

The Faith of Jesus Christ

Faith is a mystery (1 Tim. 3:9), and understanding the expression *the faith of Jesus Christ* has engendered a long-standing debate among scholars: Does *the faith of Jesus Christ* refer to Christ as the subject of faith (Christ's faith, Christ's faithfulness), Christ as the object of faith (faith in Christ), Christ as the element of faith (Christ as faith) enabling us to believe, or a combination of all three? This expression and similar expressions involving faith and the person of Jesus Christ are significant as they relate to the beginning of our experience in the Christian life and our ongoing living of the Christian life. This article looks at the significance of the root πίστ-, from which the notions of belief and faith are derived, considering what faith is, how it comes to us, and what we experience by faith. Then it focuses on the expression *the faith of Jesus Christ*, especially as it occurs in passages such as Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:22, and considers what is the force of the genitive of case in the expression of *Jesus Christ*.

The Significance of the Word Root πίστ-

The Greek word root πίστ- means "trust," "belief," "confidence," or "faith." There are four main words that come from this root: a noun πίστις ("faith"), two verbs πιστεύω ("to believe") and πιστώω ("to cause to believe," "to make faithful"), and an adjective πιστός ("faithful"). In addition, there are five words with prefixes: three words with an *a-* (alpha privative)—ἄπιστος ("unbelievable," "faithless," "unbelieving"), ἀπιστία ("unbelief," "unfaithfulness"), and ἀπιστέω ("to disbelieve," "refuse to believe")—and two compounds with ὀλιγό- ("small," "little")—ὀλιγόπιστος ("having little faith") and ὀλιγοπιστία ("smallness of faith"). This article focuses on the first four words.

The adjective πιστός ("faithful") occurs sixty-seven times in the New Testament. Faithfulness is an attribute of God. "God is faithful" (1 Cor. 1:9)—faithful to Himself (2 Tim. 2:13), to His word (Heb. 10:23), and to complete the sanctifying process that He began in His calling of the believers (1 Thes. 5:23-24). Christ is faithful, especially as a faithful High Priest to propitiate for our sins and to minister God and the divine life to us (Heb. 2:17; 3:2) and as the faithful Witness, the Amen, the firm, steadfast, and trustworthy One, particularly in the midst of the degraded church (Rev. 1:5; 3:14). The logos word is also faithful and worthy of acceptance (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1). The faithful God in Christ as the

Spirit embodied in the word is the source of faith. Faith comes out of hearing and hearing through the rhema word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). As a result of faith coming to us, we become believers (1 Tim. 4:10, 12), and when we live by faith, we can be accounted faithful (Rev. 17:14; Eph. 1:1; 2 Tim. 2:2)—faithful slaves (Matt. 24:45; 25:21), faithful stewards (1 Cor. 4:2), and faithful ministers (Col. 1:7; 4:7).

The verb πιστώω ("to cause to believe," "to assure") occurs only once in the New Testament in the passive voice with the sense of being assured of, convinced of, having firmly believed. Paul charges Timothy to continue in the things which he has learned and has been assured of (2 Tim. 3:14).

The verb πιστεύω ("to believe") occurs about two hundred forty-one times in the New Testament. It has an intransitive meaning—"to consider true," "to be persuaded of," "to place confidence in" and a transitive meaning—"to entrust someone with something" (John 2:24), such as the oracles of God (Rom. 3:2), a stewardship (1 Cor. 9:17), or the gospel (Gal. 2:7). The intransitive meaning is more frequent with two main senses. The first sense—"to consider true" or "to have been persuaded of"—occurs mostly when πιστεύω is followed by ὅτι ("that") or when it governs a noun in the dative case and means "to believe something or someone." The second sense—"to place confidence in"—occurs mostly with the prepositions εἰς ("into"), ἐν ("in"), and ἐπί ("upon," "on"). The verb πιστεύω is also used absolutely to refer to those who believe (in the present tense) or those who have believed (in the aorist or the perfect tense). The believers believe something to be true, and they also put their confidence in Jesus by entering into an organic union with Him.

