

OUR FAITH, THE FAITH EPHESIANS 1:3-14

THE FIRST TRUTH OF FAITH

It starts with you....You should find the correct faith and build it.

What is Faith?

To, much of the world, faith is a tangible assurance. Physical actions that are accepted as believable and positive in result. Faith to the world is mostly a “*wait till I see proof*” experience. Normally people are not motivated to believe anything until they see that the results have been proven. This type of faith is nice when doing business or being asked to take a risk that is material based.

Yet, humans still have this curious desire to trust, especially, that there is something greater out there to believe in. Understanding what that greater thing is....is going to require a different type of faith that is more intricate than just “wait till I see proof” kind of trust.

The deep yearning for a greater meaning that humans seek requires trust in the unseen and yet to be proven.

This “*trust first*” effort is the type of faith we must have to find God, and to accept Jesus as our Savior. What kind of faith is needed to find ourselves dependent upon God?

We find the answer in **Hebrew 11:1-6**

Hebrews teaches us exactly what this type of faith is made of.

FAITH: PISTIS – Belief, Trust, confidence

Derived from (*peithō*), meaning "to persuade" or "to be persuaded."

As the Passage gives us clues to understanding about the Faith, we learn that it is real.

- **The Substance of** – *Hupo Histemi*: Sub(Under)-*Stance* (position) – Placed as a foundation, or making something established upon. So, when you put it together – with *Under* being the rule (principle) – a position now placed upon a consistent dependency – or in thought: a foundation of understanding with confidence (assurance).
- **The Evidence of** – *Elegchos*: The presence of a truth, a proven reality, therefore it BECOMES a conviction because you see the logic/rationale/reason.
- **Things Not Seen** – The intangible. Existential awareness of the sentient knowledge that something is there even though not visible.
- **Not Made of things Seen** – Beyond this physical world (realm, universe).
Proven by celestial workings.

FIRST TRUTH: Faith has to begin with You, the believer, being sure about what you know. Your confidence grows from what you believe is the truth.

Once you are confident (completely sure) about what you believe is the truth, now you have something to build on....and live by.

SO, WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Many believe they know the truth. Many believe that they possess the truth.

1. Most of those who claim to be Christians **accept the bible as truth** – some rightly, some incorrectly.
2. All Christians believe in God, and then, in Christ.
3. Most uninitiated, or unmodernized, societies accept Naturalism or Spiritualism of Nature.
4. The Superstitious groups/individuals accept the occult (dark magic, karma, crystals, chakra).
5. Many who are abandoned and disenfranchised tend to lean towards “hero faith” or benefit-based trust.
6. Many accept humanism, the system of belief that humans are enlightened with abilities to save and lead ourselves without divine intervention.
7. There are some who are more passionate in their belief in sacrifice and they commit terrorism and acts of aggression in the name of their beliefs. What is known as (religious) fanaticism.

..... Which brings us to the human element about faith.

The Human Element

What you believe is the truth will convince you to behave and act in a manner that reveals you believe in that perceived truth.

All of these individuals and groups believe they have the truth, and their faith is real and proven by what they have experienced.

Each of these groups, believe what they hold to is true and they are willing to have the faith in their belief to live by it. Having a system of value and belief is normal and natural. Each group has come to their beliefs in similar experiences as all other groups.

Similarly, to all groups....

We who are of Christ, (Church of Christ) we believe too. We Believe that we have the truth, also. We have convicted ourselves that we know God, and the bible that we read is His word. We read that word to gain more understanding about what God wants from us as his children.

But, just like many other believers of anything...we had to start somewhere. Some of us had parents that raised us in the church so in the beginning our faith was actually a reflection of our parents’ faith. At some point we needed to learn for ourselves if what were guided in...is actually the truth. Absolute truth that can help us develop and strengthen that faith we had.

The Human Element...

People tend to wonder:

- How would humans know that the things we read in the bible are true?
- How do we know that Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, Prophets, Paul, were all spoken to by God and that they were chosen and given the truth?
- Why couldn’t anyone else be the messengers of it all?

- Why do we believe our faith is one to believe?

Reactively, we want to quote a scripture to CONFIRM it because we believe that it is true. Somehow...miraculously, because that is what we accept, so, it must be true.

But...that does not answer any of those questions about the truth or the faith.

1. Sometimes, **Christians throw out a scripture** to use as confirmation of the truth THAT WE HAVE...
2. But **Christians sometimes, are unaware.... that** the individual asking the questions may not have the truth**so to them...** your answer looks like *YOUR truth...NOT THE*
3. Quoting scripture or using scripture **does not prove** that your answer about faith is right...or that you have the absolute truth.

We must understand this:

**IF INDIVIDUALS ARE ASKING....THEY ARE SEEKING...THEY ARE WANTING TO KNOW TRUTH, TO POSSESS IT FOR THEMSELVES.
SO....**

We have to back it up with **SUBSTANCE**.

The difference between them and us is The Substance of Faith

The Human Element: Faith Substances of the World.

There are Three Main Forms of Belief in the Word.

