

THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

by K. R. Blades

The apostle Paul uses the above expression at least 7 times in his epistles to us, and with it speaks of something that often times is not fully appreciated by Christians as it ought to be. The expression strikes many as a peculiar one. "Faith" is something that we think of with respect to ourselves. We place OUR faith IN Christ. Therefore, to find Paul talking about "the faith OF Jesus Christ," or CHRIST'S faith, seems puzzling. Because of this, unfortunately, many times the expression is treated as if it were a misstatement. Christians are told, or led to think, that the expression really does refer to our faith IN Christ, but it has just been mistranslated. The impression is given that the expression is just a funny wording in the original Greek. It really does say "the faith OF Jesus Christ," but it's to be looked upon as just a funny way of referring to our faith IN Him. And with this, many English translations make the expression refer to our faith IN Christ, though some do at least acknowledge in a foot note that literally the expression is "the faith OF Jesus Christ." However, unfortunately, by doing this a wonderful truth is largely obscured, if not completely obliterated. A wonderful God be thanked truth which is marvelously conveyed in the expression "the faith OF Jesus Christ."

There are two things that ought to make it apparent that Paul's reference to "the faith of Jesus Christ" is referring to something special with respect to Christ, and that it is not just a funny wording for the issue of our faith in Him. First of all, when our faith is the issue, the wording that conveys that is plain. Consider, for example, the following...

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through FAITH IN HIS BLOOD,..."
(Romans 3:25)

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified BY FAITH without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:28)

"But to him that worketh not, but BELIEVETH ON HIM that justifieth the ungodly, HIS FAITH is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5)

"For ye are all the children of God BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS." (Gal. 3:26)

"Since we heard of YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS,..." (Col. 1:4)

There's no funny wording in these verses, nor in dozens of others like them in which the issue of our faith in Christ is set forth. This should tell us that the expression "the faith OF Jesus Christ" must be referring to something else. The second thing that makes this apparent is the fact that in the passages where Paul refers to "the faith OF Jesus Christ," he refers to the issue of our faith IN Christ by a separate expression of its own. Notice this in the following...

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God *which is* by FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST unto all and upon ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE:..." (Romans 3:21-22)

"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST, even we HAVE BELIEVED IN JESUS CHRIST, that we might be justified by THE

FAITH OF CHRIST, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal. 2:15 16)

“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST might be given to THEM THAT BELIEVE.” (Gal. 3:22)

“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through THE FAITH OF CHRIST, the righteousness which is of God BY FAITH:” (Phil. 3:9)

Paul is not being redundant in these verses. He's not simple stating the issue of our faith in Christ twice. Instead, “the faith OF Jesus Christ” is one thing, and our faith in Him is something else. In fact, placing our faith in Christ is something we do because of “the faith OF Him.”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

“The faith OF Jesus Christ” is referring to His faithful performance as our substitute redeemer. It refers to Christ's FIDELITY. His faithful performance in our place doing that which we needed done for us. The word “faith” is being used in its quality sense. In this sense it denotes the quality of faithfulness; fidelity; or loyalty. An example of this use of the word “faith” is found in Romans 3:3 4, where the apostle Paul asks the question....

“For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make THE FAITH OF GOD without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar;...” (Romans 3:3-4a)

Obviously, “THE FAITH OF GOD” here is not God's faith in anyone, nor is it anyone's personal faith in God. Rather, it is the issue of God's faithfulness. His faithfulness to His word and to do what He says He will do. This is why Paul responds to the question by saying, “Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.” God is true and faithful to His word. The “FAITH OF GOD” is His faithfulness to do what He says He will do. Another example where "faith" has this sense can be seen in Titus 2:10, where Paul exhorts servants to be “obedient unto their own masters,” and to be ones who are “not purloining, but shewing all good FIDELITY.” The word “faith” is rendered here with its sense of quality. Paul is exhorting the servants to be faithful in the performance of their duties to their masters. To show fidelity and loyalty to them.

