

Addendum

Dr. Goodwin, since publishing our article on the God-kind of faith, some questions and comments have been presented to me which indicate that some of our readers continue to stumble over one particular aspect of this discussion. Namely, the historical aspect of translating the phrase in question from Mark 11:22 as either “faith in God” or as “faith of God,” which some equate with the phrase “God-kind of faith.”

They note correctly that a number of references exist in ancient documents, in the writings of various Greek scholars, and in some old Bible translations which translate this phrase from Mark 11:22 as the “faith of God.” As you wrote in our original document, “Technically, from a very literal rendering, and if one were translating the genitive *of-God* as a possessive genitive, he could translate Mark 11:22 as ‘. . . Have the faith of God.’” Therefore, we concede that “faith of God” is a legitimate translation of this Greek phrase, do we not?

Mel, that is correct. However, in my opinion, to have “the faith of God” is not the same thing as having the “God-kind of faith.” Bibles, particularly older translations, have translated this passage in a manner similar to the way it is translated in the Interlinear Bible (faith of God). Christians have, from the earliest times of the New Testament, realized that all good things come from God. For example, James the Lord’s brother wrote:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17, ESV).

In fact many Christians, particularly those holding to a Reformed view of theology, tell us that even the faith to believe (it is a perfect gift from above) is a gift of faith from God. Therefore, in this sense faith given to us is the faith of God, that is, God is its source. However, at this particular location almost all of the committee Bibles translated in the twentieth century translate this phrase (faith of God) as an objective genitive, namely, *have faith in God*.

It seems to me, to translate this passage as meaning to “have the God-kind of faith,” conjures up the concept that God did His marvelous works through His “faith.” For example, some claim God created the universe through faith. This is a concept I do not support and I do not accept as correct the claim that this passage allows that meaning. Also, I do not believe it is a legitimate representation of the Greek text to translate this passage as to “have the God-kind of faith.”

Charles, I have done some research into this matter and I’ve found out that many of the older theologians understood this phrase, even though it may be translated as faith of God, to mean have faith *in* God. For example, John Gill (1697-1771) wrote this comment on Mark 11:22 in his “Exposition of the Bible,” this way:

“And Jesus answering, saith unto them . . . To all the disciples; for what Peter said, he said in the name of them all; and according to Matthew, the disciples said, 'how soon is the fig tree withered away?' To which this is an answer; though the Arabic version renders it, 'to him'; as if the words were directed particularly to Peter: **have faith in God; or 'the faith of God'**, so the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; that is, exercise, and make use of that faith which has God for its author, which is the work of God, and of his operation, a free grace gift of his; and **which has God for its object**; and is supported by his power, and encouraged by his goodness, truth, and faithfulness: and so the Arabic version renders it, 'believe in God'; not only that such things may be done, as the drying up a fig tree, but those that are much greater.”

In this reference, we can see that John Gill believed the correct translation was “the faith of God,” but nowhere does he indicate that he believed that this faith was a portion of the faith God Himself used to create the universe. He did not equate “faith of God” with the concept of “God-kind of faith.”

Mel, this is an excellent reference. Translators who present this passage as “the faith of God” are by no stretch saying that God had faith through which he created the universe or did other marvelous works.

This is made plain in the statement by Gill. You have made that part of Gill's remarks very plain to all of us by putting Gill's words pertaining to this matter in red lettering. Thanks for doing the research.

Dr. Goodwin, I agree entirely with this statement made by Gill regarding the faith of God. Strangely though, I found this quote on a website arguing *in favor of* the God-kind of faith teaching. This statement from Gill was quoted as proof that the God-kind of faith was accepted by Greek scholars of previous centuries, even though nowhere in this quote does Gil define "faith of God" as the "God-kind of faith."

It seems plausible to me to believe that when Kenyon originated his "God-kind of faith" teaching, he may have innocently made the same mistaken assumption that is made by many today. They see the English phrase "faith of God" in old Bible translations and in quotations by Greek scholars and assume that scholars defined "faith of God" as a measure of the faith God used or uses (God-kind of faith)—which they absolutely did not. Faith of God, to these scholars and translators meant, faith *in* God, as Gill wrote, "faith . . . which has God as its object."