1. **Monotheism**
2. **Polytheism**
3. **Atheism**

Each of these three forms of belief, cultivates different types of beliefs according to specific systems that are made up of various concepts of values, moral codes, and rationality.

1. **Monotheism** – Mono meaning One, represents the belief in One supreme being ruler over the universe. The common belief is that Deity is called God.
2. **Polytheism** – Poly meaning multiple, represents the belief that many gods rule and have impact on the universe. From this form of belief, many accept the value that each belief is equal and bounding.
3. **Atheism** – Meaning anti-divine, represents the group who do not accept that there is a Deity ruling over us, but that we, the humans are enlightened to rule our own purpose and existence. From this form of belief comes concepts that are viewed as negative.

There are types of beliefs that are created from the three forms.

The Two major types of beliefs that make all belief forms are:

- **Predestination** – The belief that everything has its place and is working according to a design or purpose.

- **Free Will** – The belief that humans have no set path but that which they set for themselves. The Universe is free flowing with energy and creativity.

It is important to learn what your belief system is and how to share it. First, understand that as a Church of Christ Christian, we have both types of belief working at different levels in our faith.

- There is a predestined order for Christianity – Those who obey God and live righteously, we believe will go to heaven. Because God has already decided this before creation.
- We have been given free will, but not our liberal choices...but the freedom to obey God because it is the correct path for humans.

This is NOT TO BE confused with the concept of predestination that the majority of the known world has accepted.

The world has accepted the concept of predestination that comes from what is called, Calvinism.

Taken from the teachings of John Calvin, a reformation of Christianity leader in the 1500s.

Calvinism - insists that God does all of the work, from choosing those who will be saved to sanctifying them throughout their lives until they die and go to heaven. In addition to this unconditional choosing by God, nothing, not even mistakes will keep them from Heaven because God chose them.

Let us look at the truth about being “chosen.” Let grab some scriptures that will put us in the best mindset for understanding how "destination" works.

Ephesians 1:3-14

We learn that God did pre-ordain a chosen people. But there is a specific condition – *it can change* (**vs14** – “**until the redemption of**”). The scripture in this verse is teaching that this specific type of choosing is an *open invitation*, which means that *whoever* accepts the invitation is "chosen" through their redeeming the offer.

Example: Your local grocery store mails out coupons to everyone in your city. The coupon is for a specific item to be redeemed as *free* after you have purchased groceries. Everyone who comes to the store to shop and use the coupon will get the item. Those who do not come to the store...does not get the free item. Yet, everyone received the coupon, but only a few showed up. Those few...are chosen through redeeming the offer. The store owner has no clue who will show up. Yet, the store owner does know that everyone was invited through the coupon.

The "**predestined**" that is mentioned in Ephesians, works exactly the same way when learning about the chosen. You are credited as the "chosen".... only **IF and WHEN** you accept the invitation. Quite easy to understand and very easy to become part of the chosen.

Some will understand and accept, and some will hear but possibly reject the invitation. This choosing is centered around an individual's belief. Those who believe then accept the invitation are then considered to be the chosen.

Thankfully, none of this sounds too difficult to accomplish. The individual believes, therefore they will accept God's invitation, and after living a faithful life, receive the salvation that was offered. There is not a set order or number for this invitation. It is open to all, and especially free to all.

Today, we understand that for years the simplicity of God's invitation has always been an easy concept to process. We know that since the 1500s, the world has understood predestination as a selective ordination for only some people. The world over has accepted this theology as the premise of God's favor being "*special*" and unique for some.

John Calvin, a reformation leader – appears to have confusion between a “selected elect” versus “grace and mercy” which gives every human a chance...not just a selected few. This brings us to the idea of people being “*blessed and highly favored*” which is a widespread concept that comes from Calvinism, is actually not a real thing. *God does not show partiality*. This is why everyone receives the invitation to accept Christ.

Let's explain:

God **predestined** or "*previously planned*" to save all humans from sin. The predestination is not an individual, merited choosing. It is simply an action to save everyone that wants to be saved. This means that every human that accepts Christ is redeeming God's offer of mercy and grace which leads to being saved. Like the shoppers, who **chose** to bring their coupon to the store. They each received that free item.

We know from the Bible (**Ephesians 1:3-14**), that God has blessed the entire human race with the invitation to be saved, but an individual must choose (**Ephesians 1:12**) to accept the offer - **which means: to believe** - in order to redeem the prize of salvation. This belief compels us to "*first trust*" in Christ as the verse teaches. A trust, that is not proven first, but is initiated by hope. The hope is to be saved. What is the hope? The hope is trusting Christ to be telling the truth. You need to be saved; you want to be saved...so you decide to **FIRST TRUST** Christ and God to do what they have promised and that is to save you.

Understand that our acceptance, or our choosing, to *trust in Christ*, is our first effort to redeem the prize of salvation. After we have trusted (**VS 12**) then we must follow the instructions given to get the prize. Yep, we still have to do something to arrive at the destination with the correct qualifications to enter Heaven. (**Rev 2:10**).

In the next lesson we will discuss what we must do to be saved with those who are "**chosen**" according to the correct *predestined* opportunity.

This lesson is to be continued.