

June 2011 Newsletter

We Walk By Faith

KK. Rich in faith.

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” James 2:5 ακουσατε αδελφοι μου αγαπητοι ουχ ο θεος εξελεξατο τους πτωχους του κοσμου τουτου πλουσιους εν πιστει και κληρονομους της βασιλειας ης επηγγειλατο τοις αγαπωσιν αυτον.

Two ideas are contrasted here, the **rich**, *plousios*, and the **poor**, *ptochos*. *Plousios* meant to have an abundance of something, in this case money. While *ptochos* meant that one not only did not have money, but that they were often forced to beg for their food and other necessities. It also had the ideas of being poor, miserable, beggarly, without power, etc..

And, as the nature of man is, the **rich**, because they have money, put their faith and trust in money. And the more they had the better it was for them. Their faith and security was in the abundance of money and things they possessed, but not in the Lord.

The **poor** on the other hand, because they had no money, had nothing to place their faith in as the rich. To them the only way that they could get any money was to be dependent on other people to give it to them, but there was no way they could count on that! So they had to have something else going for them and that was their faith! They had the faith that somehow the money would come in and they would get by!

LL. Faith has activity.

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” James 2:14 “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” *James 2:17* “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” *James 2:18* “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” *James 2:20* “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” *James 2:22* “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” *James 2:26*

Obviously James makes a clear case for the relationship that exists between faith and works, or faith and activity, for the word for **works** is *ergos* and refers to any form of activity. Faith is the mental attitude that motivates one toward an action. On the other hand, doubt would be the mental attitude that prevents us from acting in some area.

The unbeliever **calls** upon the name of the Lord as the result of **believing** on him. “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*” *Romans 10:13;14a* It was his faith in Christ that motivated him to call on the Lord.

Faith motivated Abel to the action of **offering** the proper sacrifice. “*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*” *Hebrews 11:4*

Noah's **faith** in the Word of God concerning the impending destruction of the world motivated him to **build** an ark. “*By **faith** Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*” Hebrews 11:7

When God called Abraham out to go to a different country he **believed** the Lord and he acted on that faith by **going!** “*By **faith** Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*” Hebrews 11:8 By **faith** Abraham also **offered** up his son. “*By **faith** Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,*” Hebrews 11:17

By **faith** Moses' parents **hid** him for three months. “*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*” Hebrews 11:23

By **faith** Moses refused to be **called** the son of Pharaoh's daughter and he **chose** to be identified with the Israelites and their suffering. “*By **faith** Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;*” Hebrews 11:24,25 Plus the forsaking of the nation of Egypt and the keeping of the Passover.

Wherever we find the concept of faith, that is, believing the promises of God, we will always find the concept of some form of action, either at that time, or somewhere later on. Somewhere, some place, if there is faith in that believer's soul, then that faith will motivate them to some form of action.

Even Paul said that it was his **faith**, (and the others), that motivated them to **communicate** the Word of God. “*We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also **believe**, and therefore speak;*” 2 Corinthians 4:13 Which was taken out of the OT, “*I **believed**, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:*” Psalms 116:10

MM. The prayer of faith.

“*And the **prayer of faith** shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*” James 5:15 και η ευχη της πιστεως σωσει τον καμνοντα και εγερει αυτον ο κυριος καν αμαρτιας η πεποιηκως αφεθησεται αυτω.

When we look at faith in reference to the subjective genitive and the objective genitive; the objective genitive looks at **what we believe**, the Word, God, his promises, etc., while the subjective genitive looks at the **act of believing**.

So what this does is tell us something about the nature and character of our prayers, **that there is to be faith in them when we pray!** Their character should be that when we pray to God with our requests, we should be believing that he will grant them. In the subjective genitive we have a faith-prayer, or faith in the prayer, or believing while we're praying.

Christ told the disciples not to pray with “*vain-babblings*”, which was just mechanically repeating the prayer over and over, like Catholics do with the rosary. The rosary, (prayer beads), actually began in ancient Babylon and is still utilized today by not only Catholics, but Muslims and people in the eastern religions.

