

---

THE WORK OF  
FAITH

---

- second edition -  
copyright © 2014  
Mr. Gary S. Dykes

First published in PDF format at:  
[www.Biblical-data.org](http://www.Biblical-data.org) [2012]  
second edition - 2014

Some quotations are from: the New American Standard Bible®,  
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975,  
1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Adam, for some unknown period of time—after the forming of Eve—lived a life with a mind uncluttered with sin, a mind uncorrupted. When Adam freely expressed his will to align with his fallen wife, to turn from God (to sin), his mind forever changed. All humans, today, live with minds which reflect the fallen state which Adam freely chose, none of us has ever experienced a pure mind. Despite this limitation, God can work in our minds to achieve some good, some useful productions. God can and does influence our wills. Though our freedom to choose to turn from or to God was resolved for us by Adam, we still have some varieties of free will remaining. However the ability to choose to be free from sin, to choose everlasting life was settled long ago.

In this paper, I wish to illuminate a sublime fact: humans are saved today solely via the action of God, completely independent of our own wills. Saved totally by grace! Evangelicals who read this will nod in agreement, yet this paper should also reveal that they often know not what they are agreeing to. In the popular world of evangelical religion (that is the Christian-Protestant fundamentalist theology) salvation is based upon a work executed by man. At this point their nod, turns into a scowl, no, NO! they insist it is by grace through faith, and on and on they go, sounding very much like an old record which keeps repeating the same groove. So my dear friends, sit back and enjoy a read which you will not find in the extremely popular evangelical form of the Christian religion. Allow me to examine this faith, and its relation to our wills. It is also hoped that I can bring some clarity to this issue, issues which seem to focus on the dichotomy betwixt the epistle of James, and Paul's later theology.

When a thought is formed in the brain, it exists as a tiny charge of energy, energy which can impact other neurotransmitters. A highly charged emotional thought can excite many neurons, and can minutely alter the brain for long periods. Other types of thoughts may have their origins in our senses, from what one sees or hears, or from what one smells. Some may have their origins in an evolving complex pattern, composed of various impressions which when commingled form a new thought. All of these thoughts, regardless of their origins, involve energy, they become mental activities when they activate other neurons, which can and often do express themselves in our behaviors, reactions or attitudes. Thoughts, in varying degrees remain in our memories, stored and archived at various levels in the brain.

Beginning in the twentieth century man has been able to view the electrical activity of the brain, and to observe this activity enhanced with computer imaging and analyses. Radio waves, high intensity magnetic waves and x-rays, combine in such scans as; Computer Assisted Tomography (CAT), single-photon emission computerized tomography (SPECT), cerebral angiography and electroencephalography to give observers detailed information as to how our brains process and react to various situations and impulses. Emotions and thoughts leave their imprints, they can be observed in various portions of the brain because they involve the production of and the movement of energy. Our brains are virtually electrical power plants.

Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this knowledge of the brain as an electrical power plant, is common knowledge. Our brains work when a thought is formed. For example this quote from an article titled: "The Master Code" (by Adam Piore, one of the contributing editors of *Popular Science*) as seen in a May 2014 edition of *Popular Science*:

Roughly 85 billion individual neurons make up the human brain, each one connected to as many as 10,000 others via branches called axons and dendrites. Every time a neuron fires, an electrochemical signal jumps from the axon of one neuron to the dendrite of another, across a synapse between them. It's the sum of those signals that encode information and enable the brain to process input, form associations, and execute commands.

A description of a lot of work in a very small area. This information as to how the brain **works**, is used in various ways, even in the treatment of various mental and physical ailments. Our brains burn and need fuel; glucose and oxygen coupled with a variety of enzymes and hormones supply much of the fuel. Power plants which burn fuel, producing energy. This is a description of work, or of activity manifested in results, the end product of energy metabolism. Work. Mental work expressed in new ideas, in fight or flight responses, in moving muscles, in speaking and reading, in thinking. It is well known that chess grandmasters burn a large number of calories during serious matches, their brains use a fair amount of fuel which needs replenishing, and rest. Very few grandmasters are obese!

Still the human mind, in a metaphysical sense, is mysterious. For example we know that "...the actions and attitudes of peers, rather than logic or arguments, often dominate people's beliefs and actions". [from: "To Signal is Human", *American Scientist*, May-June 2010, page 206. Article by Professor Alex (Sandy) Pentland. (I added the underline)]. Indeed, human thinking is impacted by those we are surrounded by, or by those we emulate. Yet we also know that we do not fully know why certain people think and act as they do. Each human is unique in numerous ways, not the least of which is per their mental makeup. One of the terms used to denote the mental aspect of intent or desire, is *will*. The human will itself best demonstrates the most inscrutable aspects of the human mind. Not relying upon peers,

or the crowd mentality—I shall simply via logic, stress that when a human thinks, he or she is producing energy, he or she is at work. On the face of it, this simple observation is obvious, but it has ramifications which should affect many conservative religious theologians.

