

Preface by Mel Montgomery:

I started writing an article on the subject of the "God-Kind of Faith," and realized that so much of this teaching is based on personal or unique interpretations both of theology and of New Testament Greek. I therefore concluded that the last thing we needed was for me to refute interpretations with my own interpretations. We needed instead to receive an authoritative response from someone with an extensive knowledge of theology, and of New Testament Greek, who was not hostile to Charismatics. I enlisted the help of Dr. Charles Goodwin, the son of Rev. and Mrs. J.R. Goodwin, and I believe that together we have authored an eye-opening and precise examination of this teaching.

This is offered in two versions: the Extended Version for those who desire an extensive examination of the Greek and the theology involved in this teaching, and an Abbreviated Version for those who desire a shorter explanation. This that you are reading now is the Abbreviated Version.

This is not a quick-read article, as you can see from its length. I caution you that you will have the opportunity to make a great mistake. Namely, you'll be tempted to skim over this article. Don't do that. Set aside a time in which you have no distractions and you can focus on this document in a thoughtful manner. Although Charles has a great ability to discuss Greek and theology, some of his "off the cuff" comments in this article are golden nuggets of insight that will bless you greatly and even transform your life and ministry if you will think deeply on them.

I invite you to give this article your prayerful consideration.

Kind Regards,
Brother Mel

Do We Have the God-Kind of Faith?

After accepting Christ through a Charismatic TV program, I joined a Southern Baptist church and remained a member there for six months. Then I came over into the Charismatic and Word of Faith branch of Christianity. Consequently, although I heard some foundational doctrines taught by the evangelical branch of Christianity, most of my study over the years has been of materials produced by Charismatics.

I was taken completely by surprise a few years back to find that some of our teachings are quite controversial. By examining the teachings of the broad segment of Christianity, I have found that we are the only ones to promote certain doctrines. While it is possible that we might have more light in specific areas of scriptures than the rest of the Body of Christ, it is equally possible that they have more light than we do.

Although I love our branch of Christianity and have no desire to ever leave it, I am never-the-less troubled by the fact that some of our teachings are flatly rejected by the rest of the legitimate Body of Christ. Some of the unique interpretations of the Greek that we use are not supported by a single credentialed Greek scholar. While it is true that some Greek scholars may have their interpretations colored by denominational affiliations, I cannot believe that they all are unduly influenced. If we teach something that is flatly rejected by the rest of the Body of Christ, by all Greek scholars, and was not taught by Wigglesworth, Carter, and our other Pentecostal forefathers, I think we should re-examine that teaching.

Yet, there is a kind of peer pressure in Word of Faith circles. We revere Kenneth Hagin to the point where if a doctrine was taught by him, we are reluctant to closely examine it or reject it because we feel to do so would repudiate all of his teachings and would place us in the same grouping as his vicious critics. However, I believe we need to keep two things in mind. First, Brother Hagin changed his teachings

over the years as he came to see more of the light of God's word. In one of his last books, "The Midas Touch," he rejected teachings he or others had taught for years: the end-time transference of wealth, the hundred-fold return, the anointing of increase, seed-faith giving, coming under a curse for not tithing, and so on. He came to the pulpit at Rhema after coming into a greater understanding of scripture and boldly declared, "I was wrong and I ask you to forgive me." Thus did he make several substantial changes in his teachings.

Second, Brother Hagin always taught us to judge every teaching by the word. He told us that if we couldn't find something clearly presented in scripture--even if it was his own teaching--to forget it. He said, "I can miss it. I have missed it."

I am not going to make the mistake that others have made and try to be an amateur Greek scholar. Instead, I have asked Dr. Charles Goodwin to assist us in understanding what the Greek specifically says about the subject of faith, and whether there is clear scriptural support for our teaching of "the God-kind of faith." Dr. Goodwin is the son of Brother and Sister Goodwin. He grew up in his parents' church, witnessing the miraculous power of God, and hearing Brother Hagin teach for years. From 1992 through 2005, Dr. Goodwin was an adjunct professor in the seminary division of Luther Rice University, Atlanta, Georgia. He has taught various New Testament subjects, biblical theology and New Testament Greek for many years. He is a dedicated student of biblical languages and New Testament theology. He has a love for the word of God, and absolutely no axe to grind against Brother Hagin or Charismatics.

INTERVIEW BEGINS

Let's begin by asking Dr. Charles Goodwin for a definition of the Greek word translated "faith."