In the passage it really isn't "*the prayer offered in faith*", but "*the prayer of the faith*", which really draws our attention to the character of our prayers; they are to be faith-prayers, **prayers where we actually believe that we will get what we have asked God for!** "*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*" Matthew 21:22

Faith is so important, not because it has any power in it to do anything, **but because it opens up the channel by which the power of God is made available to us in its operation.** Faith is not a feeling; and looking for some kind of a feeling when looking for faith is misleading. **It is believing that you will have what you have asked for; it's like believing that you already have it!**

There's also an assumption being made here. The elders are being called because **it's assumed that they are stronger in their faith**, both individually and collectively. Which also implies that the men who hold leadership positions in the church are to be stronger in faith than the others. It isn't about legalism, judgmentalism, tabooism, self-righteousness and things that are so prevalent today- but faith! Are they actively living by faith in their lives? Do they believe when they pray? Does God answer their prayers? These are the kind of believers you want praying for you.

The **prayer of the faith** has the definite article *the* with faith telling us that this refers to the Word of God that we have **learned, understood and believed.** Now that we know what the Word states or teaches, and now that we have believed it, **it is a part of our souls and the next and natural expression of it is to pray!** But we're to pray to God **believing** that we will receive what we have believed and asked God for and that is *the prayer of faith.*

NN. Resisting Satan by faith.

*"Above all, taking the shield of **faith**, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."* Ephesians 6:16 *"Whom resist stedfast in the **faith**, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."* 1 Peter 5:9

Satan is the most powerful and crafty created being in the universe. There is not one believer that has been able to stand up against him in his own strength. If we are to be able stand against victoriously, then it must not be in **our** strength, but in the strength that God provides. And the grace provision that God has supplied to all believers in Christ is **faith!**

But when we talk about faith again, remember, it is faith in the Lord, faith in the doctrines and promises of the Word of God and faith in the Father. Faith never stands by itself; it must always have an object and that object is and has to be – God! There is no merit in faith. The merit comes from the one whom we are placing our faith in! So when we take our stand against the devil in faith in God, we are depending upon the strength of God! When we place our faith in the Word of God, we are still placing our faith in God for they are **his** Words!

When Christ was hanging there on the cross, he could have called on the Father to send his legions of angels to save him from the cross, but he didn't! Instead he relied on the Father's promise to raise him from the dead. "*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*" Matthew 26:53

When Peter was about to be tested, (and the others), by Satan to see if he really belonged to the Lord, the Lord prayed that his faith would not fail. "*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*" Luke 22:31

Paul brings out what faith does for us, when we are attacked by Satan or one of his demons, and that is it quenches the fiery darts of the devil. These fiery darts actually refer to the idea of **burning** and speaks of the burning of bitterness. When the cobra strikes, and the cobra is one of the metaphors for Satan, it injects its venom which burns when it enters the body. The venom also is a toxic poison that will spread and infect the entire body and often results in death. And so does the poison of bitterness spread throughout our souls.

The presence of Satan, (or one of his demons), when he comes up into the space of a believer in Christ, will manifest itself in one of several ways, it could be a feeling of intense jealousy, or influencing one to be lifted up in pride, lusts of various kinds, overwhelming depression and despondency, but one of the main emotions that he directs at us and can just consume the believer's soul is an overwhelming emotion of **bitterness and intense anger!**

Anger is an emotion and as an emotions it is energy and this energy is radiated outward into the vicinity of those around us. **It can also be directed at someone!** You're in a room full of people and everyone is getting along fine with each other. Then someone, who is very angry, walks into the room. Instantly you can "feel" their anger, for it is radiated around the room. And it won't be long before their anger has stimulated other people in the room and they become angry. The radiated energy of anger by the one is "felt" by other people, or some of them, and the next thing you know they are experiencing the same anger themselves.

Now take that idea of an angry person radiating their anger in the room to one where they come over to you **and direct their anger at you!** We've all experienced this at one time or another in our lives and it's very uncomfortable. Now, other than the normal fight or flight response to the anger they have directed at you, people will generally react in anger themselves, sometimes right at the moment, other times later on when they go home, where they will take out on those around them and be stewing in anger and bitterness for days, weeks, months and longer!

