

THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD IN GALATIANS 2:20 BEING THE INITIATING SOURCE AND CONTINUING SUPPLY FOR THE BELIEVERS' ORGANIC UNION WITH CHRIST

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Given the historic significance of Martin Luther's revelation and propagation of the truth of justification by faith rather than by works, the role of a believer's faith in this justifying process has been viewed largely as an act of believing in the objective elements of Christ's person and work. This action, although important in explaining the initial experience of salvation, is incomplete in its ability to account for the subjective role of the faith of the Son of God in the justifying process. Recent biblical scholarship has begun to emphasize the subjective aspect of faith, acknowledging the possibility of two interpretations of the role of faith in Galatians 2:20. The slow movement toward more forcefully acknowledging a subjective role for faith involving the faith of the Son of God is due largely to the failure to see Paul's deeper teaching in his Epistles related to the believers' organic union with Christ, a subjective but mystical union that derives from the faith of Christ, which serves as the initiating source and continuing supply for the believers' organic union with Christ.

Two Translations Related to Faith in Galatians 2:20

The shortage in seeing Paul's deeper teaching concerning an organic union between the Triune God and redeemed humanity is exemplified in an ongoing debate over whether *Son of God* in Galatians 2:20 should be translated as a subjective genitive using the phrase *the faith of the Son of God* or as an objective genitive using the phrase *faith in the Son of God*. When considered objectively, the prepositions typically employed are *in* or *by*, but when considered subjectively, the preposition typically employed is *of*.¹ Behind the widespread acceptance of commentators and believers that *faith* points to the Son of God as the object in whom we believe, involving only an objective acknowledgment of Christ and His redemptive work, is the misguided thought that faith and the act of "believing" involve a willful choice based on rational apologetic arguments or emotional ministerial appeals.² Most commentators deny this. For example, in *Galatians*, volume 19 of his New Testament commentary series, John MacArthur says, "**Faith in Christ** is not mere intellectual assent to the fact that Jesus died and rose for man's sin but is personal trust in His death to remove and forgive one's own sins. It is total commitment to submit to Him as Lord" (57). MacArthur's explanation of what faith is not is accurate, but his attempt to define what faith is, is less successful, because he can employ only spiritualized language that implicitly reinforces the view that faith is still an issue of a willful self-choosing. After his emphatic assertion that faith is not the issue of "intellectual assent," MacArthur forwards the notion that faith is based on "personal trust" and a "total commitment to submit." The call for "trust" and "commitment" implicitly reinforces the thought that faith depends upon personal choices rather than being an irreversible response to hearing the word of the truth, the gospel of our salvation, one that bestows the Spirit upon us as the blessing of Abraham (Eph. 1:13; Gal. 3:14). The apportionment of faith to every believer is not based on a personal commitment to trust and submit; it has been given to all who have been justified freely by His grace (Rom. 3:24; 12:3).