Dr. Goodwin, what is faith?

Mel, before we begin, may I take just a short time to respond to some of the things you mentioned in the introduction material?

Certainly, Dr. Goodwin. You can offer a perspective that few can. You were reared in a Pentecostal home and experienced firsthand many of the things distinctive to the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. Yet you also have found an additional home in the main line denominational evangelical churches. You can draw from the best of both worlds.

DR. GOODWIN'S VIEW REGARDING BROTHER HAGIN

You are absolutely correct in your statement about my personal attitude. I do have a love for the Word of God, and, at the same time, I do not have an axe to grind with either Brother Hagin or Charismatic believers. In fact, instead of having an axe to grind, I have high praise for both Brother Hagin and many of the Charismatics.

I personally think that Brother Hagin was outstanding in his ministry. He seemed particularly used by God in encouraging God's people to trust God completely. This resulted in many experiencing spiritual blessings they had never imagined being available to the believer. I believe God used Brother Hagin to build many believers' trust and confidence in Him. However, I must add, even though I really loved Brother Hagin almost as a second dad, I don't agree with everything K. E. Hagin taught. One of those subjects has to do with this document, namely, Brother Hagin's teaching regarding the "God-kind of faith." This is one area in which I disagree with Brother Hagin.

**DR. GOODWIN'S POSITIVE VIEW
OF CHARISMATIC CHURCHES**

The Charismatic churches have done many positive things. For example, I believe that Charismatic churches have led the way in public worship. I see them as having introduced a high quality, energetic, and exciting spiritual worship style that is now enjoyed throughout many non-charismatic evangelical churches.

I have seen nondenominational churches, as well as traditional denomination churches, adopt many of the worship patterns practiced by the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches.

It has been my personal observation, which has also been confirmed by limited research, that a number of denominational churches now offer contemporary worship service to their community of believers that are patterned, to a great degree, after the more progressive Charismatic church services.

BEHAVIOR PATTERNS ADOPTED BY SOME EVANGELICALS FROM CHARISMATIC CHURCHES

There are also other characteristics of Charismatic worship that have spilled over into some of the evangelical churches. For example, the use of non-traditional church musical instruments - - such as guitars and drums, keyboards, etc. - - the raising of one's hand in worship, the use of applause in praise to the Lord, and other less formal and spontaneous worship behaviors. These worship practices, which have been generally related to Pentecostal or Charismatic believers in the past, have now become commonplace in many nondenominational evangelical churches. In fact, I have personally observed these worship practices being employed in a number of churches associated with the Southern Baptist Convention. As mentioned, usually this type worship is seen, primarily, in the contemporary services of these churches.

ONE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHARISMATIC AND EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Interestingly, I have noticed one major distinction between Pentecostal/Charismatic church services and the evangelical worship services which allow or utilize the behavior patterns we have discussed. In the evangelical churches I have attended, the worship leaders never ask the congregation to raise their hands, or to worship in applause. When these worship behaviors are employed, it is done spontaneously and not orchestrated. That has not been my experience in Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. In Pentecostal circles it is common for the preacher or worship leader to instruct the audience raise their hands, etc.

**DR. GOODWIN'S NEGATIVE OBSERVATION REGARDING
SOME CHARISMATIC CHURCHES**

Up to this point I have mentioned some of the *positive* factors I've seen influenced by the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches. But there is a flip side that needs to be mentioned if one is going to be objective. The Charismatic, particularly the Word of Faith Movement, does have, in my opinion, some negatives.

The major negative can be found in, what I would classify as aberrant (that is, non-biblical) doctrines taught and practiced in many Charismatic churches.

What is very interesting to me is, most of the doctrines which I find questionable are not only found questionable by me and other evangelical Bible teachers, but also the same position is posed by many of the old-line classical Pentecostal denominations' Bible teachers as well.

HOW I WANT TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Mel, I will respond to your questions as best that I can. In my responses, I do not wish to be harsh or hard-spirited toward others, but I do intend to stand true to what I believe the Bible teaches.

Words do have meaning. I will be responding to your questions from what I understand is the teaching of the New Testament. At times we will refer to the Greek text. After all it was Koine Greek that God chose to use in giving us the New Testament.

So when making decisions about what the Scriptures really mean, it is important to look at the original language in which the New Testament was written. Often the original language will give us insights we may miss if reading only the English translation.

