

Module : Foundation or Elementary Doctrines of Christ

Session : What is Biblical Faith?

Focus : Basic Understanding of Faith

Introduction : 'FAITH TOWARD GOD'

Heb. 6:1,2 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to **MATURITY** not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of **FAITH TOWARD GOD**.

Faith is the second of the 'Elementary or Foundation Doctrines of Christ'. It comes after 'repentance'. The act and continued process of repentance prepares us for consistent development in faith. Faith is the second building block in our foundational doctrine as sons of God, and like all the other doctrines, is essential for our attainment of maturity in Christ. It is important to keep this in mind, for **whilst 'faith' is elementary, its focus is the attaining of maturity. Without developing strength in your faith disposition, maturity in Christ will not be attainable.** Many sectors of the church view faith very narrowly, focusing its objective on only securing material things. Although faith may include this, faith's focus is greater than this. Faith's focus is God Himself. Thus, the doctrine of faith in Hebrews 6:2 is aptly framed, **'Faith toward GOD'**. Its target is the fullness of Christ expressed in every conceivable way within every domain of our lives. We are not to have faith in the **'principle' of faith** itself, although we believe and embrace it, but rather our faith must be rooted in the **Person of God** Himself.

Hebrews 6:2 focuses faith's object, viz. God Himself (faith **'TOWARD God'**). **Faith in God or toward God is an expression of utter dependence upon Him for all of our life's provision and for our effective and successful functioning in God's will in this life.**

A BASIC DEFINITION OF FAITH

A basic definition of **faith is BELIEF or TRUST in God**. To have 'faith' is to have an **UNSHAKEABLE BELIEF** in a thing, a truth, a person, etc. Although there is much more to the definition of faith, we will start off here with the basic premise that **to have faith in God is to BELIEVE HIM, trusting in His PERSON or NATURE , WORD, PURPOSES AND PROMISES.**

The Greek word for faith is **'pistis'**.

Faith = Pistis = Subjectively meaning **firm persuasion, conviction, belief in the truth, veracity, reality or faithfulness.**¹

The Greek word 'pistis' is derived from another word, '**peitho**', which means '**to win over or persuade**'².

So, he who has faith is **WON OVER** or **PERSUADED** as regarding **something reckoned to be absolutely TRUE and FACTFUL about God, His person (nature), Word, purposes or promises**. The person of faith becomes '**CONVINCED**' as to the veracity of what has been presented to him through the medium of 'hearing' with the inner ear of his spirit. To be 'persuaded' is to be 'convinced' or 'assured' concerning a matter and highlights the impossibility of being dissuaded from that conviction. You become '**assured of**' the matter. This then gives you great peace and 'assurance'. You REST in the certainty of the utter reliability of the truth under consideration.

Probably the most iconic person and standard of faith in the whole of Scripture is Abraham. His faith in God incorporated this whole idea of being '**persuaded**', '**convinced**' or '**assured**'.

Rom. 4:20,21

KJV: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being **FULLY PERSUADED** that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

NKJV: He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being **FULLY CONVINCED** that what He had promised He was also able to perform

NASB: yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being **FULLY ASSURED** that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

So, fundamentally, to have faith is to BELIEVE ...

- In God.
- In something God said.
- In a command He releases.
- In an instruction He issues.
- In a requirement He expects we should live by.

SAVED THROUGH FAITH

Our relationship with God begins with faith in Him and His Son, Jesus Christ. We are saved and restored to relationship with God our Father, by GRACE through FAITH.

Eph. 2:8,9 For by **grace** you have been **SAVED THROUGH FAITH** and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of **works**, so that no one may boast.

WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH.

Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

Justification refers to the act of God declaring us righteous and free from the penalty and consequence of sin. This happens when we BELIEVE or express FAITH in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, repent from our sin, confess our sin and receive His gift of forgiveness. We are righteous before God BY FAITH. The righteous shall live by faith. This could be read as, ‘**the righteous, who are righteous by faith, shall live**’.

Justification by FAITH in Christ Jesus Grants us Access INTO GRACE. Faith pursues Grace

Rom. 5:1,2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

At the point of our entrance into the salvation experience and process, when we received Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour and Lord, we were saved, i.e. our sins were forgiven and we were re-instated back into relationship with God our Father, as sons of God. Legally, we become sons of God and are declared righteous by virtue of our receipt of the **GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (Rom. 5:17)**.

We are ‘justified’ before God, declared free from the guilt of sin, for Jesus took our sin in His death on the cross. At this point, we became compliant to God’s demand on us to be reconciled to Him through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We were given a new heart and spirit, being born again into the family of God and having received the deposit of the nature of God within us. This is commonly referred to as the doctrine of **JUSTIFICATION**. Simply stated, when God justifies us, He regards us ‘**JUST-AS-IF**’ we had never sinned.

Rom. 5:1-2 quoted above, states that we are **justified by our faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ, thus having **peace with God the Father** and we also receive an **introduction into an estate or economy called THE GRACE OF GOD**. Having entered this grace, we must **continue in it (Acts 13:43)** and **grow in it (2 Pet. 3:18; Luke 2:40,52)**. Faith’s object was always GOD and His Grace. It is not our good works, but faith that saved us. Our faith provided access into something called the GRACE of God. God’s grace is His person. Grace is the compositional or constituent element of God as a spirit being³. This too, is the constituent element of our human spirits. When we are saved, our spirits are regenerated by God, the Holy Spirit.