Per surviving written history, the study of the human will has occupied some great minds, generally from Plato and Aristotle onwards. Prior to the Greeks' and their studies many statements concerning the human mind can be found in the Hebrew Old Testament. In reality, the Bible contains much useful psychological data. After all, it is the word from our very designer Himself, God. God alone, knows our very thoughts, and why we think in such a way or manner. God designed each of our brains, our minds. Hence, He is the single best source for information as concerns the working of our minds, and our wills. He knows exactly why we each will, and how we will. For example:

"Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for **I know their intent** which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore." [Deuteronomy 31:21]

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and **understands every intent of the thoughts**. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever. [I Chronicles 28:9] (Lord = Yahweh)

**Create in me a clean heart** [literally "mind"], O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. [Psalm 51:10] (God can heal the mind).

He heals the **brokenhearted**, [literally "the shattered mind"] And binds up their wounds. [Psalm 147:3]

As mentioned earlier in the Garden, Adam did have a completely free will. Saving-faith was not then needed in his brain. He did exercise his will, he chose to turn from God, to follow his wife into sin. From that moment on, Adam's will was no longer totally free, free of any and all evil influences, no longer free to clearly choose whom to follow. A decision was made, and it impacted all subsequent humans.

Therefore, just as **through one man** sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of **Adam**, who is a type of Him who was to come. [Romans 5:12-14]

Through Adam, sin took up residence in the human being, in their flesh as well as in their minds:

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his **fleshly mind**, [Colossians 2:18]

This "fleshly mind", is better rendered literally as "the mind of the flesh", as seen in Romans 8:7, φρονηματα της σαρκος. Since the fall of Adam, our fleshly natures now exercise great control and influence in our minds. The most debase of which is pure *lust*. Lust is very much a part of a human's will, it is sometimes under the control of that person's faculties; in some beings it rages completely out of control. Perhaps noting a typical definition of the "will", may assist here with its abilities and configurations.

WILL:

- a) In the widest sense, will is synonymous with conation. [i.e. conation is defined as "voluntary activity"].
  
- b) In the restricted sense, will designates the sequence of mental acts eventuating in decision or choice between conflicting conative tendencies.

From: *Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Dagobert D. Runes, 1975. Page 336.

Making a choice, gives evidence to the outside world of one's mental activity. Again note that an activity is envisioned, it is not some static object, but a dynamic effect occurring within the neurons of one's brain. Processes of energy are clearly involved.

Lust, according to Augustine, was the lowest form or most basic of sinful mental activities. It reflects the fleshly mind quite well.

Lust is dominant in every kind of evildoing.

[From *On Free Choice of the Will*, by St. Augustine, as translated by Anna S. Benjamin. Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1964. Page 8.]

Augustine is often referenced when the old debates about freedom of the will are discussed, yet he has one great flaw in the debate:

...we established that the mind could not become a slave of lust except through its own will. It cannot be forced to serve lust by something superior, or by an equal, because this is unjust; also it cannot be forced by something inferior, because the inferior thing does not have the power. [from the same translation by Ms. Benjamin, above, page 87.]



In other words according to Augustine, serving lust, or sin in general, is the result of one's own will. It is a voluntary choice, free from any influence. I beg to differ!