Mel, what about claiming, as some do, that since Jesus Christ had faith, it follows that God the Father also has faith?

Dr. Goodwin, I believe that making the argument that God has faith simply because the Bible clearly speaks of the faith of Jesus Christ and Christ is God, is a false parallel. Jesus Christ was God manifested in the flesh, this means that He was at the same time, all God and all man. Jesus did not have faith in himself, nor did he describe faith as a "force," and lastly, he didn't have faith in faith. It is clear throughout the Gospels that Christ's entire focus was upon obeying the Father, pleasing the Father, and placing his entire trust—or faith—in the Father.

I do not see Christ exercising the God-kind of faith. I see the Son of God with his eyes unwaveringly fixed on the Heavenly Father, placing

no faith in faith, releasing no spiritual force, molding no spiritual substance with his words, but instead focusing his entire trust and faith absolutely and completely on God. (We too ought to focus our trust absolutely and completely on God. That's true "faith.") If Christ Himself did not exercise the "God-kind of Faith," I see no way that we can. The servant is not above his Lord.

Mel, I don't see how this truth could be stated any clearer.

Dr. Goodwin, allow me to inform our readers of a source where they can confirm for themselves the absence of the phrase "God-kind of faith" from the early Church and from major Greek scholars over the ages.

Many readers of our article may be unaware that early Church documents are not shut away and inaccessible in some distant dusty library. There are online sources where anyone can read directly from the early texts. One excellent source is [Christian Classics Ethereal Library](http://www.ccel.org) at www.ccel.org. This is an internet database of thousands of early Church documents. On average, this website is accessed 30,000 times per day by scholars around the world.

These early documents have been treated with great reverence, attention to detail, and with great concern for accuracy. None of these have been edited or altered in any way—even those documents which are considered today to be of questionable origin or authorship.

I used the search function on this website, as can our readers, to search through thousands of pages of ancient Church documents. The results settle for me the question of whether the phrase "faith of God" has historically been understood to mean the "God-kind of faith."

The results are as follows:

"faith of God"	appears 435 times in ancient documents
"faith in God"	appears 618 times
"God-kind of faith"	appears 0 times

Surely if the God-kind of Faith was widely believed and taught by the early church—as some claim--the phrase would appear numerous times in these writings. But as far as I can determine, there are no known references to this phrase in early Church records. This absence would indicate to me that the translation "faith of God" was well-known and accepted as legitimate in ancient times, and by scholars since then. However, to interpret this phrase as the "God-kind of faith" was unknown, at least as far as I can tell, until Kenyon's time. It seems to me that this teaching is something that has been added in relatively recent years to the unalterable Gospel of Jesus Christ in which we have believed, and should therefore be discarded.

Mel, I completely agree with you. Additionally, you and I agree that a Bible teacher ought to teach Christian beliefs that can be supported by the Bible. In my opinion, to teach that God Himself has faith and therefore there is something “out there” that one can identify as the “God-kind of faith,” is not found in Holy Writ. But it is really satisfying to be able to point out to the reader that the teaching about faith as advocated by you and me is not something new or novel. Why can I make this statement? It is without equivocation that the teaching regarding “faith” that we advocate has been taught since the New Testament times in historic orthodox Christianity. If we are wrong, we have a lot of company, namely, the scholars, teachers, preachers, and theologians who have populated the orthodox Christian church since Pentecost. I’m proud to be associated with such an august crowd who “has faith in God.”

Charles, I too am thankful to believe in, and be an advocate of, the core faith message that has consistently been believed and preached since ancient times. Thank you Dr. Goodwin for helping us to separate the equal concepts of “faith of God” and “faith in God” from the “God-kind of Faith.”