There is nothing we can do to earn this when we come into His Kingdom through the born again experience, and get re-connected to God as a Father relationally. It is all by an act of HIS grace (unmerited favour in this context). All we have to do is just **BELIEVE in Christ Jesus**, that He is

God's Son, believe in His meritorious and efficacious sacrifice of His blood on the Cross and receive Him as our Lord and Saviour. When we did this at our conversion, we expressed FAITH in God for salvation. Hence we are saved by grace through faith.

Acts 16:30 They said, "**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and **you will be saved**, you and your household.

Rom. 4:3-5 For what does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God**, and it was credited to him as **righteousness**." Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his **faith is credited as righteousness**,

Rom. 3:22 even the **righteousness of God through faith** in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

Rom. 9:30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the **righteousness which is by faith**

Receiving the gift of righteousness requires simple BELIEF in God and His Son Jesus Christ. **Righteousness is compliance to an eternal, predetermined Divine standard for all aspects of life.** Being restored to God your Father relationally requires only that you BELIEVE in Him and His Son. This places you in right standing with Him. **Through faith in and acceptance of His son, Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, and believing that God raised HIM from the dead, you become His son.**

John 1:11,12 But as many **as received Him**, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those **who believe in His name**.

Rom. 10:9,10

9_ that if you **confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord**, and **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**, **you will be saved**;

10_ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Col. 2:12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him **through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead.

Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Now that you are saved and are legally God's son, you must develop and grow your faith. **Your initial faith is a seed that must grow in strength and stature so that you can practically 'become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus'.** Your belief (faith) in God made you righteous **positionally**. The faith you expressed for salvation is what many refer to as the 'measure of faith', i.e. every human being has a God-given ability to express faith in God for salvation.

Rom. 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Now, **practically** you need to grow into all practical expressions of righteousness by the same principle of faith.

Righteousness is revealed **"from FAITH to FAITH"**.

Rom. 1:17 For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith**; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

From **"faith to faith"**, implies **progressing from one level of faith to the next**. Every time you obey some requirement or commandment of God in His word, you advance in faith. You obey God because you believe Him. You deliberately embark upon a course of obedient behaviour, believing God implicitly, despite your circumstance or feelings. Every time you do, you sync your life more accurately to God's righteous demands for your life.

As faith's focus was grace at your entrance into salvation, so too, will faith's focus be grace as you continue to grow in maturity as God's son in Christ. The grace of God does two essential things, i.e. **configures your identity as God's son** and **empowers you to do God's will in obeying His general principles in His Word, fuelling your specific obedience in fulfilling your unique calling in the Kingdom of God**. To obey God fully, you need His grace. **Grace can also be viewed as God's obedience-enabling power**. Faith - your unshakeable belief in God's person and word – always has its eye on God's grace. The more grace you have, the more enabled or empowered you are to obey God and do His will. The ultimate objective of faith is to OBEY GOD.

Heb. 11:8 By FAITH Abraham, when he was called, OBEYED ...

Grace is that which enables us to obey God. Hence faith pursues grace.

CONSIDER the following flow of thought:

- By faith you enter God's Grace.
- Hence, faith's focus is God's Grace.
- Through faith you are saved.
- Through faith you have the gift of righteousness.

- By faith you have complied to a specific requirement of God granting you positional righteousness.
- By saving faith you received your initial deposit of God's grace within your spirit.
- This grace reigns and rules in this sphere of positional righteousness within you.
- Having received salvation, i.e. grace accessed by faith, making you righteous before God, you now, by the empowerment of grace, embark upon works of obedience. This obedience, when expressed, is the fruit of your faith and an indication of practical righteousness, to which more grace is endowed upon for the potential of greater works or faith.

Faith's focus is God, specifically God's grace. This grace empowers us to be all that God ordained for us to be as his son in the process of maturing in Christ. It empowers us to do all that He has called us to do in obedience to His general principles and specific will for our lives. Faith knows the power of grace and pursues it. Faith knows that if it can receive grace, it can represent God fully in the sons of God.

Faith's pursuit is grace. Grace's pursuit is the Glory of God. Glory's objective is to put on display the exact representation of the nature of God for men to see and marvel and turn to God.

Faith is fully aware of the obedience-enabling power of Grace. Hence, faith's pursuit is God, specifically the Grace of God that drives obedience. These obedient works reveal and put on display the glory of God, exactly representing His person and purpose. Faith's ultimate aim is the glory of God made possible through pursuing the grace of God, contained in the truth (Word) of God.

HOW DOES THE BIBLE DEFINE FAITH?

Heb. 11:1 Now **faith** is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence of things not seen.**
(NKJV)

Faith (pistis) is a **firm conviction or persuasion as to the truth of something**. Specifically, it is '**THE SUBSTANCE**' hoped for. The words '**OF THINGS**' in Hebrews 11:1 is not in the original Greek manuscripts. It is an insertion by translators. Faith's objective and focus is not 'THINGS', as in material things. Rather, its focus is the SUBSTANCE of GOD. This word SUBSTANCE, in the Greek, is a loaded term and warrants our serious attention. It has a range of meanings, some which have been applied by theologians and teachers of God's Word to Hebrews 11:1 - based on an already established particular view of faith.

The **word 'SUBSTANCE'** in the Greek has **three basic meanings**, all of which are applicable to Hebrews 11:1.

Substance = HUPOSTASIS⁴ = (1) What really exists under any appearance; reality; essential nature.

(2) That which is the basis of something, hence, assurance, guarantee, confidence;

(3) That quality which leads one to stand under, endure, or undertake something, firmness, boldness, confidence

The first of these meanings will be discussed in this session and the second and third in the next.

1) What Really Exists under any Appearance; Reality; Essential Nature.