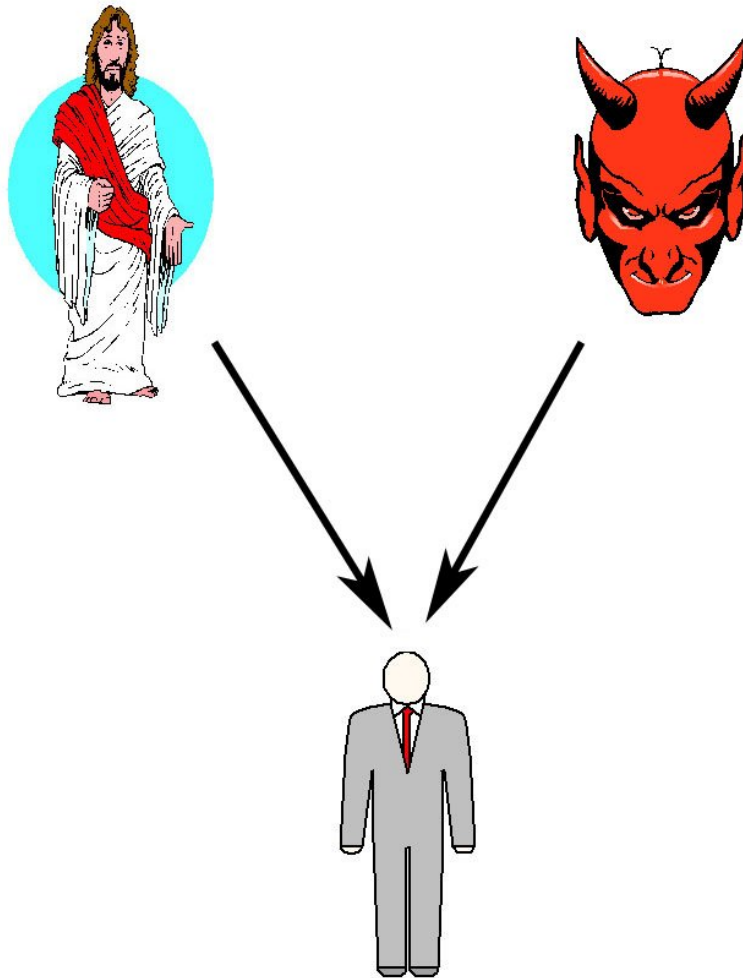
A superior influence *is* at work in our minds when we lust or commit or think of any sin. It is of our fleshly mind, yes, but our fleshly mind—governed by the flesh—is and was instituted by Satan himself. He is the source for this influence which some are compelled to follow! A unique symbiotic relationship exists. Now Augustine did not want to explore the very cause of the root of all sorts of evil (I Timothy 6:10), he taught that it was vain to search for a cause of lust. Thus, to him, the human will was the responsible agent in sinning, and indeed it is, but not the sole agent. Augustine overlooked the satanic contribution to a portion of our fallen human natures. Satan is alive and well, even in the minds of all humans!

Perhaps a few illustrations will drive home my point: here is how man's mind was influenced before the fall. Note besides his then pure environment, only God had an influence upon the mind of man.



the influences upon man, in his original state

Then while and after man turned from obeying God, another influence began to exert itself upon man's mind.



the influences upon man, in his fallen state

Man still partially retains his free-will, but man cannot make himself UNfallen, nor can man save or rescue himself from these influences. Man lies at the mercy of God, the Creator. In Adam all men became guilty, all were doomed to Gehenna. All were captured legally by Satan [Isaiah 49:24-26]. That could have been the end of the story, but God being rich in mercy had prior chosen some for salvation.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, [Ephesians 2:4-6]

God made us alive, God saved us, all of which was done by grace, that is, it was not based upon any or a work or effort by the recipients. Indeed, only God is able to change our fallen status. To the chosen few, He has done this.

Let us again discuss "works" and the "will". Recall that Jesus Christ said that if a man lusted in his heart to commit adultery, that by that very act, he was then as guilty as if he had actual sex with the person. (Matthew 5:28). GUILTY. It is absolutely clear that Jesus Christ considered the thought as equivalent to the actual deed. He recognized the thought as an act. Which is what I have been stressing all along in this paper. In American Law, criminal intent, conspiracy and other forms of mental activities are crimes. In God's eyes, man, is held guilty or innocent by how he or she thinks as well as by how he or she acts. (Romans 8:6).

When the age-old argument betwixt works and grace pops up, evangelicals are quick to state that we humans are saved by grace

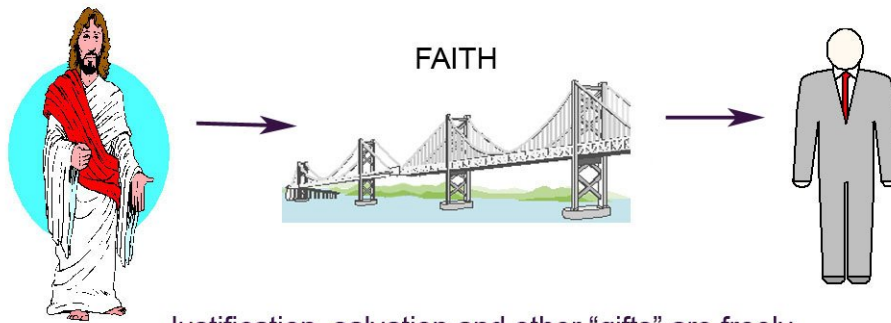
through faith, and that this is not in any way dependent upon a man's work or effort. It is a free gift, not earned. So as not to be misunderstood, allow me to quote a popular evangelical:

...saving faith. That comes only when I make a decision of my will to depend on, or put my *trust* in, Christ as *my* Savior. [From *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Wayne Grudem. Zondervan, 2000. Page 712, note 675 too].