The Apostle Paul wrote,

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV).

Mel, my response to your questions will be based on the Scriptures. It is my prayer that the Lord will impress each of us as to how best apply His Word in our lives.

Brother Charles, I'm glad you have shared with us your heart. Your statements make it clear that your responses will not be colored by animosity, or by an agenda. You aren't interested in who is right, but what is right. This allows you to be objective, and objectivity is what we need most. Now to return to my original question, - - Dr. Goodwin, what is faith?

FAITH DEFINED - ENGLISH DICTIONARY

The English dictionary gives a number of denotations (the direct or specific meaning of a word) for this word. For example, *Webster's New World Dictionary* lists six denotations for the word "faith."¹ There are two meanings about which I will comment. The first denotation (#1) states that faith is *unquestioning belief that does not require proof or evidence*. Denotation number five (#5) identifies faith as *complete trust, confidence, or reliance*.

My response to your question, "What is faith?" will be from two perspectives: 1) faith as used in an ordinary everyday English conversation, and 2) faith as used in the New Testament. In either perspective the exact meaning intended by the writer or speaker is usually determined by the context.

FAITH IN ORDINARY CONVERSATION

From perspective number one - - we can see how these meanings listed in the dictionary are correct when we are talking about *faith* in a normal, everyday application.

If I tell you to turn the water faucet in my home to the “on” setting and you will have a good flow of water, I’m speaking with *faith*, that is, with *a complete trust, confidence or reliance* that water will appear (denotation #5).

Please notice where my *trust or confidence* is placed. I have faith in the water faucet. I have *complete trust* that it will allow the water in the pipes behind the faucet to flow through the faucet into the sink, basin, container, etc., in place to receive the water. My faith has an *object* to which it is directed - - the faucet. My faith is an *objective* faith.

In another sense, I’m also speaking with a *faith*, that is, an *unquestioning belief that does not require proof nor evidence* (denotation #1). My unquestioning belief is based on the fact that this has routinely been the result at my home when conditions were normal and the faucet was turned to the “on” setting. In this scenario my faith is still an objective faith - - I have *faith* or *trust* that is directed toward the faucet.

Some people may suggest that we could identify this definition (denotation #1) as a “faith-in-general” type faith. This type faith does not require proof or evidence. It is based on my unquestioning belief that the faucet will operate, all things being equal, in the same manner as it has done in the past. (In the next section we will see that “biblical faith” is not *empty of content* nor is it a *faith-in-general*.)

BIBLICAL FAITH

Now to perspective number two. When we move to the meaning of the word *faith* in the spiritual and biblical context, more refinement may be needed for clarification.

Faith, in biblical terms, is a *multi-faceted* entity. The Bible speaks about faith from different perspectives (e.g., life of faith, healing faith, gift or gifts of faith, etc.), as well as making a distinction of at least four kinds of faith (intellectual, miracle, temporary, saving).² *However, biblical faith is not empty of content nor is it a faith-in-general.* It has content. The content is provided in Holy Scripture. New Testament faith is based on evidence as presented in the Bible. Let us look at this biblical faith as defined in the original language or Greek text.

Dr. Goodwin, I've often heard it said that faith is *to believe*. It seems to me that you are saying that faith includes believing, but there must be something in which to, or someone in whom to, believe. Is my understanding correct?

Mel, you are exactly correct. In Christianity faith must have an object. Therefore, New Testament faith means to have confidence or trust in something or someone. This conclusion is supported by how *pistis* was used during the time of the writing of the New Testament.

**NEW TESTAMENT GREEK LEXICON
(DICTIONARY) DEFINITION**

The Greek word translated as faith in English is *pistis*. One popular lexicon used by many New Testament Greek students defines *pistis* (faith) as: “a conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things,” generally with the included idea of “trust” and “holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it” . . . (*Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, #4102 [Strong’s number]).

A more abbreviated definition is found in the *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, p. 173. The author of this lexicon, Gringrich, gives the following information regarding *pistis* as: *faith, trust*. Denotation #2 in this lexicon reads: *trust, confidence, faith in the active sense = “believing,” in religious usage, directed toward God and Christ.*

Mel, as one can easily observe, faith is, according to the Greek Lexicons, an objective faith. Faith has an object to which it is directed. It is not a trust or confidence in some mentally concocted image such as “faith” in “faith.” Faith is not only objective, it also has content.