The word hupostasis refers to God's **internal and essential being or nature**, i.e. His grace. The Greek word, hupostasis, approximates to two other Greek words also denoting the essential nature of the person of God, namely 'ousía' (G3776 - existence, substance) and 'phúsis' (G5449 - nature)⁵.

That which cannot be seen underpins everything that can be seen. The visible is upheld by the invisible. Skyscrapers are anchored on deep, strong, yet unseen foundations. Let us now illustrate that the GLORY of God is that dynamic of God that is overtly visible for men to behold, yet it must be stationed and established upon an invisible spirit dynamic of God called GRACE.

Heb. 1:3 And He (*i.e. Jesus the SON*) is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

The word for 'nature' here is hupostasis, the same word translated as 'substance' in Heb. 11:1.

Consider the phrase, '**RADIANCE OF HIS GLORY** and the **EXACT REPRESENTATION of His NATURE**':

- Jesus, the Son, is the radiance of His Father's glory. Whatever Jesus is, so are we.
- This radiant glory is not His glory but that of His Father's. He reflects His Father's glory. No son has a glory independently of his Father's glory, which is meant to be displayed.

Proverbs 17:6b ... And the glory of sons is their fathers.

- Glory has a radiance - a brilliance - a brightness - a splendour - an effulgence - a shining forth - that attracts attention to it - it can be seen.
- This glory is further described as '**exact representation of His nature**', i.e. the radiant seen glory is nothing more than an accurate representation or reflection of His Father's inherent and quintessential **NATURE**.

- Thus, we may conclude that His nature is the unseen reality that the glory seeks to make known. This underlying nature is **God's GRACE**.

The KJV frames Heb.1:3a powerfully: 'Who being the **brightness of his glory**, and the **express image of his person**'. Thus God's essential nature – His GRACE – is HIS PERSON.

The Greek term '**HUPOSTASIS**' translated as **NATURE (nasb)** or **PERSON (kjb)** is important for us to consider, because it directly describes **THE GRACE OF GOD**. God's glory is full of GRACE and TRUTH.

The definition of 'hupostasis' above is important. Note the following:

The appearance of the attributes of God are designed for men to see – these must be 'apparent' before men. These attributes are reflections of the weighted **glory** inherent within His person as God. There is something 'underneath' these attributes or characteristics that provide a foundational substructure to them. This is God's 'essential nature'. God's attributes are anchored within, and so emanate from this underlying substructure, nature or 'essence'. These apparent attributes require a core reality that gives rise to their manifestation. This 'essential nature', 'essence', 'substance' of God is His GRACE.

The substructure of God is His 'hupostasis' (nature) that underlies, upholds and provides a basis upon which everything that is designed to become 'apparent' or visible about Him is based or flows forth from. This 'hupostasis' is HIS GRACE, which is focused upon manifesting His glory exactly or accurately. Jesus, the Son, did this – He manifested His Father's glory. This is the preserve and responsibility of every son of God, including you and I.

Thamo Naidoo, a servant of Christ, offers this light on the Greek term 'hupostasis':

*"When the early church fathers tried to explain that Christianity has one God expressed in three persons, they said that God is a God of substance (hupostasis), i.e. He has a non-material substance. The three persons in the Godhead are co-equal in that they have the same substance – this is the **compositional make up** of God. Each of the parts of the Godhead has the same weight of substance; but the character of that substance may express itself differently. This is the basis upon which the image of God is expressed. **Inwardly we have to bear a divine substance that carries and communicates our character.** This is the basis upon which your life is founded. It **undergirds everything in my life that appears as the image of God.** This is the **immovable foundation** of your life. Faith is the substance hoped for. **Faith is the means of accessing the Divine substance, which is the essence of everything God is.**"*

Thus we may conclude that the goal of God's grace is the generation and manifestation of His glory. This is powerfully illustrated in Jesus' life in John 1.⁶

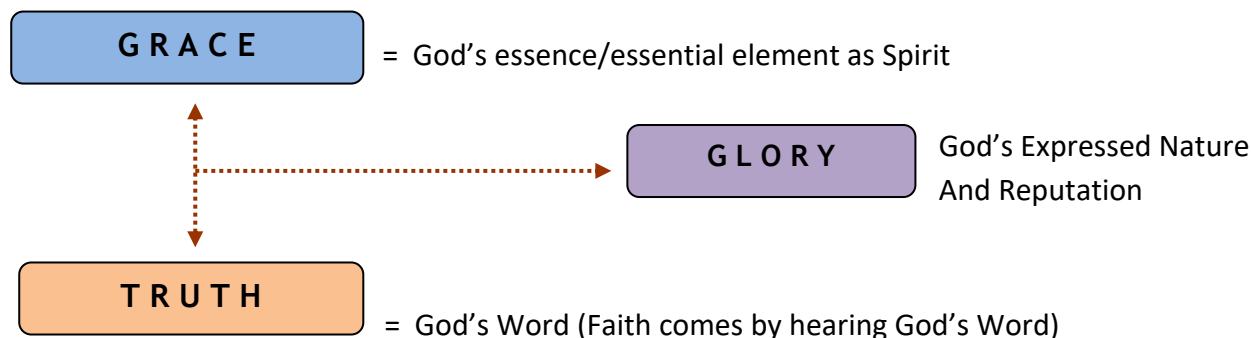
GRACE AND GLORY

[Read the entire chapter of John 1 and note the following verses]