This is typically the standard evangelical declaration. Though "salvation by grace through faith", was probably first formulated by Paul. [per Ephesians 2:8]. In relation to Ephesians 2:8, 9 evangelicals focus upon Abraham who was considered "righteous" by God, righteous because Abraham believed. Abraham thus acts as a model for the typical evangelical:

For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." [Romans 4:3]

Evangelicals should admit that it was an *effort* on Abraham's part as Abraham believed. Thus Abraham's expression of this implanted faith is one of the reasons why God reckoned Abraham as righteous. This gift of righteousness given to Abraham (i.e. justification, basically equivalent to saying he was saved) was conveyed to Abraham from God. All sorts of graces are given to us by God, but a means of conveyance is stated (δια της πιστεως; "through the [or that] faith", Ephesians 2:8). The picture is this:



Justification, salvation and other “gifts” are freely given to us. Often faith is the means (or bridge) whereby they are given, the burden of this paper is: WHO BUILT THE BRIDGE?

Paul appears in Romans, to be illuminating not just the contrast between works and grace, but between what man does, and what God did. Man's efforts usually involve works, and reward. God's works, are here based upon His sovereign will. The contrast is principally between the will of man and the will of God. Evangelicals are wont to state that it is just a contrast between grace and works, this misses some of the argument poised by Paul! An act stemming from God, saved Abraham, not Abraham's act. Abraham's' faith was and is a result of God working upon his mind. For it is God Who **WILLS** us to believe!

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, [Philippians 1:29]

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. [Romans 9:16]

God wills us to believe, in which case the expressed faith emanates from that faith which already resides within the brain. Now I realize that endless proof texts can be called upon, but one should be able to see that expressed faith is a mental activity, an act and or *will* of the mind. Thus it can be commanded as an act to be done, or executed if possessed, shown by the Apostle John,

And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. [I John 3:23, and note the "we", elected saints!]

When a person expresses his inner convictions, he or she is expressing what must prior exist within their brains. When expressed it is a thought, an act, it requires energy and it burns fuel. It is a work, and as demonstrated, God does consider mental activities as fully equivalent to physical efforts. Here we must exercise caution: the presence of this special saving-faith within our brains (one of the indicators, or markers indicating election) is not in itself a work. It was implanted into our brains by God, and there it simply existed, much as a seed exists. However, when it is expressed, or activated, it then becomes effective, and energy is manifest. In this sense we appear to contribute, we express that which God had given us. It is by this expression—of that possessed faith—that the men of old were approved by God (Hebrews 11:2). Abraham chose to express his God-given faith, so a work is manifest in his mental activity, but it was God Who activated this then dormant faith residing in Abraham. Consequently God is the agent, and the instigator of Abraham's actions. But there is more.

Philippians 2:12 and 13 are clear:

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for **it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.**

"To will" and "to work" joined by a conjunction, both are sides of one coin. God is at work in the minds of the believers, in the minds of the elect. God gave to Abraham the ability to believe; by grace, entirely God's effort.

In James 2:21-24 we read:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is **justified by works, and not by faith alone.**

James clearly teaches that Abraham was justified by works, Abraham performed an offering via which James says he was justified (synonymous with being reckoned as righteous). He also clearly states that this work was accompanied by faith and that two elements were involved in the justification of Abraham. James does not share the fact that a saving-faith produces the work. Despite the outward sign only the possession of faith was required. James accents the outward expression—the sign. The offering resulted from the faith. In addressing Jews (the scattered tribes) James speaks their language, they are people who require signs to validate anything from God, (I Corinthians 1:22) James cannot elaborate upon the source of the asseveration which Abraham expressed. But we shall.



Faith is a very interesting entity. Like emotions (anger, sorrow) it can generate reactions. But unlike emotions it has not the same stimulus, it does not arise from some observable reality, or from some observed fact. Apparently evangelicals would like for folks to believe that humans somehow create this idea, or concept, that from within our bowels somewhere, this special trust is developed. However, the Bible is clear in stating that the source of this special faith is NOT from within a or any humans.