So to sum up, there are ten reasons why the "God-kind of faith" teaching fails:

1. It appears to be a teaching unknown to the early Church and to our Pentecostal forefathers, appearing only during the lifetime of E.W. Kenyon (1867-1948).
2. We can find no reference to the phrase "God-kind of faith" in ancient Church documents.
3. We know of no current experts on the Greek language and theology, regardless of denominational affiliation, who endorse translating the phrase "have faith in God" in Mark 11:22 as "have the God-kind of faith."
4. The Greek does not allow or imply that faith is a force or a moldable spiritual substance.
5. Nowhere in the Bible is God described as having faith, needing faith, or using faith. Therefore we cannot have the God-kind of faith when God Himself does not have faith.
6. God is always spoken of in the Bible as being the object or receiver of our faith.
7. Christ set the pattern for us in the area of faith by placing his total faith in God alone. He did not have faith in faith. Nor did he describe faith as a force or as a moldable spiritual substance.
8. Faith involves belief in something or someone other than one's self or greater than one's self. Since there is nothing greater than God, and no one is equal to God, it is impossible for God to have faith or use it. He is God. He needs nothing.
9. God did not create the universe through faith. He created it by an exercise of His omnipotent power.
10. Jesus Christ, not faith, was the intermediate creative agent in Creation.

My Brethren, we call ourselves "Word of Faith" because we strive to believe in all that the Word teaches, particularly on the subject of faith. However, the "Word" not only doesn't support this "faith" teaching. The Word refutes it. Regardless of who has taught this in the past or who originated this teaching, I think it is time that we separate ourselves from this teaching for which we can find no scriptural or historical support. Past proponents of this teaching did not have instant internet access to early Church documents or to as many scholarly writings as we do today.

If the few teachers of yesteryear who advocated this teaching had access to all of the resources we can draw from today, would they still be teaching the God-kind of faith? I can't answer that, and neither can you. However, I can say with assurance that of the few ministers who taught this in the past, I believe them to be men of biblical integrity. They had a track record showing that whenever they increased in their knowledge of the Bible, they were quick to adjust their teachings and even to cease teaching doctrines for which they could no longer find scriptural support. Sometimes their stand for biblical integrity cost them dearly.

Many past leaders whom we revere, faced incredible persecution whenever they stood up and said, "I used to teach this, but I can do so no longer. I can find no clear Bible confirmation of this teaching." I think we need to follow their example by quietly separating ourselves from this teaching.

A person might legitimately ask, "What makes the difference? Why not just keep teaching this? What harm is done?" Do you realize how many Christian groups over the centuries have said those exact words, choosing to hold on to their religious traditions rather than to adjust their teachings when God brought them more light?

Do we really want to join their ranks?

If we love our Word of Faith traditions more than we love the Word, God will have to pass us by and raise up a whole new group of people through whom to work. I think this is too high of a price for us to pay.

Footnotes:

¹*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2nd College Edition (1978). s.v. "faith".

²Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1986), pp. 326-27.

³Nigel Turner, *Christian Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), p. 153.

⁴Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus*, plays ed. by A. C. Pearson (Oxford Classical Text), p. 950.

⁵*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1968 ed., s.v. "Demosthenes."

⁶Turner, *Christian Words*, p. 153.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, p. 326.

⁹*The New Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary*, (1964), s.v. "doubt."

¹⁰R. C. Sproul, *Ligonier Ministries Audio Tape AP50.21*, 1984.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), pp. 21-22.

¹³Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), p. 332.

¹⁴Richard Popkin, "Fideism," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 3:201.

¹⁵*Classical Apologetics*, p. 22.

¹⁶Enns, *Moody Handbook*, p. 332.

¹⁷H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto, Ontario: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 244.

¹⁸A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1933), 5:418.

¹⁹John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Hebrews* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 287.

²⁰*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed., translated, revised and augmented by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich from Walter Bauser's Fifth Edition, 1958, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 249.

²¹Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 2:476.

²²Brooks and Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, p. 14.

²³McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, pp. 141-42).

²⁴John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, p.1486.

²⁵Ibid.

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