John 1:1,4,9-18

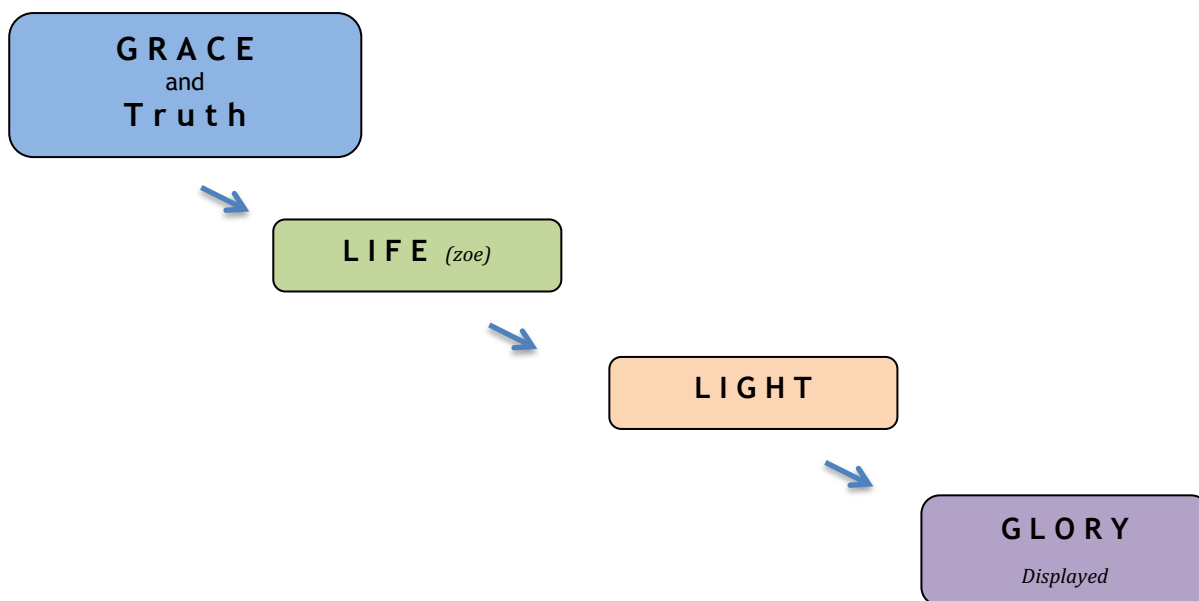
- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.
5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend (*overpowers*) it.
9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.
14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.
18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Note 'HIS Glory' is FULL of GRACE and TRUTH (v.14).



God's grace in us is meant to display His Glory. Glory is to be beheld by an observer. It is something exhibited outward as an expression of an abiding inward state. The inward state is GRACE which rests on TRUTH (His Word). We will demonstrate in a later session how that GRACE is primarily communicated and thus rests upon TRUTH, which is a descriptor of GOD's WORD. The resultant manifestation of grace coming in via the truth of the Word, is GLORY! It is impossible to showcase God's glory without being saturated inwardly with His GRACE, built on His Truth (Word). Grace and Glory belong together. Glory is the result of grace. Grace is packaged in God's Word.

Our LIVES, like Jesus's was, are to be the LIGHT of the world (John 8:12; 9:5; Matt.5:14). Light (glory of God) is to be displayed in LIFE (our behaviour, attitudes, etc. – see Phil. 2:15). Note that IN Jesus, was LIFE, which is the LIGHT of men (John 1:4). But it also indicates that in HIM was GRACE – for of 'His FULLNESS we have received grace upon grace' (John 1:16). Thus we conclude that the GRACE in God is the LIFE of God Himself, which when incarnated in human form, will offer both LIFE and LIGHT to the world. This life, which is light, when manifested, will be God's glory displayed in His sons to all of creation.



NOW FAITH IS THIS SUBSTANCE HOPED FOR! FAITH THAT COMES VIA THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD HOPES FOR 'GRACE', THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF GOD, AS THE KEY FACET BY WHICH THE GLORY OF GOD CAN BE DISPLAYED.

Another verse that effectively marries the concepts of faith, grace and glory is 2 Thess. 1:11.

2 Thess. 1:11

NASB: To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and **FULLFILL EVERY DESIRE FOR GOODNESS** and the **work of FAITH** with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will **be GLORIFIED in you**, and you in Him, **ACCORDING TO THE GRACE of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ**.

NLT: So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the **POWER to ACCOMPLISH ALL THE GOOD THINGS YOUR FAITH PROMPTS YOU TO DO**. Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be **HONORED** because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with him. **THIS IS ALL MADE POSSIBLE** because of the **GRACE** of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