SAVING FAITH

As stated, biblical faith is never empty of content nor is it a faith-in-general. New Testament faith is based on evidence as given in Scripture. We will examine the concept of “saving faith.” However, we must understand that the principles of believing, trusting, etc., in saving faith will *also be included* in any other specified area of faith such as miracle faith, etc.

“Saving faith” is the most important aspect of faith because it is the kind of faith having to do with our salvation. We will call this justifying faith. Faith, as used in the Bible, requires us to have trust in God. I am repeating for emphasis - - the principles given in “saving faith” can be a model (paradigm) for other areas of religious faith.

Saving faith has three aspects: 1) there must be information (e.g., that we are sinners and need a Savior), 2) we must agree, that is, assent to the information, and 3) we must “trust” ourselves to the Lord. This will involve an act of the heart, the will and the affections. Some people call this “making a decision” or “to believe in one’s heart.”

Then are you telling us that when the Bible speaks about faith it is talking about an objective faith and that God is the object of this faith?

That is exactly what I’m trying to convey.

I’ve always heard that faith was “to believe.” How does believing have anything to do with faith?

It is true that faith includes believing, but there must be something in which to believe, or someone in whom to believe. Repeating - - faith

must have an object. Therefore, New Testament faith means to have confidence or trust in something or someone. It means to hold something as true. In other words it has content. Any time a person places a trust in something, or holds something to true, he is making an *intellectual* assertion. Therefore, from this perspective, New Testament faith does involve an intellectual dimension.

Since faith does include an intellectual affirmation, does this mean a Christian is one who *never* doubts that Christ has removed the guilt of his sins and granted him eternal life?

No, even a Christian will have times in which he questions his own relationship with God. This doubt doesn't come from God it comes from our adversary, the devil. It's my opinion that the best way to deal with Satan when he plants those kind of thoughts is to do what the Lord's brother, James, said to do. He wrote,

"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7, NIV).

Dr. Goodwin, I can see that biblical faith does involve feeling, but is there an intellectual dimension to faith also?

Mel, yes indeed, faith does involve an intellectual dimension. It is generally accepted that there are basic truths that must be believed for salvation. As one author stated, "Saving faith, then involves believing the basic truths fundamental to man's salvation: man's sinfulness, Christ's atoning sacrifice, and His bodily resurrection."¹³ This statement reinforces the whole concept that New Testament faith is not empty of content nor is it a faith-in-general.

New Testament faith is not a leap into the unknown. New Testament faith has content which is provided in Holy Scripture. New Testament faith is based on evidence as presented in the Bible. The gospel has a content which is to be recognized, understood, and affirmed. At this point faith does include an intellectual basis.

From these three aspects one can see that New Testament faith is not exclusively the making of an intellectual assertion, but it definitely includes it. But it also includes an emotive dimension, a psychological dimension, as well as a volitional dimension.

Dr. Goodwin, can you give us an illustration of faith in which these dimensions are identified? Then if we understand these components of faith, their operation will be the same in saving faith, miracle faith, or in trusting God concerning some other area of life.

Mel, the best analogy that I know to use is a chair. The first step is to present a chair. There has to be information presented. Present information or data suggesting the item you are presenting is a chair. E.g., it looks like a chair; it feels like a chair, it is advertised as being a chair, etc.

Step #2 has to do with *assenting* to the information. Next ask your audience, “Do you believe the chair can hold you if you sit in it.” E.g., tell them it looks sturdy, it feels sturdy, and it is advertised as being capable of holding a weight of over 500 pounds. Most will respond that they do believe the chair will hold them up if they were to sit in it.

Step #3 - has to do with the “trust” aspect. The first two steps do not, standing alone, demonstrate true faith. Even the demons achieve to this level of faith (James 2:19).

The “trust” aspect of faith refers to the personal trust dimension of faith and is demonstrated with the chair example when the individual says he believes the chair can hold him up, actually trusts his body to the chair by sitting in the chair. At this point in the demonstration, all three aspects of true *faith* have been demonstrated.

I've heard faith described in Word of Faith teachings as being a "force." Does the Greek indicate in any way that faith is a spiritual force?

No, there is no way that the Greek text would allow “faith” to be a spiritual force. Faith is a trust in God (Jesus) that He will do what He has said He will do. Faith is objective.

Hebrews 11:1 reads: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Since this scripture refers to faith as "substance," some have concluded that faith is some kind of spiritual substance floating around in our hearts or in the spiritual realm.