It is with this same sense of quality that the word “faith” is used in the expression “the faith OF Jesus Christ.” The issue is His faithfulness. Jesus Christ's faithful performance as our substitute redeemer.

OUR SUBSTITUTE REDEEMER

The Lord Jesus Christ faithfully and perfectly performed for us the work necessary to deliver us from the debt and penalty of our sins. What we could not do for ourselves by any of our works, He did for us as our substitute redeemer. He took our place, as our redeemer, and suffered the wages of our sins for us. He propitiated God's justice in connection with the penalty of our sins, and perfectly provided for the forgiveness of our sins and our justification by God.

Redemption, as described in the Law and illustrated in the Book of Ruth, sets forth two essential requirements on the part of the redeemer. First, the redeemer had to be capable of functioning as such, and second, he had to be FAITHFUL in the performance of his duty. Faithfulness of performance was an essential issue. If there was no faithfulness on the part of the redeemer, there was no redemption. The one needing redemption was completely dependent upon the faithfulness of the redeemer for deliverance from his predicament. The declaration of the "FAITH," or FAITHFULNESS, of the one redeeming summed up the fact that all the work necessary for redemption had been done and the one needing redemption could trust in and relax in the work of his redeemer.

And so it was with us! The predicament of the debt and penalty of our sins was one from which we could not escape. None of our works, no matter how good or well intended, could propitiate God's justice and justify us in His sight. We desperately needed a redeemer. One who was capable of functioning in our place, and one who would faithfully perform our complete redemption. Thanks be to God for the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Thanks be to God for "THE FAITH(FULNESS) OF JESUS CHRIST." He did the work we could not do and the declaration of His "FAITH," or FAITHFULNESS, means that we can completely trust in Him and relax in what He has done for us.

THE VERSES

Consider now the verses where the apostle Paul uses this magnificent expression. Consider how precious in meaning this wonderful expression is as it conveys the truth of Christ's faithful performance as our substitute redeemer.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God *which is* by FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST unto all and upon all them that believe:..." (Romans 3:21 22)

"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by THE FAITH OF CHRIST, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:15 16)

"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST might be given to them that believe." (Gal. 3:22)

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through THE FAITH OF CHRIST, the righteousness which is of God

by faith.” (Philippians 3:9)

The “righteousness of God”; justification; the promise of justification unto eternal life which men so desperately need, doesn't come through our own performance of works and deeds. Instead, justification is by “THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST.” It's provided for through the faithful performance of Jesus Christ as our substitute redeemer. His faithful performance as our redeemer has provided justification for us, and God justifies all who believe in Jesus Christ; that is, all who trust in Him, relying upon His faithful performance as their redeemer.

“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by THE FAITH OF HIM.” (Ephesians 3:11 12)

Here, in Ephesians chapter 3, the apostle Paul utilizes the expression again as he deals with the grandeur and glory of the eternal purpose of God now made known through the revelation of “the mystery of Christ.” And we, who have trusted Christ as our Savior, are not only justified unto eternal life, but we have been made fit by God to be utilized by Him in His “eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We have been made fit to be utilized by Him in His plan for the reconciliation of the principalities and powers in heavenly places. However, fitness has not come of our own doing, but once again we have been made fit “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” (See, for example, Eph. 1:3 7; 2:1-22; Col. 1:12 13) Christ's faithful redemptive work in our place has made us completely fit to be utilized by God in His plan and purpose. Therefore, “we have boldness and access with confidence by THE FAITH OF HIM.”

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:19 20)

Likewise also is this expression used regarding `living unto God' in our daily lives. We can't and won't live unto God and bring forth fruit unto Him by our own energy and performance under the law. Rather, we live unto God as we walk motivated by the justified and sanctified position we have in Christ, all through “THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD,” who loved us and gave Himself for us.

What a wonderful truth is conveyed in this expression - “the faith OF Jesus Christ.” If it wasn't for His faithful performance as our substitute redeemer there would be for us no redemption; no forgiveness; no justification; no reconciliation; no sanctification; no nothing.. There would only be wrath in “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Thanks be to God for “THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST”.