πιστεύω followed by ὅτι is used to indicate that someone believes facts concerning the person of Christ and His work. People believe that He is the Holy One of God (John 6:69), the Christ, the Son of God (11:27; 20:31; 1 John 5:1, 5), and Jehovah, the reality of the verb *to be*, the self-existing and ever-existing One, the I Am (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). People also believe, concerning His work or His acts, that the Father sent Him (11:42), that He came forth from God (16:27), that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (14:10), that He died and rose (1 Thes. 4:14), that God has raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9), and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

Πιστεύω followed by a noun in the dative case is used to indicate that people believe (or conversely, do not believe) Jesus (John 4:21), believe that what He is saying is true (8:45), and believe His words (5:47) and His works (10:38). They also believe God (Gal. 3:6; Titus 3:8; 1 John 5:10), the Scriptures (Acts 24:14), and the truth (2 Thes. 2:12).

Πιστεύω followed by one of three prepositions ἐπί, ἐν, and εἰς indicates a deeper relationship with Christ—believing not just about Him and that He is true but with belief that brings us into an organic union with Him. In the New Testament πιστεύω followed by ἐπί (“on,” “upon”) and a noun in the accusative case or a noun in the dative case indicates belief on or trust based upon the Lord Jesus and all that He stands for in His person and work. The preposition ἐπί followed by the accusative case (indicating motion toward) implies a transfer of confidence from something else to the person of the Lord Jesus. People believe on Him to be saved (Acts 16:31) and to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (11:17), and they believe on Him who raised Jesus from the dead for them to be reckoned justified (Rom. 4:24-25). Πιστεύω and ἐπί with a dative-case noun following indicate a static placement of confidence upon. People place confidence upon the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord Jehovah, who is a cornerstone of God’s building, for His transformation work to make them part of God’s eternal building; and he who believes on Him shall by no means be put to shame (Isa. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:6; Rom. 9:33). People also believe on or place their confidence upon Christ Jesus unto eternal life, that is, to inherit eternal life in full (1 Tim. 1:16).

Πιστεύω together with ἐν (“in”) occurs only a couple of times and refers mostly to our initial experience of believing. John the Baptist charged people to repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15). When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise (Eph. 1:13).

Πιστεύω together with εἰς (“into”)—εἰς governing a noun in the accusative case and frequently indicates motion toward—occurs more than fifty times in the New Testament, including over forty times in John’s writings. Believing into Him with the sense of motion toward and into implies the believers’ being brought out of Adam with their trust and confidence in the adamic life and into Christ as their new focus of trust and confidence, symbolized by baptism, which should accompany belief (Mark 16:16). Believing into Him also unites the believers with Him as one and brings them into many rich experiences in the Christian life. People believe both into Him and into His name. His name is His person, and believing into His name is equivalent to receiving Him and results in our becoming children of God (John 1:12). People believe into His name, the name of the only begotten Son of God, to be free from

condemnation (3:18). They believe into Him to receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43), to be justified through faith in Christ (Gal. 2:16), to avoid perishing but have eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 6:40), and even to know with assurance that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13). Those who believe into Him shall by no means ever thirst (John 6:35) but have the Spirit flowing as rivers of living water out of their innermost being (7:38-39) and live even if they should die (11:25). We can believe into Him as the light and thus be delivered from darkness (12:36, 46). Believing into Him enables us to do the same works as the Lord did and even greater works (14:12). By believing into Him we have His testimony in ourselves (1 John 5:10).

The Greek word πίστις (“faith”) occurs about two hundred forty-three times in the New Testament. Faith has two aspects: objective faith (the faith—what we believe in, the contents of the New Testament as our faith) and subjective faith (faith—our act of believing into Christ). Objective faith is frequently preceded by a definite article in Greek, whereas subjective faith usually lacks an article unless there is modification following the noun *faith*. Sometimes faith may be both objective and subjective. For example, God’s economy is in faith: (the) faith is the contents of God’s economy, and faith is a sphere and a principle to experience the items of God’s economy, as opposed to the natural realm or the works of law (1 Tim. 1:4). Both kinds of faith occur in verse 19: by holding subjective faith we will not become shipwrecked concerning the objective faith.

The objective faith consists of items that all believers should hold to, especially related to Christ’s person—He is the complete Triune God and a perfect man—and His redemptive work, including all the steps of His organic salvation to produce and build up the church as His Body. The noun *faith* with prepositional objects can indicate the object or direction of faith, similar to the prepositions following the verb πιστεύω (“to believe”) mentioned above. For example, faith is directed in (ἐν), into (εἰς), or toward (πρός) the Lord Jesus Christ at least twelve times (see below). Faith is also directed toward (πρός) or upon (ἐπί) God twice (1 Thes. 1:8; Heb. 6:1). One time, faith is in (ἐν) His blood (Rom. 3:25), referring to His redemptive work on the cross and the shedding of His blood for our forgiveness.¹

Objective faith is revealed in the New Testament (Gal. 3:23) and announced as the gospel (1:23). The faith is to be obeyed (Acts 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 16:26). The believers need to be established in the faith (Col. 2:7), continue in the faith (Acts 14:22; Col. 1:23), and stand firm in the faith (1 Cor. 16:13). The churches were strengthened in the faith (Acts 16:5). We should have progress and joy of the faith (Phil. 1:25), and in one spirit with one soul we should strive together along with the faith of the gospel (v. 27). We hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience (1 Tim.