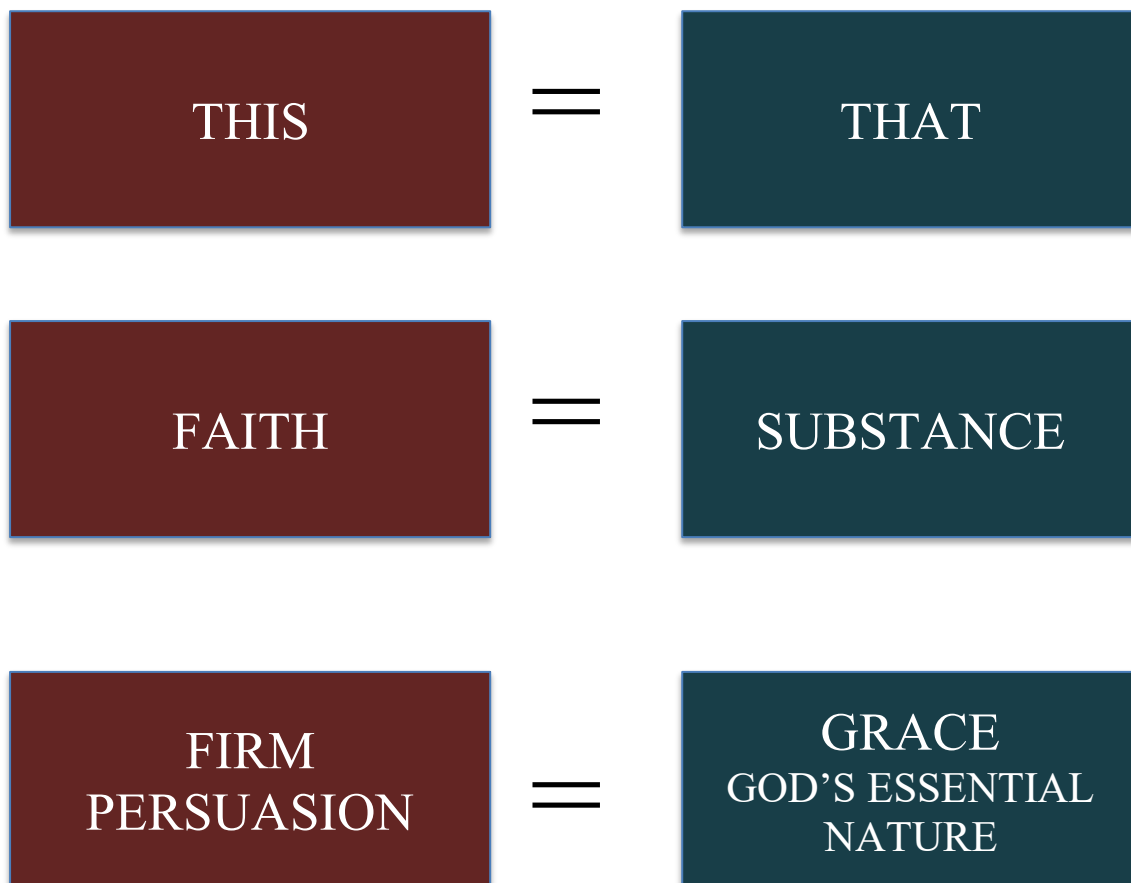
MSG. We ... pray that he'll fill your good ideas and **ACTS OF FAITH** with his **OWN ENERGY** so that it all amounts to something. If your life **HONORS** the name of Jesus, he will honor you. **GRACE IS BEHIND AND THROUGH ALL OF THIS**, our God giving himself freely, the Master, Jesus Christ, giving himself freely.

AMP. With this in view we constantly pray for you, that our God may deem and count you worthy of [your] calling and [His] **EVERY GRACIOUS PURPOSE OF GOODNESS**, and with **POWER may COMPLETE** in [your] every particular **WORK OF FAITH** (faith which is that **LEANING** of

the whole human personality **ON GOD** in **ABSOLUTE TRUST** and **CONFIDENCE** in His **POWER, WISDOM, and GOODNESS**). Thus may the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be **GLORIFIED** and **BECOME MORE GLORIOUS** through and in you, and may you [*also be glorified*] in Him **ACCORDING TO THE GRACE** (favor and blessing) of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

If in the same sentence, one concept is defined in terms of another substantial concept, then the first cannot be understood nor experienced apart from the second. **Example: Assume 'this' is defined as 'that'.**

If 'this' is 'that', then conversely, 'that' is 'this'. 'This' cannot be defined outside of 'that'. In other words, to get 'this', seek and pursue 'that'. When you get 'that', you got 'this'. Faith (THIS) is substance (THAT) hoped for. A firm persuasion or conviction (FAITH) is the grace (SUBSTANCE - 'essential Divine essence or nature') hoped for.



To be firmly persuaded or convinced is the outcome of the reception of grace. Faith results from grace. To develop in faith, grow in grace. Faith comes through the hearing of God's Word. This word is full of 'Grace'. When heard accurately, you will respond with a firm belief and persuasion regarding the truth of what you have heard and embark upon expressions of works of obedience. Your unaltered persuasion within stems from the nature of God's grace within you, and fuels or

drives every outward act of obedience, even in the face of external circumstances that contradict what you have heard.

FAITH PURSUES 'GRACE' - THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF GOD - AND NOT 'THINGS' PER SE.

Material things result from the pursuit after the nature of God. It is possible to get material things without the nature of God. There are many wealthy people that have no relationship with God whatsoever.

If 'GRACE' and my growth in it configures my sonship identity in Christ (Who I am) and also empowers my functionality in executing God's purposes (What I do), then FAITH can be used for both dimensions. Faith is not just narrowly focussed on material things or used to ensure your personal needs are met.

FIRSTLY, FAITH PURSUES GRACE WHICH CONFIGURES YOUR SONSHIP IDENTITY, i.e. the nature and likeness of Christ in you. Initially, you were saved by faith - by your belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of GOD AND ACCEPTANCE OF HIM AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOUR. Positionally, you are righteous before God. Then after your initial salvation encounter, you live by faith and grow in practical righteousness through acts of obedience to God's Word, also called the Word of righteousness and the Word of Grace. By faith you grow in maturity, as every time you hear God's Word, you receive FAITH to grow in GRACE through your acts of practical obedience to the demand of God. You develop in righteousness by your obedient practical behaviour.