This special saving-faith comes from God. Period. Its source is not deep within the human psyche or mind. It does not result from some observable phenomena, it is not a result of rational logic. It comes from God, and is expressed only in or via the minds of the elect. It is in their minds when they are born, and exists in germinal form until it is activated by the good-news of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:17, which could actually read "...faith is *activated* by hearing..."). In Romans 10:17 the added term *comes*, is a CONJECTURE, and it may be wrong in my opinion. Note the context of one of the prepositions here, (ἐξ αὐτοῦ) it can be seen as a source, or an agent/means; as an agent it can activate! [note the preposition δια follows, which itself indicates the intermediate source in Romans 10:17!—do refer to the end-note which focuses upon this text]. If viewed as the traditional *comes*, then it complicates what we read in Hebrews 12:2,

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the **author (αρχηγόν) and perfecter of faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

That faith seen in Abraham, came from Jesus Christ. It had been given earlier to Abraham, and indeed to each of the men and

women of faith. Numerous English translations often mistranslate several passages germane to my point here, note these correct or suggested renderings:

nevertheless 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 Christ Jesus, that we may be justified **by the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. [Galatians 2:16, note also the KJV]

even the righteousness of God through **faith of Jesus Christ** for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; [Romans 3:22]

ἐν τῷ ἀνοχῶν-τοῦ-θεοῦ· προὐ τῆς ἐνδείξεως τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ· ἐν τῷ ἰσχυρῶν καὶ ἐν τῷ ἐπιτολῆσαι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ· (Romans 3:26, per Nestles 26<sup>th</sup>, the TR omits the determiner before “demonstration” ἐνδείξεως)

Romans 3:26, literal English translation:

in the patience of God, for the demonstration of His righteousness at the present time, for the purpose of His justice and as the justifier of the one who has (the) faith of Jesus. 27 WHERE THEN IS BOASTING? (...the faith of Jesus, Jesus is the source or origin of this faith as indicated with this preposition, ek. Unfortunately most evangelically oriented (controlled) translations garble this important passage).

And all these, having gained approval through faith, did not receive what was promised, [note the NASB, RSV, ASV, NET, and the ESV all add a pronoun before "faith", which is an error, here again the KJV stands correct in its clean therapeutic humbleness.] Hebrews 11:39

It is true that we should have faith IN Jesus Christ, but our saving-faith was put into us by God, and it is that faith which belongs to and was created by Jesus Christ. No neurologist, nor chemist, nor pharmacist can formulate or create this entity, saving-faith! This also

better explains the text in Romans chapter four, in which we see that the very core of Abraham's justification, was due to a gift, a gift of faith. Romans 5:1 is clear, in that "we have been justified by faith", coupled with Romans 3:24; "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus"; observe, justification is predicated by at least two grammatical objects: faith **and** the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Both were given to Abraham. Again, the very faith which Abraham willed or expressed was a gift. That concept that source of energy was put into Abraham's brain by God. Freely. Had Abraham created this concept, this will/inclination in his brain, had he conceived of this notion of complete trust, then he would have had something to boast of. His mind did not engineer or produce the thought or concept.

Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Romans 3:27, 28:

There is nothing for Abraham or for us to boast of, we are not the source, even our expression of this faith was orchestrated by God. Concerning some of these observations, Wayne Grudem, being a Reformed theologian, makes some nice contributions (his *Systematic Theology*, pages 669-679); but he (as well as most English Bible versions) overlooked the possibility that the Greek term τυχεωσιν in II Timothy 2:10, can mean "experience" instead of the common "might obtain", seen on page 676 in Grudem's work.

It is impossible for any human to actually create this type of faith. Our neurological power plants cannot compose this form of electrical-chemical combinations to generate on their own, saving-faith. Nor can they unaided, understand the Bible.

But **by His doing** you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." [I Corinthians 1:30, 31]

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and **he cannot understand them**, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. [I Corinthians 2:14-16]

even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with **the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus**. [I Timothy 1:13, 14]

For by grace you have been **saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. [Ephesians 2:8-10] [see comments below]

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (mind). [Hebrews 4:12]

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law God, **for it is not even able to do so**; [Romans 8:5-7]

Notice again, above and below, the inability of the non-elect mind:

For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and **never able** to come to the knowledge of the truth. [II Timothy 3:6, 7]

Throughout the Bible we are reminded that only the chosen can understand the things of God. Since we believers, cannot determine who amongst those about us are elect (or not), we are free to share the good-news about the Lord Jesus Christ, in hope. If the hearers have that special indwelling faith, it may then and there be activated, they may then and there express this faith. Such new Christians can now perceive the things from God, they can begin drinking the milk of the Word.

As concerns the famous passage in Ephesians 2:8,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God;

We may profitably again quote Grudem [*Systematic Theology*, note #14, page 731]:

The word translated "this" is the neuter pronoun (τουτο), which refers not to "faith" or to "grace" specifically in the previous clause (for they are both feminine nouns in the Greek, and would require feminine pronouns), but **to the entire idea** expressed in the preceding phrase, the idea that you have been saved by grace through faith.