3:9). A good minister of Christ Jesus is nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching (4:6). We can test ourselves and prove whether we are in the faith by realizing that Jesus Christ is in us (2 Cor. 13:5). The faith is common to all the believers (Titus 1:4), and we all need to arrive at the oneness of the faith (Eph. 4:13, cf. v. 5).

However, the faith does not belong to all (2 Thes. 3:2), and the faith even becomes an object of attack. Opposers attempt to turn people away from the faith (Acts 13:8). In later times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons (1 Tim. 4:1), and become shipwrecked (1:19) and disapproved regarding the faith (2 Tim. 3:8). Therefore, we need to fight the good fight of the faith (1 Tim. 6:12) and contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). As we fight, faith (both subjective and objective) becomes our defense. We take up the shield of faith to quench the flaming darts of the evil one (Eph. 6:16). We also need to put on the breastplate of faith and love (1 Thes. 5:8).

More commonly, faith in the New Testament refers to our subjective faith—the act of believing, the exercise that we engage in through the infusion of Christ as our believing element. Subjective faith comes from the presentation of the items of the objective faith, particularly its primary object, the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is presented as the object of faith in the announcing of the gospel (Gal. 1:23), which is the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). This faith comes from hearing the rhema word of God (Rom. 10:8, 17). Subjective faith is apportioned, or allotted, to us by God (12:3; 2 Pet. 1:1), given to us in the same Spirit who operates and distributes various gifts (1 Cor. 12:9-11). Living faith is produced by the operation of the living God, causing us to experience the resurrection life, signified by the raising aspect of baptism (Col. 2:12). As a result, faith becomes ours (Rom. 1:8, 12; 14:22; 1 Cor. 2:5). We have one faith through which we believe into the Lord (Eph. 4:5). Faith accompanies and is a necessary means in our experience of the steps of God's salvation. Our hearts are cleansed by faith (Acts 15:9) and out of, through, and by faith we are justified, that is, approved by God according to His standard of righteousness (Rom. 3:30; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:24). Christ becomes our righteousness through our faith in Him and based on faith (Phil. 3:9). Through faith we are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8), and salvation is through faith (2 Tim. 3:15). By faith we have access into grace (Rom. 5:2), and through faith in Him we have access to God and His economy (Eph. 3:12). Through faith Christ makes His home in our heart (v. 17), and by faith we experience positional and

dispositional sanctification (Acts 26:18). Our faith grows (2 Thes. 1:3), we are those who have (lit., "are of") faith to the gaining of the soul (Heb. 10:39), and we are being guarded by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time (1 Pet. 1:5). The salvation of our souls is the end of our faith (v. 9). Out of faith we await the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5). Out of the hearing of faith and through faith, we receive and experience the bountiful supply of the Spirit (3:2, 5, 14). We live in (ἐν) faith as a sphere (2:20) and out of (ἐκ) faith as a source (3:11; Heb. 10:38). All that is not out of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). We are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26) and constituents of the household of the faith (6:10). In our living, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails; caring for other outward ordinances likewise does not avail; living faith operating through love is what avails (Gal. 5:6). Our work should be a work of faith (1 Thes. 1:3), and the nature and strength of this work of faith are sourced not in our natural being and ability but in God, the One in whom we believe, infused into us. James stresses that faith needs to be accompanied by works (2:14-26).

Faith has certain qualities. It can be unfeigned, or not hypocritical (2 Tim. 1:5). The faith of others can be closely followed (3:10) and imitated (Heb. 13:7). We should be healthy in the faith (Titus 1:13). Our faith is being proved (1 Pet. 1:7; James 1:3). Faith can be added with virtues being supplied bountifully in our faith (2 Pet. 1:5), and we need to build up ourselves upon our most holy faith (Jude 20).