Now take all of that and kick it up to the level of the most powerful created being in the universe, who is not just angry, but filled with great rage **and this angry powerful being is coming at you and directing his anger at you!** And how much more so upon being kicked out of heaven during the middle of the Tribulation and having to come down to earth! *"Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, (great rage) because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."* Revelation 12:12

Now how are we going to stand against all that? Who has the strength to withstand the furious rage of the devil directed at us. How do we keep his vile venom from coming into our souls and poisoning us? How many believers have ruined their lives by the root of bitterness? How many have harbored childhood resentments down through the years? How many have been hurt by a friend or loved one and never recovered? How many have reacted against a fellow believer in Christ and walked off in resentment nursing their wounds?

But here we see God has given us a perfect provisions which will enable us to stand up against Satan's rage and not be affected by it. And this provision is found in the dynamic of faith. How this works is when we exercise faith in the Word of God, we will be filled with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will produce in us the spiritual mental attitude of agape love and the mind of peace, and **it is this state of peace and this mind of love that will protect our souls by preventing them from reacting to the anger and hatred that is directed at us!**

OO. Faith is the main actor in the drama of our life.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;” 2 Peter 1:1,5 *σιμων πετρος δουλος και αποστολος ιησου χριστου τοις ισοτιμον ημιν λαχουσιν πιστιν εν δικαιοσυνη του θεου ημων και σωτηρος ημων ιησου χριστου...και αυτο τουτο δε σπουδην πασαν παρεισενεγκαντες επιχορηγησατε εν τη πιστει υμων την αρετην εν δε τη αρετη την γνωσιν.*

Throughout the NT metaphors are used to help us in our understanding of a spiritual concept. But not only to just help us understand it, but to give us a greater dimension and depth in our **understanding** of a spiritual concept and our **application** of it to our lives! There are military metaphors used in the NT, agricultural metaphors, metaphors of astronomy, the metaphor of the Greek mystery religion, and the one that the Apostle Peter uses here in 2 Peter 1:1-11, actually verses 3-11, is Greek drama. So the Greek stage is the back drop of this passage that we have to use to fully understand and appreciate this passage, especially in all its nuances.

For it is the stage of the Greek drama that creates the ambiance for the greatest play that you will ever go to see, for it is the one where you are the key actor on the stage of your life on earth. The lights are turned down low, the curtain is opened, and now you, the believer in Jesus Christ, walk out on stage. But to understand this, we will need to have a little understanding of Greek drama. So here's where I put my disclaimer in. I did not major in drama in school and I'm sure there are many students of the arts who are more familiar with the stage and especially Greek drama, but I do know enough of the terms to help us understand them and how they relate to the spiritual dynamics going on in the Christian life, and especially toward our application of them in our own life's drama.

There is a relationship between the Greek drama and the Christian's spiritual life. The story of the drama that took place on stage covered a certain day in the life of a hero who died, tragically, who could have lived victoriously and successfully, but didn't because he had a tragic flaw. It spoke of the hero who had so much going for him in life, who had such a great potential, but died suddenly, tragically, because of his own actions. It speaks of what could have been, and what should have been, and what would have been, if only he didn't have a tragic flaw.

The tragedy was used for religious purposes in the mystery cult of Dionysus, much like we find in some of the European classics of today. It was also used for a catharsis of the soul; the cleansing of the emotions from the soul, sort of like purifying, or cleansing, the heart. The story develops, the plot thickens, the hero is suddenly and tragically murdered, the heart bursts forth with tears and emotions, and the hearers are cleansed.

But there is another use for this Greek tragedy and that is for Christians in staying on course, dealing with and overcoming their soul sins, communion with God and going on to spiritual maturity. Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not only uses Greek terms for the stage in his letter, he sets this entire passage in the context of the Greek tragedy! He's paralleling for us what he saw unfold on stage centuries ago to instruct us in the spiritual life dynamic!

The word tragedy comes from *tragodia*, the goat song. A goat was used in the performance of the drama where it was walked off stage. Apparently in ancient times human sacrifice was first used, but later on was replaced by a goat who was the hero.

A **tragic flaw** is a defect in the character of the hero that brings about his own downfall. Where the hero's death, or demise, is caused, not by things happening to him, but by his own actions! All of which could have been avoided, but because of the hero's flaw, or series of flaws, which he couldn't see in himself, (or wouldn't see), he became responsible for his own death or demise. Interestingly enough, the Greek word for the **tragic flaw** was *hamartia*, our word for **sin**!