I've heard it taught that if you will take a hold of this invisible substance called faith, you can mold it with your words into whatever you need. Thus, if you need to be healed, take faith and mold it into a healing. Brother Charles, does the original Greek of Heb. 11:1 indicate that faith is a moldable spiritual substance?

Before directly answering this inquiry, let me do a review of what biblical faith is not. Biblical faith is not a “hope-so” type attitude. Biblical faith is not merely a positive confession. Faith as described in the Bible (as we have looked at in some detail) is not positive thinking or a mental agreement with an idea about what God is supposed to do. Bible faith is not a mental or spiritual “psyche” job. And most emphatically, biblical faith is not some invisible substance you can reach out and capture with your words and mold it into whatever you need to experience. Claims such as these seem, at least to me, to be more at home in new age or New Thought literature. It is not historic Christianity.

Mel, I’m sorry to hear this report. I have no doubt that there is a segment in Christian circles that have become involved in advocating this type of non-biblical doctrine. I am not claiming that they are cultist. I know they are Christian and most of them are sincere, but they are sincerely in error.

What I am saying without equivocation is, they are teaching a

doctrine that is not biblical. At least one thing is for sure, this type thinking is not now, nor ever was in the history of the orthodox Christian church promoted as biblical teaching in main stream Christianity.

Let us examine Hebrews 11:1 that you made reference to in your question. Allow me to number the English words and make comment regarding each word, with regard to what is meant in the Greek text.

Heb. 11:1 1Now 2faith 3is 4the 5substance 6of
7things 8hoped 9for, 10the 11evidence 12of
13things 14not 15seen.

Word #1 - “now” is a translation of the Greek conjunction (a word used to connect words, phrases, clauses, or sentences) *de*. This conjunction is used here as a transitional or continuative particle and can be translated *and, moreover, then, now, etc.*¹⁷ The author of Hebrews had just written:

You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he promised (Heb. 10:36, NIV).

Similar expressions occur elsewhere in Hebrews (6:12, 15; 9:15; 11:13, 17, 39). In some of these instances the assertion is that the person did not receive the promise during their lifetime, and in other passages it is said that they did. The variation is to be explained as the difference between introductory aspects and complete fruition. In this passage the complete fulfillment is in view. The author looks ahead to the consummation of salvation at the coming of Christ.

For in just a very little while, “He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.” But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved (Heb. 10:37-39).

Now the author is connecting the context of the end of chapter ten (10) to a new paragraph which begins chapter eleven (11). He does this by using the connective *de* translated as “now.” In chapter eleven he immediately proceeds with great eloquence and passion, to illustrate his point by a recital of the heroes of faith whose example he is encouraging his readers to follow.¹⁸

I have heard some Bible teachers claim the “now” is talking about “now faith,” then they identify “now faith” as faith in the present time. For this to be the case, “now” would need to be an adjective (describing the noun - faith). But the Holy Spirit chose to use the connective *de* (a conjunction), not an adjective. Now who am I to trust, an unlearned teacher/preacher or the Holy Spirit? My choice is to believe in the grammatical selection as used by the writer as he was moved by the Holy Spirit in recording Holy Writ.

Word #2 “faith.” We have already determined the meaning of faith to be *confidence* or *total trust in God*. At this point we can translate the first two words as: “Now total trust in God.”

Word #3 “is.” This is a verb written in a construction which shows continuous action as happening in the present time (of the writing). At this point our translation could read: “Now total trust in God is at present and continuously.”

Word #4 “the.” This word does not appear in the original Greek text but it is necessary to supply it in the English translation to make the meaning clear.

Word #5 “substance.” Substance is a translation of the Greek word *hupostasis*. This Greek word is a compound word composed of *hupo*, a preposition meaning “beneath or under,” and *histemi* meaning “to set, to place, fix, or cause to stand.”

Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5:418, states: “*Hypostasis* is a very common word from Aristotle on and comes from *huphistemi*, what stands under anything (a building, a contract, a promise).” In this context it is making reference to a promise.

So at this point our text could be translated as: "Now total trust in God is at present and continuously the undergirding support."

Words #6 through #9 "of things hoped for." These four English words translate one Greek word *eipizomenon*. The grammatical construction of this word (present passive participle in the genitive case and plural number) tells us this word has to do with things which are continuously receiving hope.