The book of Hebrews stresses subjective faith. Faith in God together with repentance from dead works is our foundation (6:1). In chapter 11 faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (v. 1). Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to God; whoever comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (v. 6). Hebrews 11 continues with a history of the Old Testament saints who carried out many actions by faith. In the New Testament age we should come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith (10:22). The logos word that we have heard should be mixed with faith in order for it to profit us (4:2). Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of our faith (12:2). As the Author, He is the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith. Witness Lee explains the working of subjective faith:

In our natural man we have no believing ability. We do not have faith by ourselves. The faith by which we are saved is the precious faith that we have received from the Lord

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(2 Pet. 1:1). When we look unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element. Then, spontaneously, a kind of believing arises in our being, and we have the faith to believe in Him. This faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself as the believing element into us that He may believe for us. Hence, He Himself is our faith. We live by Him as our faith; i.e., we live by His faith (Gal. 2:20), not by our own. (*Recovery Version*, Heb. 12:2, note 3)

As the Perfecter of our faith, Jesus “can carry us in His footsteps through the pathway of faith...As the Perfecter of faith in His glory and on His throne in heaven, He transfuses and even infuses us with the faith that He originated and perfected” (Note 3).

Faith, or believing, begins with God, who presents Himself in Christ as the object of the faith in the preaching of the gospel. Then Christ as the Spirit embodied in the *rhema* word infuses Himself into us as the believing element of faith, giving us the way to believe into Him and into His person and work as the object of faith. This process of faith occurs initially at the time of our regeneration when we are justified and continues throughout our Christian life. This experience is implied in the use of the expression *faith of Jesus Christ*.

Different Interpretations of the Genitive Case in the Expression *Faith of Jesus Christ*

The particular expression *faith of X*, where X is a personal entity in the genitive case in Greek, occurs about twelve times in the New Testament. The personal entity in the genitive case following the noun *faith* is Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22, 26; Gal. 3:22), Christ Jesus (2:16), the Son of God (v. 20), Christ (v. 16; Phil. 3:9), the Lord Jesus Christ (James 2:1), Jesus (Rev. 14:12), God (Mark 11:22), His name (Acts 3:16; i.e., Jesus, v. 13), and Him (Eph. 3:12; i.e., Christ Jesus our Lord, v. 11).

The question is, what is the relation between the head noun *faith* and the genitive noun that follows? Is the genitive personal noun a subjective genitive, “Christ’s faithfulness,”² or “Christ’s faith”; an objective genitive, “faith in Christ”; or a genitive of apposition, “Christ as faith”? Traditionally, these genitive structures have been interpreted and translated as objective genitives. But this view has been challenged and has been the subject of considerable debate in many articles and monographs for more than fifty years. Two articles are particularly helpful in summarizing the debate—a 2010 article by Matthew C. Easter and a 2008 article by David L. Stubbs.

Easter in “The *Pistis Christou* Debate: Main Arguments and Responses in Summary” calls the objective genitive reading an “anthropological” reading emphasizing human belief or

faith in Christ and the subjective genitive a “christological” reading emphasizing Christ’s faithfulness (33-34).

One of the strongest arguments for the subjective genitive against the objective genitive is that there are more than twelve cases where πίστις (“faith”) is followed by a preposition (ἐν (Gal. 3:26; Col. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:14; 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:15; Eph. 1:15), εἰς (Acts 20:21; 24:24; 26:18; Col. 2:5), ἐπί (Heb. 6:1), or πρὸς (“toward”) (1 Thes. 1:8; Philem. 5)), indicating the object of faith, and mostly with Christ as the object. If the writers of the New Testament had wanted to emphasize an objective genitive reading, they could have used πίστις with one of these prepositions rather than the more ambiguous genitive structure, *the faith of Jesus Christ*.

One passage that seems to indicate the subjective genitive is Romans 3:21-22: “Now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, witness being borne to it by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe, for there is no distinction.” As Easter indicates, this passage begs the question: “How can human faith disclose God’s righteousness?” to which the answer “The righteousness of God has been revealed in the faithfulness of Christ” seems to support the christological reading (39-40). However, as Witness Lee points out, the faith of Jesus Christ can also be understood in a multivalent way, referring to faith in Jesus Christ and Christ as our faith, our believing element:

This faith refers to the faith of Jesus Christ in us, which has become the faith by which we believe in Him, as in v. 26; Gal. 2:16, 20; 3:22; Eph. 3:12; and Phil. 3:9.