For example, you have to have strong faith to master or perfect the principle of forgiveness towards a brother. Jesus presented the Kingdom standard of forgiveness to His disciples, saying they must forgive the same person who sins against them, 'seven times in the same day'. By this, Jesus meant that they are to perfect forgiveness in their lives to such a degree that they come to 'rest' or maturity in this principle (the number seven denotes perfection and rest). Their forgivenesses of the recurrent offences of the same person within the same day must be reflexive, spontaneous and consistent. This was obviously a tall order for the disciples, who responded with a passionate and heartfelt request saying, **"LORD INCREASE OUR FAITH"**.

Luke 17:3-5 Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." The apostles said to the Lord, **"Increase our faith!"**

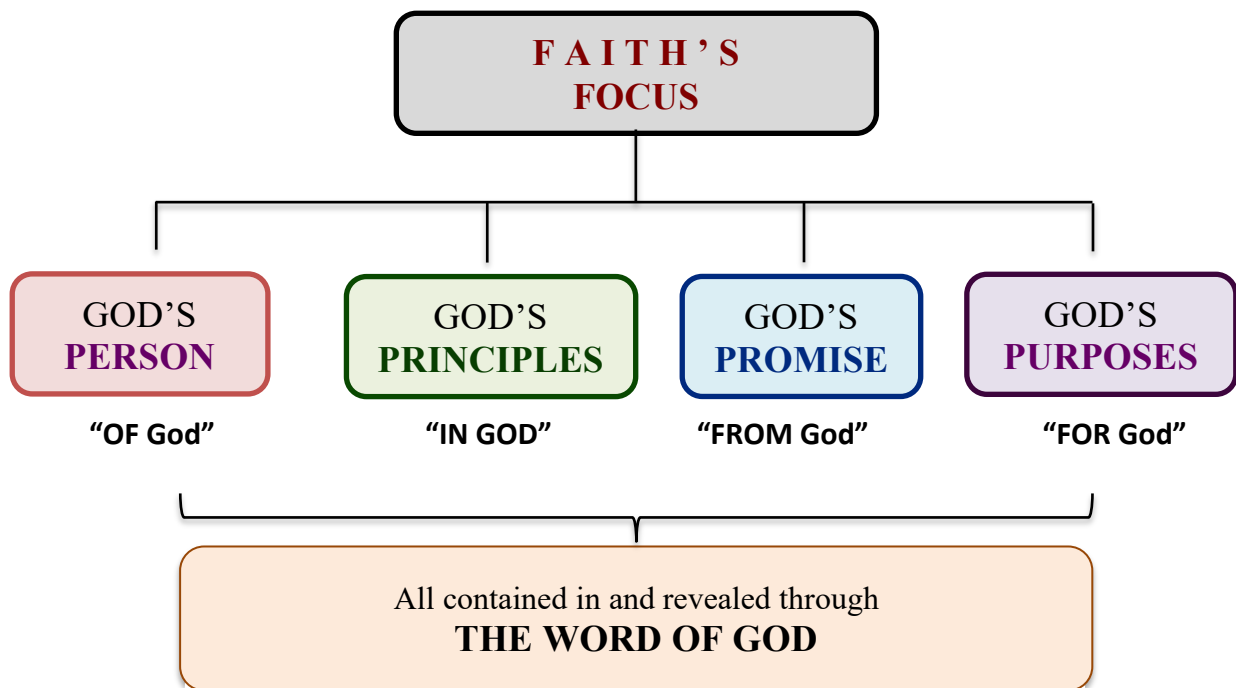
In the verse above, the apostles' view of faith was this: "Lord, give us more grace, more of your nature, more of the Divine ability of God within us to actually forgive like this." They needed faith to forgive. So faith here was focussed on assimilating the nature of God to such a powerful degree, that the human response to a negative circumstances or person would be one that would put on display the nature of God. Here, faith's focus was not to get anything from God, but to simply represent God exactly as His sons within the context of potentially tense relationships. Faith is needed to forgive a brother, and to act covenantally, maintaining the oneness of the Body of Christ in love.

SECONDLY, FAITH PURSUES GRACE THAT EMPOWERS OR FUELS FUNCTIONALITY. A cursory perusal of Hebrews chapter 11 reveals what Old Testament saints used faith for. Most times it was to simply **DO what God required of them**. Noah built an Ark by faith; Abel made an acceptable offering by faith; etc.

Faith pursues the **Person of God**, the **Principles in God**, the **Promises of God** and the **Purposes of God**. But the **priority is God's Person and Principles**, before His Promises or Purposes.

Faith's focus is Fourfold ...

- | | | |
|---------------------|--|--------------|
| 1. God's Person | : Impartations of God's nature | – "OF God" |
| 2. God's Principles | : Standards that we must obey | – "IN God" |
| 3. God's Promises | : Blessings within our Sonship | – "FROM God" |
| 4. God's Purposes | : Doing the Will of God - Our assignment | – "FOR God" |



As will be demonstrated in this writing, faith does incorporate a desire to see every Biblical **PROMISE OF GOD** for His sons manifested practically in our lives. Abram was promised a son and by faith he eventually secured his promised son.

Faith's focus will also definitely include prosperity, material blessing and general physical health and well-being, although this is not presented in Scripture as faith's primary focus. Faith must be focussed more on the God of the Promise, than the Promise of God, lest the promise of God becomes the new idolatry. Never pursue the PROMISE of God without first prioritising the GOD of

the promise, for fear that the manifestation of the 'promise' might draw you away from the 'God' in whom the promise vests.

Anything **OF GOD** (His Person), **FROM GOD** (His Promise) and **FOR GOD** (His Purpose and Will) is received, accessed, attained, secured or performed by the principle of FAITH, a firm persuasion or belief in God.