In this context, the things hoped for (expected) are related to the promises of God. The promises given to Old Testament saints were so real to them, because they believed God, that they based their lives on them. The faithful among God's people acted as if they were in the present tense. They simply took God at His word and lived on that basis.¹⁹ An expanded translation of this word could be "of things God has promised which we expect."

At this point our translation reads: "Now total trust in God is at present and continuously the undergirding support of things God has promised which we expect to receive."

Word #10 "the." Same as explained in word #4.

Word #11 "evidence." This Greek word is *elegchos*. One Greek dictionary states that as the word is used in Hebrews 11:1 it means "proof, proving hence perhaps 'inner conviction'" or "a proving of (or conviction about) unseen things."²⁰

Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tells us that *elegchos* as used in Hebrews 11:1 demands that it be regarded as "the divinely given conviction of things unseen."²¹

At this point our translation reads: "Now total trust in God is at present and continuously the undergirding support of things God has promised which we expect to receive, (faith is) the divinely given conviction."

Words #12 and #13 “of things.” These two English words translate the one Greek word *pragmaton*, which is the genitive plural of the word meaning *deed, thing, event, or occurrence*.

At this point our translation reads: “Now total trust in God is at present and continuously the undergirding support of things God has promised which we expect to receive, (faith is) the divinely given conviction of events.”

Words #14 and #15 “not seen.” Here we have a negative “not” being used with *blepomenon*, which is a verb form (participle) meaning “to see.”

Our translation of Hebrews 11:1 now reads: “Now total trust in God is at present and continuously the undergirding support of things God has promised which we expect to receive, (faith is) the divinely given conviction of events not seen.”

Mel, I will now address your question. You asked, **does the original Greek of Heb. 11:1 indicate that faith is a moldable spiritual substance?**

The Bible teaches that faith is trusting in God. Can we in any way think of faith as a moldable spiritual substance? In my opinion nothing could be further from the truth of God’s Word.

Dr. Goodwin, Romans 12:3 reads: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Does this mean that God has given every man a measure of faith as a moldable spiritual substance, or does it mean that God has given every man the capacity or ability to believe the Gospel?

Mel, since we have taken the position that faith being a moldable spiritual substance is ridiculous, your suggestion that “the measure of faith” means God has given every man the capacity or ability to believe the Gospel” is far more palatable to me than the alternative you have related.

However, I believe a better understanding of this passage may be somewhat as follows. Paul is writing to believers. He tells them that a believers’ consecration to God and their transformed lifestyles are to be demonstrated in the exercising of their spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. Then he warns them not to think of themselves more highly that they ought to think. An inflated view of oneself is out of place in the Christian life.

Then Paul encouraged them by saying, but rather to think of themselves with sober judgment (sound thinking), in accordance with the measure of faith God has given every Christian. The Greek text doesn’t have the definite article “the.” The qualitative aspect of “measure” is being emphasized.

God has given every believer adequate faith by which to serve Him. Paul emphasized that human pride is wrong partly because all natural abilities and spiritual gifts are from God. (And the Bible tells us in another passage that to whom much is given, much is expected.) When a Christian follows this instruction he will demonstrate a proper sense of humility and an awareness of his need to be involved with other members of Christ’s body.

The teaching of "the God-kind of faith" is drawn from the account in Mark Chapter 11 of Jesus cursing the fig tree. So let's read the relevant scriptures:

"And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

And when even was come, he went out of the city. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."--
Mark 11:13,14, 19-24.

In some King James Bibles, for verse 22 where Jesus says "Have faith in God," the margin reads "have the faith of God." Some teachers who are not Greek scholars take this a step further and say verse 22 can equally be translated "have the God-kind of faith." So it is common in our circles to teach God has faith and operates by faith, and so should we. Since "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith," (Rom. 12:3) we teach that God has given everyone a measure of *His faith*. Therefore, we conclude from Mark 11:22 and Romans 12:3 that the scriptures tell us to take the measure that God has given us of His faith, and use it to see that our needs are met. Thus, we should have the God-kind of faith.

Dr. Goodwin please explain what Christ's words in the Greek actually say that have been translated as "have faith in God."

Mel, first of all God does not have faith. I know of no passage in Scripture suggesting the He has faith. God is the object of our faith. I think we addressed that concept adequately while talking about "What is faith?"