Faith has an object, and it issues from its object. This object is Jesus, who is God incarnate. When man hears Him, knows Him, appreciates Him, and treasures Him, He causes faith to be generated in man [subjective genitive], enabling man to believe in Him [objective genitive]. Thus, He becomes the faith [genitive of apposition] in man by which man believes in Him. Hence, this faith becomes the faith in Him, and it is also the faith that belongs to Him.

In God’s New Testament economy, God desires that man believe in Jesus, who is God incarnate. If man does not believe in Him, he commits the unique sin before God (John 16:9). However, if man believes in Him, he is righteous to the uttermost before God, and God reckons this faith as his righteousness. At the same time, this faith brings its object, that is, this One who is God incarnate, into those who believe in Him. He is God’s righteousness, and God has given Him as righteousness to those who are indwelt by Him (Jer. 23:6). All this is out of, and depends on, the faith that is in Him and of Him (Heb. 12:2). (*Recovery Version*, Rom. 3:22, note 1)

Related to Romans 3:21-22 is Galatians 2:16: “Knowing

that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in [or “of”] Jesus Christ, we also have believed into Christ Jesus that we might be justified out of faith in [or “of”] Christ and not out of the works of law, because out of the works of law no flesh will be justified.” This passage has two genitive constructions translated “faith in Jesus Christ” and “faith in Christ.” This translation emphasizes the objective genitive, with Christ being the object of faith as the means for us to be justified. But subjective genitive and genitive of apposition readings are also involved in the believing act, as Witness Lee also states:

Faith in Jesus Christ denotes an organic union with Him through believing. This is related to the believers’ appreciation of the person of the Son of God as the most precious One. The believers are infused with the preciousness of Christ through the gospel preached to them. This Christ becomes in them the faith [genitive of apposition] by which they believe and the capacity to believe [subjective genitive] through their appreciation of Him [objective genitive]. This faith creates an organic union in which they and Christ are one. (*Recovery Version*, v. 16, note 1)

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HIMSELF IN CHRIST AS THE OBJECT OF FAITH
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THEN CHRIST AS THE SPIRIT IN
THE RHEMA WORD INFUSES HIMSELF INTO US
AS THE BELIEVING ELEMENT OF FAITH.

The righteousness of God disclosed, or manifested, becomes our righteousness through faith that begins with Christ in His faithfulness to God in His economy to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15) by His living by the Father and dying on the cross to pay the price for our sins and terminate the sinful nature (subjective genitive). Christ then infuses us with Himself as faith (subjective genitive and genitive of apposition) as the ability to believe in Him, in His person and work (objective genitive). When we believe into Him, He as God’s righteousness is imparted into us and reckoned to us as our righteousness, and we are justified, approved by God according to His standard of righteousness.

Another passage that argues for a subjective genitive is Galatians 3:22-23: “The Scripture has shut up all under sin in order that the promise out of faith in [or of] Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came we were guarded under law, being shut up unto the faith which was to be revealed.” Those arguing for a christological interpretation say that *faith came* (like the seed coming in verse 16) refers to Christ. Easter also quotes James D. G. Dunn, who argues that *faith came* here refers to “the era of *pistis* [and]...‘the human response that is the necessary complement to the coming of the seed’” (42). Easter concludes, saying, “The present state of the debate suggests that both translations are viable. Nevertheless, interpreters must make a decision between the two or intentionally argue for some combination thereof” (44).

Stubbs, in “The Shape of Soteriology and the *Pistis Christou* Debate,” arrives at a similar conclusion. He focuses on a “theological vision which includes three facets—a christologically centered understanding of the *pistis Christou* passages [subjective genitive], a broader understanding of *pistis*, and the centring [sic] of soteriology around the concept of ‘participation in Christ’ [objective genitive]” (139).

Stubbs quotes from an article entitled “Πίστις Χριστού” by Morna D. Hooker; Hooker, who holds to a concentric approach, considers

[the phrase *pistis Christou*] not as a polarised expression, which suggests antithesis, but as a concentric expression, which begins, always, from the faith of Christ himself [subjective genitive], but which includes, necessarily, the answering faith of believers [objective genitive], who claim that faith as their own. (qtd. in Stubbs 142)

In “Another Look at Πίστις Χριστοῦ,” Hooker continues,

The answer to the question ‘Does this phrase refer to Christ’s faith or ours?’ may be ‘Both’. Nevertheless, that

faith/faithfulness is primarily that of Christ, and we share in it only because we are in him. Although all the passages where the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ is used refer to our faith in Christ, it would seem that this faith is possible only because it is a sharing in his. In Christ, and through him, we are able to share his trust and obedience, and so become what God called his people to be. (62)

Perhaps we could say that the writers of the New Testament deliberately used the more ambiguous genitive structure (e.g., “the faith of Jesus Christ”), rather than an unambiguous objective structure (e.g., “faith in Jesus Christ,” with a preposition), to account for the intricacies involved in believing and faith. While it is not incorrect to translate these genitives as objective genitives, this is not all that is involved in believing.