In reference to **DOING MIGHTY WORKS OF FAITH** and great **EXPLOITS** or **feats for God**, faith accesses and harnesses God's POWER or ABILITY to perform supernatural or extraordinary things that are humanly impossible. But, before mighty works can be performed for God, faith first seeks to know and secure the Person of God - His nature and character. Having secured the nature and character of God, faith pursues the promise and purpose of God. It is from God's Personhood that God's Power is revealed and demonstrated. **Jesus at one time presented the frightening possibility of doing God's work and performing spiritual activity successfully, but yet without knowing God intimately.**

Matt. 7:22-23 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

When you chase after the Person of God, the Promises of God are accessed almost automatically, and subsequently you will be enabled to DO God's Purposes with power.

The Example of Gideon's Faith:

Gideon possessed great faith to execute GOD's PURPOSES, but did so from an endowment of GOD'S PERSON within his being, and a belief in and appropriation of a PROMISE from God.

Heb. 11:32-33 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets who **by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.**

Read Judges chapters 6 to 8. Gideon was selected by God to destroy a long-standing enemy of the Israelites, viz. the Midianites. God referred to him as a 'mighty man of valour'. This perspective of God of him was far removed from his perception of himself, his family and his tribe.

Judges 6:12-16

12 The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, **O valiant warrior.**"

- 14 The Lord looked at him and said, “Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. **Have I not sent you?**”
- 15 He said to Him, “O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.”
- 16 But the Lord said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man.

Gideon’s view of himself (‘the least’; ‘the youngest’) was earthly and natural, based on physical, natural conditions, but God had a heavenly estimation of him (‘valiant warrior’). It was important for Gideon to align his thinking of himself to that of God’s if he was to effectively execute God’s purposes. If he is to be a man of faith, he has to think like God thinks. He has to understand himself as from the viewpoint of God and not himself. Meditation upon God’s view of you as revealed in and through His Word, aligns your own perception to agree with His, so that you can function in the power of the truth of Himself presented to you in His description of you.

How can God get Gideon to be FAITH-FILLED? How can Gideon become ‘FULLY PERSUADED’ and possess a settled, unaltered belief in God? Well, the only way is for God to reveal HIS PERSON to Gideon. His person is His grace. If Gideon had an impartation of grace, what would then result in him, is a firm persuasion of immovable faith in God. God imparts this grace to Gideon by revealing Himself to him in very specific manner that is peculiar, unique and tailored to the PURPOSE God had for Gideon. For Gideon to successfully execute the Purpose of God, He must receive impartation of the Person or Grace of God, so that he can in faith, believe the Promise of God.

Judges 6:22-24

- 22 When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, “Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.”
- 23 The Lord said to him, “**Peace to you**, do not fear; you shall not die.”
- 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it **The Lord is Peace**. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites

In Gideon’s case, God wanted to deal with the Midianites. **Midianite** means ‘**strife and contention**’. Peace destroys contention, and hence God unveils Himself as ‘The Lord of Peace’ - (Jehovah Shalom) to Gideon – who begins to embody and imbibe the reality of God’s nature. This then becomes key to Gideon’s success.

The Scriptures teach that whatever we behold in God, we become like that very aspect of His nature we behold. We become transformed by the Spirit of the Lord, from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). When we see God by revelation in and through His Word, we become like Him in reference to that aspect of His nature which we see of Him. The Divine condition/character of peace within Gideon that He possessed from assimilating it impartationally from ‘**The Lord is Peace**’, becomes the principle from which Gideon destroys the Midianites, who are people intent upon strife – who literally break the peace. What we become of Christ within us is our empowerment for victory and success in every Kingdom assignment. [**Aside thought**: You cannot destroy enemies of God until you function as an accurate representation of God, embodying His nature and character, a

nature/character that is antithetical, but also authoritatively superior to the enemy you seek to obliterate.]

Gideon had to be imbued with the nature of God as Jehovah Shalom (God is Peace), before he would, through this very disposition of God's PEACEFUL essence WITHIN HIM, by an act of FAITH-FILLED obedience, defeat the Midianites. Gideon's faith to face them and conquer them was vested not so much in his own ability to conjure up courage to attack them, but rather in his assimilation and thus representation of the God of Peace. Simply said, he needed the peace of God to fight strife, and was successful because he embodied the godly nature of peace, which became his weapon against strife.

The Example of David's Faith:

David too conquered Goliath, not so much by his own internal disposition of bravery to attack a giant. David's strength in his faith was because he was the embodiment of the grace or person of God. He said to Goliath, "I come to you IN THE NAME of the Lord".

1 Sam.17:45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.

'Name' denotes 'nature'. What David was saying is that "I come to you, embodying the nature of God within me".

Also, David said, "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts". 'Hosts' ('Tsaba' in the Hebrew) describes a mass of people (angels) and things (resources) arrayed, organised and prepared for warfare. In other words, God is positioned to battle on your behalf. David had this view of God in spirit and soul. He knew that as he goes in faith, running toward Goliath to fight him, that not only is his faith-filled action a result from the grace deposit of God within him, but also, he has sight of an eternal reality, viz. the entirety of angelic armies are backing him. Faith SEES what doubt and unbelief cannot see. Faith's perspective prompts its bold and daring actions.

The five stones in David's bag, amongst other things, represent GRACE, five being the number of grace, and grace referring to the essential SUBSTANCE of God as a SPIRIT BEING.

1 Sam. 17:40 He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.

Faith's confidence is derived from God's grace-filled disposition. It was a stone of grace that brought down Goliath. Faith ventured forth to slay the giant, because faith had its residence in the SUBSTANCE - the grace of God.