Additionally I might add, that the "it" seen in the phrase: "**it** is the gift of God", is added in the English to complete the sense. This "it" also refers back to the preceding clauses; thus grammatically it is suggested that: (1) the whole concept, as well as (2) faith as well as (3) salvation—are gifts, freely given by God. Abraham did not earn faith. It too was given to him, and he expressed it. The "faith" the "salvation" and the "grace" were not "from you" not ἐκ ὑμῶν the "you" (i.e. we) are not the source! (Ephesians 2:8).

Objections may be raised, and can be. For example one might declare that in Nehemiah 9:8, God "found" Abraham's heart to be faithful: certainly the narrative does not imply that this surprised God, it can imply that Abraham was tested and or tried. The mention of "being saved" or "salvation" in the early epistles of Paul (Galatians, I Corinthians, Romans, I and II Thessalonians) often can be clarified as being "rescued" from the wrath to come. [Which wrath Paul clearly saw as imminent in his early epistles]. Not only are believers saved from eternal punishment due to their sins, but they will not experience the coming tribulation. There are numerous passages in Paul's early epistles which can have this semantic aspect: for example, I Corinthians 1:21, 3:15, 5:5, 9:22, and of course II Thessalonians 2:10. Each of these and other salvation passages, should be reexamined by those who simply believe that the word "salvation" only concerns being redeemed or being labeled "not guilty" in a great future judgment! The effort can be rewarding, but it is an effort, one which is also handicapped when one relies upon questionable translations, as evidenced by the NASB's rendering at Galatians 2:16.

Before concluding allow me to try to bring together some deductions from all of the above. Each day we the elect, express our faith, in how we behave, how we speak and dress (*et al*). Abraham

expressed his faith in some tough situations (although after the dynamic visions and the Voice of God directing Him, and the scene viewing the stars, he had some powerful inducements!), nevertheless he was a great man of faith. He and we have/had choices in each case, to be faithful or not. Yet before we can make the choice, that faith must first exist, it must first be in us. When in us, we then have options, and are INFLUENCED by its presence. In other words, our freedom of choices or our freedom of our wills is influenced, we are not totally free. Abraham expressed that faith given to him, he was not totally free in doing so! Evangelical theology implies that people choose to believe the gospel based upon their own totally free wills. This is not so if Abraham's example is followed. (refer to Galatians 1:6, II Thessalonians 2:13, 14). If faith is present, its influence impacts our choices; even when expressing that saving-faith.

God considered Abraham justified, God gave Abraham the faith, God saved Abraham and God blessed Abraham. Though Abraham expressed this faith (which came from Jesus Christ), it was all God's doing, totally of grace; the calling, the choosing, and the prior implanting of faith and its expression. Sooner or later, Abraham (indeed all elect) will choose to follow God. When evangelicals imply that Abraham himself produced this faith by following/obeying God (or even by perceiving his future Seed), unbeknownst to them—they are also implying that he did a work. Hence, they need to recompose some of their salvation formulas, and to recognize a far greater degree of grace typified in Abraham's justification/salvation.

In conclusion, we may summarize thusly:

- (1) Saving faith has a single source, Jesus Christ.
- (2) God gave this saving-faith freely to each human being. When it is expressed, a sign is then displayed that such person is to be then reckoned as elect or saved.
- (3) Faith is also an entity in the brain, when it is expressed it becomes dynamic energy uniquely composed of neurons and electro-chemical constituents. It can grow, and hence utilize more neurons! II Corinthians 10:15.
- (4) The expression of faith is a work, a mental effort.
- (5) The possession of faith (in contrast to its expression) is not a work, it can also be an inner indication of election.

I realize that this whole area of theology is a delicate one. It has been complicated by centuries of arguments. Man does not like the concept of reprobation for example, nor of not knowing exactly how or why God acts. Certainly we are creatures, He is the Creator. He knows what He is doing, and we must be content to accept what wonderful gifts and joys, trials, comforts and information He has provided to us, His creatures. We are in good hands! Knowing this fact, believing this fact that we are in good hands, is *very comforting*. It is known largely via faith and afterwards by the daily walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, experienced in a multitude of ways while we



advance through life on earth. God gave us this faith, amongst its many functions it can be a comfort, as provided to certain of His creatures. Thus the Potter has molded, and thus we be.

## END-NOTE

This end-note concerns the text of Romans 10:17.