The Greek tragedy was played out on stage where there was the main actor portraying the hero, such as Agamemnon, and several minor actors who composed the **chorus**. During the play the chorus would be warning the hero of the tragedy that lay in wait for him. But, because of the hero's tragic flaw, he did not listen to them, and because he didn't listen he died tragically. The hero's tragic flaw, or series of flaws, was error in judgment, sin, and overwhelming pride. And his death was as the result of his own actions, or failure to act, not on anyone else.

And so we have the drama of the Christian's life, our life, being played out before our eyes. Will it end in death? Will it end in tragic loss or failure? Or will we overcome these flaws that we all have and go on to victory, spiritual completion and fulfill the plan of God for our lives? That is to be seen and it all depends upon whether we *listen to the chorus* and apply what they are trying to tell us!

One of the plays centered around Agamemnon, who not only was a king, but the commanding general of the Greek army. In the course of time they went to war against Troy, and as they set sail the winds died down making it impossible. To keep the story short, he was advised by his soothsayer to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia, to the Olympian goddess Artemis. The winds then picked up and he went on to Troy. While he was gone for ten years word of this had reached his wife, Clytemnestra, who burned in seething rage against her husband seeking revenge.

While Agamemnon was off fighting the Trojans for these ten years his wife had taken a lover. And then one evening a watchman on the roof of Agamemnon's palace sees the night sky reddened with the signal of a burning fire on a mountaintop signaling Agamemnon's victory over Troy. Which meant that he would be home soon. And so the plot thickens with his wife and her lover.

When Agamemnon arrives he comes with a captive, a prophetess named Cassandra, who is also his concubine, further enraging his wife Clytemnestra. When Agamemnon shows up, his wife pretends to be joyful at his arrival, and that all is well, and how much she has missed him all those years. But in her heart she hates him and is planning his death.

Well the gist of the story is that his bath is made ready for him, and while he is bathing unsuspectingly his wife comes in and plunges a knife into him and avenges her daughter's death. Saying that his blood spurting forth was as sweet as the rain falling from the heavens to the fields of corn.

Now what is the chorus doing all this time? The chorus of elders is suspicious that the Queen is plotting her husband's death and so they keep trying to warn Agamemnon. Saying, "*At home there tarries like a lurking snake, [snake: Clytemnestra]; Biding its time, a wrath unreconciled; A wily watcher, passionate to slake; In blood, resentment for a murdered child.*"

Even though Agamemnon had done a terrible wrong in his life, and even though he had many tragic flaws (sin), if he had listened to the chorus, he would not have died. But it was his arrogance that downplayed the seriousness of his act, its impact on his wife and any actions she might take, and his pride disregarded the advice that the chorus was trying to give him!

A. Equal Privilege v.1

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:” 2 Peter 1:1 *σιμων πετρος δουλος και αποστολος ιησου χριστου τοις ισοτιμον ημιν λαχουσιν πιστιν εν δικαιοσυνη του θεου ημων και σωτηρος ιησου χριστου*

Peter first states his position as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, then he begins with the matter of our faith in Christ and how it is that we obtained it.

The word used for **precious** is *isotimos* and it meant of equal value, or held in equal honor, equal in the sense of the same kind. It was used in secular Greek to denote having the same status and rank in civic life. The idea being that men are equal to each other only under the law. Only equals can enter into legal relationships, so that in civic life, where all men are governed by law, they become equals.

In Greek or Roman society every citizen had certain rights and privileges under the law. By being a citizen, or by becoming a citizen, each individual now had equal access to all the rights, privileges and protections of the law.

This underlines the fact that every Christian has equal access to God as his Judge, Ruler and Father. So the idea here is not so much upon the preciousness of our faith, although it is precious, but **the privilege and right of access to God that all Christians equally hold**, regardless of race or sex.

Now it says that we have **received** a faith, but is this faith objective faith as in the body of doctrine, or the doctrine that we have believed? Or is this to be taken in the subjective sense of the ability to trust Christ as our Savior?