The Example of Stephen's Faith

Acts 6:8

NASB: And Stephen, full of GRACE and **POWER**, was performing **great wonders and signs** among the people.

NKJV: And Stephen, full of FAITH and **POWER**, did **great wonders and signs** among the people.

The most authentic manuscripts of the New Testament Scriptures have 'GRACE' instead of 'FAITH' in Acts 6:8. Only the KJV and NKJV versions of the Bible say that Stephen was full of FAITH and POWER, and as a result performed mighty miracles. Every other version of the Bible indicates that Stephen was FULL of GRACE and POWER, replacing 'grace' for 'faith', because of reliance on the 'NU TEXT' of the Scriptures⁷. Based on our discussion above, these two seemingly contradictory positions are not really contradictions, since faith's focus and the internal mechanism which drives it, is the grace of God. Most certainly, to do great wonders and signs requires great faith, something which great grace affords and makes possible. The point is simply that Stephen was full of faith because he was full of grace.

The Example of Abraham's Faith

Abraham, as an example of faith, will be discussed later, but brief reference is made here in respect to faith (firm persuasion) resulting from or made functionally possible by grace.

Abram was promised that he would be a father of nations. He tried to produce a son (Ishmael) in his flesh through impatience. God changed his name to Abraham, denoting an insertion of Divine grace. The name change from Abram to Abraham demands the insertion of the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Five is the number of grace. So **Abraham has more grace than Abram**. Abram produced Ishmael, but Abraham produced Isaac. **Faithless works produced Ishmael, but Grace-filled faith produced Isaac**. Having greater grace, Abraham could, with the internal insertion of God's essential nature within him, from that foundation, exercise confident belief and trust in God that HE would certainly bring to pass all that HE said HE would do. Abraham has more grace than Abram, hence Abraham has more faith than Abram. Faith results from grace.

Abram got it wrong. Abraham got it right. Abram pursued the 'thing', i.e. a son. Abraham pursued the 'grace', and the thing which he was promised and desired materialised. Never seek to generate outwardly anything of the promise of God, if you have not secured the associated grace of the person of God inwardly.

ABRAM sought the 'PROMISE of God' and carnally produced Ishmael to give indication of the stature of a claim to 'faith'. But faith did not produce Ishmael; flesh did.

ABRAHAM sought the GOD of the promise, and through the power of grace, the God of grace produced through him and Sarah, the promised son, Isaac. What grace produced, grace was able

to freely give up. Abraham later was willing to sacrifice the 'PROMISE' (Isaac) to express loyalty, devotion and unswerving obedience to GOD, who had promised and ensured the fulfillment of the Promise.

The Example of Noah's Faith:

Gen. 6:8 But Noah **found grace** in the eyes of the Lord.

Heb. 11:7 **By faith** Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, **prepared an ark** for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became **heir of the righteousness which is according to faith**.

Noah found grace in the eyes of God. This grace became his to possess inwardly. By faith - a firm conviction and confidence in the persona and nature of God as reliably faithful, he proceeded to build an ark in obedience. What he did outwardly was to put on display the nature and character of God represented symbolically by the ark (a representation of Christ). Noah means REST. Where it says, "Noah found grace", could be read "REST found grace". When we 'rest' - when we are fully assured in the ability of our God - we make room for the power of His grace to generate results that only His grace can produce.

If you read Hebrews 11:1 as 'Now faith is the assurance - the way we 'stand under' confidently for the things we hope for', then the way you STAND is by RESTING in quiet confidence in God.

Heb.11:1 Now faith is the substance of *things* hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
(NKJV)

Faith's focus is the unseen, internal essential nature of God called His grace. A revelation of God's persona and being produces in us a confident hope and becomes the evidence of things not seen. Faith's raw confidence is that whatever this nature of God requires in and through us, it will manifest outwardly in obedient works that exhibit His glory. These obedient works become the outward display of that inward unseen reality we hold to. **Faith brings what is invisible and unseen into the visible and seen reality.** God is invisible and unseen, and faith makes visible all that God's Person, Purposes and Promises seek to reveal.

In summary, consider the following statements regarding faith. Some of these will be further explained in subsequent sessions.

**Faith is an extremely strong conviction or persuasion
of belief rooted in the nature and Word of God.**

**It comes by hearing the rhema Word of God, which communicates 'grace',
the very substance of which God, who is Spirit, is composed.**

Faith is a divine reality, the nature or grace of God within one,

that undergirds and produces a confident expectation or hope.

This hope causes one to act with intense desire outwardly in obedience, even without physical or tangible external proof or evidence, because faith provides a perspective into the unseen invisible reality.

[To Be Continued]

Great Grace and Peace be multiplied to you,

Randolph Barnwell

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ENDNOTES

1. Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.), Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, #G4102
2. Ibid. #G3982
3. Refer to my teaching on Grace : http://www.randolphbarnwell.com/pdf_topical.html
4. Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.), Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, #G5287
5. Zodhiates, S. (2000, c1992, c1993). The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament (electronic ed.), Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.
6. The section here below is an extract from my study notes on the subject of the Grace of God. See my website for the full set of notes. http://www.randolphbarnwell.com/pdf_topical.html
7. In New King James Translators' Notes, the NU text has the word 'grace' instead of 'faith'.

Aside: About the NU-Text : These variations from the traditional text generally represent the Alexandrian or Egyptian type of text described previously in "The New Testament Text." They are found in the Critical Text published in the twenty-seventh edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (N) and in the United Bible Societies' fourth edition (U), hence the acronym, "NU-Text." See the 'Preface' of the NKJV : The Holy Bible, New King James Version Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.