Covenant. That is, we have received the Holy Spirit and we abide in Christ—by keeping a clear conscience we *remain* in him.

8. The **unity of the spirit** – The unity of the spirit is automatic. It belongs to believers everywhere instantly. The moment a person is born again, he has One God, one Lord, and one Spirit. He has one baptism, one hope, and has become part of one Body. The unity of the spirit belongs to every believer instantly, but we must struggle to conserve it. We conserve it by affirming the seven essential Truths, including the doctrine we know as the one Faith.

We must *make every effort to keep* (NIV) this set of truths. Other Bible translations say that we must be *eager* to keep them (LEB), that we *endeavor* to keep them (NKJV), or that we must be *diligent* to keep them (Ephesians 4:3; NASB). Reading these translations reminds us that the key action we must take is to *keep* or *conserve* the unity of the spirit. We do not establish these Truths. They've already been established by God through the prophets and apostles. Our job is just to keep what God has given us.

9. **Virtuous living.** God's Church already has the unity of the spirit. Our task is simply to *conserve* it. We conserve it through *the bond of peace*, by walking with *humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance in love*. Notice that these virtues are tied together by love, without which we are nothing because 'the greatest of these [faith, hope, and love] is love' (1 Corinthians 13:2, 3, 13).

10. **Our calling.** Finally, the inspiration God has given us to act virtuously is our *calling*. So, what is the calling God has given us? To reign with Christ in the Kingdom. Let that calling inspire you to act virtuously every day! Act as if you were someone destined to rule over the Earth with Christ because to that goal God has called us.

... walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3; NASB).