A number of semantic and grammatical issues shall be discussed concerning this text. First observe the Greek text as per the  $\aleph$ , with a portion of the context:

**10:15** πως δε κηρυξουσιν εαν μη αποσταλωσιν καθως γεγραπται ως ωραιοι οι ποδες των ευαγγελιζομενων ειρηνην των ευαγγελιζομενων τα αγαθα

**16** αλλ ου παντες υπηκουσαν τω ευαγγελιω Ησαιας γαρ λεγει Κυριε τις επιστευσεν τη ακοη ημων

**17** αρα η πιστις εξ ακοης η δε ακοη δια ρηματος θεου

**18** αλλα λεγω Μη ουκ ηκουσαν μενουγγε εις πασαν την γην εξηλθεν ο φθογγος αυτων και εις τα περατα της οικουμενης τα ρηματα αυτων

One may note some differences from the eclectic Nestle's text especially as concerns the quote as seen in verse 15, and the reading of "God "as opposed to the reading "Christ i" verse 17. Basically these differences do not affect the issues I am raising. However affecting the whole issue is the context of our passages in review. The greater context is that of Romans chapters 9 – 11. I would wager that anyone who sits down to read all 16 chapters of Romans would be struck by the parenthetical nature of these three chapters, 9 – 11. Though "faith " is one of the major subjects of the entire epistle, in these three chapters Paul focuses upon a major group within the church in Rome, he focuses upon his countrymen, the Jews. Within these three chapters he "adjusts "some of his concepts concerning faith to meet the specific and special requirements of the Jews in particular. Paul greatly desires to make sure that they too have a proper understanding of the simple truths in this epistle, this new information being sent to them. It is all too easy for the Jewish Christian to embrace the Messiah through the constraints of legalism, through aspects of the Mosaic code, and not through the avenue of grace. The former method, through the Law—promotes a pseudo-christianity a threat to the church in Rome (noted also prominently in the first epistle to the Corinthians as well) and indeed to the entire Christian church today.

Striking at the very heart of legalism Paul states in Romans 9:16,

So then it does not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. NASB

Doing the Law requires a man's "will " and his running or performance, both are superseded by the actions of God; God chose the Israelite as based upon promise, God's promise [Romans 9:8, 9;

4:13]. The actions of men are thus immaterial in this respect. God acts, God chooses, God promises. Man is a recipient whose actions only encourage God to bless, punish or show mercy.

The Israelites stumbled over the Stone, they did not see the Light,

For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.  
Romans 10:3, NASB

In Romans 10:13-15, we are told that the Israelites have and are being told the truth, they are told how to be rescued, or saved. To these Jews living in Rome, Paul's epistle was of the greatest import.

In Paul's era, there were approximately 175,000 Christians living in Rome (per *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Rome", page 732). Also during the period about 50,000 Jews were living in Rome (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, volume 22, s.v. "Judaism", page 391). Additionally, from the time of Caesar onwards (circa 45 B.C.) the Jewish synagogues and religious activities were given legal protection. Archaeological remains and historical accounts reveal that Hebrew was almost unknown to the Jews living in Rome, and that Greek was the primary language for all aspects of life; except perhaps for several synagogue rituals.

There existed a strong (though not large) Jewish element within the Christian Church in Rome, as also evidenced by the list of names seen in Romans 16, clearly then we are dealing with a Judeo-Christian group. Long before Prisca and Aquila began their preparations for Paul's ministry in Rome, synagogues served the Jewish inhabitants, the Mosaic Law held sway. A close study of the Pauline epistles in general discloses the fact that certain Jews were

using their religious prestige, their former eminence to act in an arrogant manner. Perhaps treating the Christians (Christianity) as a rather new novelty. This attitude caused divisions, divisions which were a great danger to the early church. In light of all of this, Paul devotes three chapters (indeed the heart) of this epistle to concentrate his energies toward alleviating the problem. It is a serious challenge to the emerging church, one engineered by Satan, and one which was quite formidable.

This thus, is a partial context for our Romans 10:17. Dr. Skip Moen (a doctor of philosophy, via Oxford University) refers to this verse as Paul's great SHEMA (or SHAMA). And indeed it can be seen as such:

**CONSEQUENTLY (ἀρα) FAITH comes FROM OBEYING, AND HEARING THROUGH THE MESSAGE ABOUT (or, from) GOD.**

As Paul's shema, it would correspond with the older Jewish shema that being Deuteronomy 6:4, (with transliterations below)

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is One.  
Understand YHWH Elohim YHWH

To an Israelite Paul's exclamation in Romans 10:17 may well generate this - "one must hear and obey to believe". A dynamic shema. Again I find it necessary to remind expositors and readers that these three chapters focus upon the Jewish members of the young church in Rome. For example, the suggestions that one confess with one's mouth and believe in one's heart that Jesus is God. (Romans 10:9). Alas you point out that I did not correctly quote Romans 10:9, for the

Greek text states that Jesus should be thought of as “Lord”, not God. True, I intentionally misquoted. But if you were a Jew living in Rome and a member of this church meeting in Prisca and Aquila's house, and you read this verse, you would understand it as meaning GOD.