Usually when faith is to be taken in the objective sense it will have the definite article with it - the faith, for when the meaning of faith is clearly objective, the definite article is used. But it is omitted here, leading us to conclude, which the context also bears out by the subjective use of faith in v.5, that it is subjective faith being discussed, that is, **our faith in Jesus Christ**. Which reveals that our ability to trust Christ as our Savior was given to us by God.

God deals with us on the basis of grace. Only faith can appropriate the grace of God. Therefore God gives man the faith needed to believe on Christ as his Savior, and he gives believers the faith which is necessary to appropriate his grace in their post salvation experience.

This is what so many mean when they say we are saved by God's grace. What they are saying is that God, in his grace, gave us the faith to believe on Christ! *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that (the ability to believe on Christ) not of yourselves: it (the ability to believe on Christ) is the gift of God: Not of works (human activity), lest any man should boast (brag about what he has or what he has done).”* Ephesians 2:8,9

Now the passage tells us that we have **received** this faith, and if we have received it, then it says that we did not possess it ourselves. Now the word for to **receive** is the orist active participle of *lanchano*, which meant to obtain by lot, to draw lots, to receive by lot, to get something by drawing lots. It's the root idea for the lottery. Now before anyone thinks that one draws lots to see who gets the faith, which is a wrong interpretation, we need to see what it meant back then.

It was used for a variety of ideas back then, one of them was to draw a lot to see who could bring their suit into court. But the idea behind getting something by drawing a lot was like getting something “**out of the blue**”. It denoted the idea that **something happened more by luck or chance, rather by one's desire or effort**, along with the idea of being **unexpected**.

It came to mean, and this is how it was regarded, as **divine appointment**. One's lot in life was what he drew, that is, it had been allotted to him by God. We have a similar expression today in, “that's the hand I drew”, or, “we have to play the cards we're dealt”. Men drew lots as a means of trying to determine divine will and appointment. Whoever received the lot was the one that God had chose. So when they said that a man *drew his lot*, it was an idiom which meant that he was appointed by God apart from any desire or effort of his own.

It's significant that the Holy Spirit uses *lanchano*, **to draw a lot, to explain how we receive faith**. It's significant in itself that we receive the faith necessary to believe on Christ as our Savior, because that tells us **that saving faith is not and cannot be generated by the person, but is received from God**. And it's significant, because out of the nineteen words used to define *receive* he uses the word for the **drawing of lots**.

Men in those times would look at this phenomenon of *lanchano* from the standpoint of **luck, or chance, or fate, maybe out of the blue, or the luck of the draw**. **It was their way of expressing something out of the ordinary, such as, cause and effect, decisions and consequences, hard work and reward. So when something happened to them out of the ordinary**, especially if it was good or involved money, they would say that it happened by way of *lanchano*, “that he got lucky”!

But *lanchano* takes a different spin when it comes into the world of God and men and our receiving of faith to believe on Christ. Here we have the ideas that it happened suddenly, or unexpectedly, out of the blue. One of your buddies or coworkers, who always was going out drinking and carousing, comes in after the weekend and now he's saved! He's believed on Christ and is a changed man.

There's something else about the using of this word and that is the drawing of lots is a **great equalizer**. For here it does not matter how rich, poor, tall, short, smart, dumb, good or bad you are, because all human merit, will and efforts are set aside. One simply has drawn his lot, that is, it happened to him out of the blue and not because of anything he had done.

And this faith we received to believe on Christ comes to us “*through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*”. There are those who believe that man initiates in his faith toward God compelling God to respond in his grace. Rather it is God who initiates toward man in his grace giving man the faith needed to trust his Son as their Savior.

We have received this faith through the righteousness of God, because it is his righteousness that condemns all of man's works, efforts, or merits. So if God condemns everything that man could do, then he had to provide the means of saving man in his grace. This is why **God gives us the faith to trust Christ as our Savior**. Which reveals that man in himself does not possess saving faith.

One only needs to look at the apostle Paul to see this matter of faith and salvation. He was on the road to Damascus to persecute more Christians because of his hatred of Jesus Christ, when the Lord suddenly and unexpectedly appeared to him, “out of the blue”, and saved him. In a moment of time Paul received the faith to believe on Christ as his Savior and became a changed man.