Second, we have addressed Romans 12:3. For the life of me I can't see how anyone could conclude from that passage that God has given us His faith when, according to His written Word, He *doesn't* have faith.

I'm repeating for emphasis. God is the *receiver* of faith. If one claims God gives us *His faith* when He has no faith (He can give us faith but not *His* faith) we break one of the basic laws of reasoning. It would be like people who claim the universe came into existence out of nothing. Their claim, there was nothing and all of a sudden there was something - - creation. We argue that "Out of nothing comes nothing."

In our rebuttal we point out that it is impossible for something to come out of nothing because for every *effect* there has to be a *cause*, and *nothing* produces *no thing*, that is, *nothing*. Thus we refute the claim that creation just happened (self created).

Our position is quite different. We say that God, who has eternally existed, created the universe out of nothing. In this claim we advocate that the *effect* (creation) had a *cause* (God). By analogy - - if I am correct concluding the Bible doesn't mention an entity known as God's faith, then there is no such thing as "the God-kind of faith" for a believer to have.

Dr. Goodwin, the Greek Interlinear reads "have the faith of God." Please address whether this is correct.

Mel, I'm glad you mentioned this *Greek Interlinear* reading. It is probably from people using the *Interlinear* without a basic understanding of the Greek grammar that causes, or at least contributes to, erroneous conclusions such as the "God-kind of faith" theology.

In the Greek text, you see that the last three Greek words are translated in the Interlinear as "Have [the] faith of God." The word *faith* is a particular type noun known as a noun of action or action noun. An action noun is a noun that contains a verbal idea.²² The word translated in the Interlinear as *of_God* is in the genitive case, a

case of description. When an action noun is used with a genitive case *substantive* (a noun or word used like a noun) in a phrase (a group of two or more words that can function as a grammatical structure) such as this, a special construction is in place.

In this particular construction the genitive noun can be a *subjective genitive* (the genitive noun [God] would *produce* the action indicated in the action noun [faith]) or it can be an *objective genitive* (the genitive noun [God] would *receive* the action indicated in the action noun [faith]).

How do translators determine if a construction is a *subjective* or *objective* genitive? Only the context can determine whether a genitive which modifies a noun of action is subjective or objective. In other words, a decision must be made on the basis of exegesis rather than a rule of grammar. At times the immediate context will not solve the problem and thus the general New Testament teaching will be the factor determining the exegesis.

What is interesting is that all English Bibles of which I am aware translate Mark 11:22 as an *objective genitive* (the action noun *faith* has an object, God) - - *have faith in God*. This conclusion, reached by all these translators and grammarians, sure seems reasonable to me. Why? Because we have no biblical evidence that God has faith.

Some of the Bibles reading “have faith in God” are: King James Version, the New King James Version, the NASB, NIV, the Williams translation, Beck translation, Today’s English Version, the Phillips translation, the Living Bible, the New Living Translation, Revised Standard, The New Revised Standard version, the New English Bible, Bible for Today’s Family, the New Century Version, the Simple English Bible, and I’m confident there are many more that I just haven’t had time to research.

Our teaching of "the God-kind of faith," raises an interesting question: Does God have faith?

I repeat. God doesn’t have faith. He is the object of faith. You may ask, “What about Mark 11:22? Could it not be translated . . . ‘Have the faith of God?’”

Technically, from a very literally 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.”

However, if one understands New Testament Greek and biblical theology he would never translate the phrase as “. . . Have ‘the God-kind of faith.’” Even an intermediate Greek student would understand that this phrase is, according to most modern Bible translators (particularly committee translators such as those who translated the NKJV, NASB, and NIV), an objective genitive.

Unfortunately, this is not the case in today’s Faith movement. In commenting on this matter one writer²³ wrote,

Another popular Kenyonism in the Faith movement is “the God Kind of Faith.” Rather than the customary translation of Mk 11:22, “Have faith in God,” Kenyon proposes the translation “Have the faith of God.” From this translation, Kenyon deduces that “We have God’s faith produced in us by His living word, by His nature that is imparted to us (Kenyon, *Two Kinds of Faith*, p. 103).

Hagin developed Kenyon’s interpretation into the concept of “the God Kind of Faith.” According to Hagin, “the kind of faith that spoke the universe into existence is dealt to our hearts (Hagin, *New Thresholds*, p. 74).

Charles, when I think of faith, I think of having *faith in* something greater than myself. If faith is not a *force*, and it is not a *substance*, then if God created everything through faith, *who* or *what* was He having faith in? God couldn't have had faith in something greater than Himself, for nothing is greater than God.