These more ambiguous genitive structures are used for two crucial experiences of the believers—judicial redemption and organic salvation. From the side of judicial redemption, we are justified through faith in/of³ Jesus Christ, out of faith in/of Christ (Gal. 2:16), or out of faith in/of Jesus (Rom. 3:26); through faith in/of Christ we have the righteousness of God (Phil. 3:9); and through the faith in/of Jesus Christ righteousness is imparted to all those who believe (Rom. 3:22). From the side of organic salvation, out of faith in/of Jesus Christ we receive the promise of

the Spirit as the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham of the seed and the land (Gal. 3:22), through the faith in/of Christ Jesus our Lord we have access, not only to approach God but also to partake of His New Testament economy (Eph. 3:12), and we live in faith, the faith in/of the Son of God (Gal. 2:20). In summary, following Paul, we could say that out of faith we have life as a result of justification, a justification of life (Rom. 5:18), and live (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17). This faith is not our own—it is a gift of God (2 Pet. 1:1) brought to us through the faith of the operation of God; it is a living faith produced by the operation of the living God (Col. 2:12).

Conclusion

The expression *the faith of Jesus Christ* illustrates the mystery of faith. Perhaps the writers of the New Testament chose this more ambiguous genitive construction to allow for a multivalent interpretation of faith (subjective, objective, or in apposition), to indicate the role of faith in the believers' experience of two major steps in their salvation—judicial redemption and organic salvation. Faith begins in the person of Jesus Christ, who lived a life of faith. He was faithful to live a life that accomplished the Father's will, even unto death, the death of a cross, on which He shed His blood to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law and accomplish judicial redemption. In resurrection He became the life-giving Spirit embodied in the word to be presented to humanity through the preaching of the rhema word of the gospel. In the hearing of the word of Christ, faith is infused into the hearer, generating in the hearer an inward response of faith to Christ's person and work—the hearer believing into Christ as the object of faith in order to be justified and enter into an organic union with Him. In Him the believers experiences many wonderful items of God's organic salvation by and out of faith until the consummation of their life of faith—the New Jerusalem, the city that Abraham eagerly waited for by faith (Heb. 11:10).

by Roger Good

Notes

¹In addition to these examples of faith with prepositions, there are a number of times where faith followed by a noun in the genitive case is translated as an objective genitive, e.g., “the faith of Jesus Christ” translated “faith in Jesus Christ” (e.g., Gal. 2:16, see note 3 below).

²The numerous articles arguing for the subjective genitive reading of *the faithfulness of Christ* mostly stress Christ's faithfulness during His human living to accomplish judicial redemption. However, the faithfulness of Christ should not refer just to His past actions and living but to Christ in His resurrection as the indwelling Spirit as a continuing, living faith or faithfulness within the believers, enabling them to believe into Him and to continue a life of faith in which all the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled and all the steps of God's organic salvation are experienced. He is the believing One in us, who is even now living in us.

³*In/of* indicates that while the translation of the structure is frequently as an objective genitive “faith in,” the Greek structure is a genitive case indicated by *of*. For example, in Galatians 2:16 “the faith in/of Jesus Christ” is translated as an objective genitive—“faith in Jesus Christ”—in NRSV, ESV, ASV, NASB, NJB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, and the Recovery Version. Conversely, it is translated as a subjective genitive—“the faithfulness of Jesus Christ”—in BBE, NET, and CEB, and ambiguously as “faith of Jesus Christ” in KJV and Darby.

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The Source of Faith

God is the Giver of faith; God is the source of faith. Nevertheless, the fact that God is the source of faith does not mean merely that He gives faith to us. It means that men have faith or increase in faith through God because God is the source of their faith. In other words, men have faith or increase in faith because God possesses a nature that makes it easy for men to trust in Him.

What does this mean? It means that we do not have to ask, “Do we have faith? Is our faith sufficient?” These are not the most important questions. These questions will keep us in darkness and discouragement. We should ask, “Is God reliable? Is God honest? Is God trustworthy? Will God break His promises? Are God's power and love real?”

From *Fact, Faith, and Experience* by Watchman Nee, p. 54