This is so because the Greek word for “Lord” is *Κυριος*, which to the reader—is equivalent to GOD—as this Greek term means GOD in the Septuagint (LXX). The Bible which all (most) Christians and Jews used in the world of the dispersion (and even in much of Jerusalem, in that era) was the Greek LXX. Recall that the Jews in Rome used and spoke Greek. To them Hebrew was a dead language; or in the words of Professor Louis H. Feldman: “...predominantly Greek-speaking and almost totally ignorant of Hebrew.” (i.e. the Jewish community in Rome). Quote from *Encyclopedia Britannica*, volume 22, s.v. “Judaism”, page 391.

In Rome in the first century A.D., THE Bible was the Old Testament, there was of course no “New Testament” as yet, so the LXX was THE book, used by all those fortunate enough to afford a copy. *Κυριος* meaning “God”, is used hundreds of times as such in the LXX, it and *θεος* are the primary words used as the name of God in the Greek LXX. For example the famous shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 reads as such in the LXX:

*ακουε Ισραηλ κυριοι ο(θεοι) η(μων) κυριοι ει(ς) εστιν*

In each case, as prior demonstrated, both of the above *κυριοι* are the Greek words for YHWH, the *θεος* is used for the Elohim Hebrew term. What this amounts to is that if you (again) were a Jew living in Rome, and you read Paul's epistle, you would see “GOD” in your mind as you scanned *Κυριος*. Of course this is intended, Paul knows his audience.

In the Greek text of Romans 10:17, two prepositions are juxtaposed (ἐκ and διὰ). The ἐκ seems to be indicating the means or source, the διὰ is also apparently, indicating the means; or if you want to personify the Word, then it can indicate the agent—the immediate agent. Alas, would not the preposition with “hearing” the ἐκ not also indicate the immediate agent? One should be an intermediate agent/means? ἐκ could indicate the source, which gives grounds for the addition of the conjectured “comes”. Instead of “comes” consider these options:

- ...faith “consists of hearing ”
- ...faith “is from hearing ”
- ...faith “is activated by hearing ”
- ...faith “distinguished by hearing ”
- ...faith “is hearing ”
- ...faith “comes from comprehending the message... ”
- ...faith “consists of understanding the message (the ρημα)”

Similar passages may afford some help such as I Corinthians 8:6, Galatians 4:23 or I Corinthians 11:12 below: (NASB)

For as the woman originates from (ἐκ) the man, so also the man has his birth through (διὰ) the woman; and all things originate from (ἐκ) God.

The second ἐκ indicates a source, and the διὰ indicates the or a agent. Still, the actual semantics existing between the two prepositions in such proximity, is not made clearer. Perhaps both represent “immediate ” means/agency. In any case the syntax itself grabs our

attention, which may be why the grammatical scene is presented in the first place. Yet in Romans 10:17 the word for “hearing” (ακουη) can also mean understand or comprehend, as seen in Mark 4:33 and Acts 4:19, below (wherein “ακουειν” is an infinitive),

But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed (ακουειν) to you rather than to God, you be the judge; (NASB)

Notice also, in Romans 10:16 that hearing, believing and obeying are linked, they must obey the message. (KJV) The Greek text is

But they have not all obeyed the gospel, for Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"

'Al l' ou)pahtej uph~~kousan~~ t%eu)aggel i%. Hsai~~aj~~ gar l egei,  
Kurie, tij epi~~steusen~~ tv=~~akov~~=h(nw~~h~~;

Faith and obedience linked.

In Deuteronomy 6:4, the Hebrew word for “Hear” as in “Hear O Israel”, is shema or shama, and it can mean *understand!*

Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, "Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we **understand** it; and do not speak with us in Judean, in the hearing of the people who are on the wall." (Isaiah 36:11, NASB)

As shown above, the word often used for “listen” or “hear” the Hebrew שָׁמַע [which when transliterated is shema or shama], is on occasion, used to mean “understand”. Deuteronomy 6:4 may be another example.

Understand O Israel, God is One.

Romans 10:17, faith is understanding the message of God, or from God. This is how the Jewish readers of Romans 10:17 could have understood this verse; parallel to their famous shema, is this shema from Paul. Thus I offer my suggestion:

FAITH IS FROM GRASPING THE WORD OF GOD!!



Mr. Gary S. Dykes

April 21, 2014, while in Tullahoma, Tennessee

[www.Biblical-data.org](http://www.Biblical-data.org)