Are we to believe that God had faith in God? The logic of that escapes me. So allow me to ask, when God created the Universe, did He do so by exercising faith or by an operation of His power?

Mel, I really like your reasoning. Your question - - “if God created everything through faith, who or what was He having faith in?” That question is far beyond my grade level to answer.

Your state that the logic of the claims articulated in the above comment escapes you - - well you have me as a partner on that point.

For one to reach the conclusion that God required “faith” to create the universe, is a conclusion that is not supported anywhere in Holy Writ. God is omnipotent, He does not have to have faith in himself. He spoke the created things into existence by his creative power. Creation was not the result of God having faith in his own faith. God, being omnipotent, did not have to stoop from His splendor and utilize some metaphysical technique to create the universe.

If God required “faith in his own faith” to create the universe, then, God’s faith would have been the *intermediate* agent in creation.

However, the Bible presents a different picture. In fact, *John 1:3* tells us explicitly that Jesus Christ was the *intermediate* agent in creation. Since Christ was the intermediate agent in creation, it stands to reason that faith could not be the intermediate agent in creation.

John 1:3 (NKJV) All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

The Greek text in *John 1:3* is written in such a way so as it tells us that Jesus was the intermediate agent in creation. (The use of the preposition *dia* with the genitive case makes this conclusion perfectly clear.)

Mel, here is a case where just a little knowledge of the biblical language will help guard a Bible student from falling into an erroneous teachings.

This verse, along with other passages, completely confirms that Jesus

Christ was God the Father's agent involved in creating everything in the universe.

Col. 1:16-17 (NIV) For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities: all things were created by him and for him. (17) He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Heb. 1:1-2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, (2) but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

Brother Charles, do you find any scriptural support in the original Greek for the teaching of the God-kind of faith?

There is no evidence for teaching "the God-kind of faith."

When God created the Universe, did He do so by exercising faith or by an operation of His power?

God created the universe by an operation of His power. Interesting, the Bible tells us all three Persons of the Trinity were involved.

In the passage of scripture where Christ cursed the fig tree, since he was not instructing us to release a force, nor mold a spiritual substance, nor have faith in faith, what was he telling us to do?

He was making it perfectly crystal clear that His disciples were to have faith *in* God.

Mark 11:22-24 "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. (23)I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. (24)Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believing that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Verse 22 - *Have faith in God.* This may have been a gentle rebuke for the disciples' lack of faith in the power of His word. Regardless as to the accuracy or not of that conclusion (a gentle rebuke), He told His disciples where their faith is to be directed - - to God. An application - - we must trust God to respond to our prayers.

Verses 22, 23 - *This mountain . . . into the sea.* I have read where this expression was a common metaphor of that day. The phrase, "rooter up of mountains," was used in Jewish literature of great rabbis and spiritual leaders who could solve difficult problem and seemingly do the impossible.²⁴ It seems to me that Jesus' point is that if believers sincerely trust in God and truly realize the unlimited power that is available through such faith in Him, they will see His mighty powers at work.²⁵

Verse 24 - *Whatever you ask for in prayer.* This places no limits on a believer's prayers, as long as they are according to God's will and purpose.

We must remember that God is sovereign and at no time does He abdicate His sovereignty to appease our desires if they are not in line with his Word or His will. However, believing prayer taps God's power to accomplish the humanly impossible. Jesus exhorted His disciples to believe that they have already received whatever they request in prayer. Faith accepts it as good as done even though the actual answer is still future.

I know that Wigglesworth, Carter, Frodsham, and the other early Pentecostals did not teach the God-Kind of Faith. Nor am I aware of any Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical, Liberal, or Conservative denomination today that accepts this teaching. This teaching is exclusive to the Word of Faith branch.

Now to the final questions: Dr. Goodwin, based on your knowledge of early church documents and teachings, did the early church teach this doctrine of the God-Kind of Faith? If not, do you know from where it originated?

Mel, I really like these questions because they are easy to answer and the answers are very short! No, the early church did not teach this doctrine. From the best that I know, the doctrine originated with E. W. Kenyon and was refined by Brother Hagin.

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. Again, 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:

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

⁴ Sophocles, *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.

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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.

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¹⁵*Classical Apologetics*, p. 22.

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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.

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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 Bauer'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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