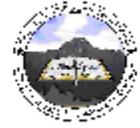




# On The Frontier



“For The Glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

Vol XVI No.1

January/February 2008

## Now Abideth Faith . . .

*All Scripture presented is from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted. Comments and notations by this author within Scripture text will appear in brackets.*

For us to rightly-divide God’s Word we must consider the context, both immediate and remote, and the scope within which it is set. We dare not, as some have done and do, magnify one section of Scripture above another.

Either it is all God’s Word or none of it is God’s Word. The Old Testament records are as relevant in this regard as are the New. The four Gospels are not to be favored nor ignored and the Church Epistles have no more validity than any other section of the Holy Writ.

Choosing one Bible section or passage above others has proven to be the bane of Christianity and the benefit of man-made religion. Some religions go so far as to name their “brand” of Christianity in accordance with the verse, passage, or practice that they have chosen to grant prominent authority to.

This produces religion which invariably promulgates error. This it must do if the doctrines and tenants upon which said religion was fabricated are to survive.

We must remember that Christianity is NOT a religion. It is the relationship of a loving Father with His family.

Christianity springs forth from what God did when He raised His Son from the dead and what He does in you when you believe on Jesus Christ pledging by faith to follow him.

Religions are man made. Both Christian and non-Christian alike are contrivances of human thinking.

Conversely, the Word of God is not from the mind of man nor subject to man’s opinion and interpretation.

**II Peter 1:20**

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy [declarations both future and otherwise] came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

All of God’s Word is “prophetic.” Some sections foretell of events yet future while some simply relate to events past or as they are at present. Either way, it is all God’s Word and none of us should magnify one word, verse, passage or book above another.

That being said, it is fine, if not necessary, to work towards an understanding of biblical concepts and the phrases containing them.

One such concept is faith as is found in the following:

**I Corinthians 13:13**

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

The above verse declares charity to be greater than faith and hope.

Charity is an English word chosen by the King James translators to translate the Greek word *agape*. But as with all words, meaning and use may change over time.

Today when we use the word charity we are thinking about giving to a needy group or person. I am always reminded of the Salvation Army volunteers seeking help around Christmas to benefit others. We find them most commonly at the entrances of supermarkets and retail stores ringing a bell and wishing us a Merry Christmas. Few would deny the “charitable” motives behind such activities. Reading the immediate context of I Corinthians 13 we find a disparity between this and our current vernacular.

**I Corinthians 13:1-4**

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [*agape*], I

am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [*agape*], I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [*agape*], it profiteth me nothing.

The word charity is mentioned three times in as many verses and although wonderful things are mentioned, none profit destitute of charity. This is a glaring contradiction to our modern understanding of this word which is bestowing goods and feeding the poor, i.e., we see charity as giving.

This begs the question, how can charity mean giving to the needy if one can give to the needy without it?

The answer is quite simple when you define this word in light of biblical usage rather than current.

The biblical meaning of the Greek word *agape* is love and can be understood as; Divine love, God's love or the love of God. This differs significantly from our modern understanding of the English word "charity" chosen by the King James translators to translate *agape* into English.

Our current definition of the English word "charity" is somewhat "muddied" and

consequently does not communicate as accurately as intended by God's use of the Greek word *agape*.

Of course the Koine Greek of the New Testament is much more precise than English.

For instance, in English if I were to say, "There is water in the glass," you would understand this as a container containing a given amount of the liquid. However in Greek, I could not only say that but I also would have the ability of indicating that this same liquid was actually in the material (glass) of which the container is made.

In other words, contingent upon the words chosen and how they are used, Koine Greek allows for a much more expansive and detailed communication.

Another example can be seen in the various Greek words used to describe love.

Three such words and their meanings are:

*Agape* = Divine love.

*Phileo* = Human love

*Eros* = Animal love.

Clearly there is a great distinction here. God's love is freely given and not based upon merit of any kind.

Human love, such as a mother has for a child, is conditional and has some relevant association as its basis. This type of love is very strong and selfless. However, there needs to be consanguinity of some sort for it to exist. This is not a factor in *agape*.

Animal love is also known as sexual or physical love. Though it reaches great heights it subsides rapidly upon personal satisfaction. Again, this is not a characteristic of *agape*.

Love often motivates giving, as is the case with God.

John 3:16

For God so loved [*agapeo*] the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

However, we humans can give with motivation other than love.

I Corinthians 13:3

And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

It is noteworthy to acknowledge at this time the reproving nature and purpose of Corinthians. The saints at Corinth were giving, but they were not loving.

Although some older dictionaries recognize the love aspect of this English word, most of our more modern ones emphasize giving over love.

The following definition describes what most of us think when we read or hear this word:

Generous actions or donations to aid the poor, ill, or helpless.

The following recognizable definition is usually paired with "non-profit" or "tax exempt":

A foundation created to promote the public good. An organization set up to collect money for the needy.

As you can see, our modern use of this word “charity” is not in keeping with its biblical meaning.

A translation more conducive to our current day understanding is found in the Authorized Standard Version.

**I Corinthians 13:3**

And if I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

Some other fine translations:

**I Corinthians 13:3**

And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. [Young's Literal]

**I Corinthians 13:3**

And if I distribute all my possessions to the poor, and give up my body to be burned, but am destitute of Love, it profits me nothing. [Weymouth]

**I Corinthians 13:3**

And, though I morsel out all my goods,—and though I deliver up my body, that I may boast, and have not, love, I am profited, nothing. [Rotherham]

**I Corinthians 13:3**

And if I shall dole out all my goods in food, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but have not love, I profit nothing. [Darby]

**I Corinthians 13:3**

And if I give all my goods to the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it is of no profit to me.

[Bible in Basic English]

Now that we have expanded our understanding of *agape* we can begin to understand why God's Word deems it greater than both faith and hope.

God's love is unconditional, unchanging and unearned.

This passage describes it aptly:

**Romans 5:6-10**

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

God introduced His love to us when we were weak, ungodly, sinners and enemies! Isn't that amazing! Clearly, we did nothing to facilitate His loving us. It was His love alone that motivated Him!

No wonder His Word calls love the greatest! *Agape* is the energizing element of faith and hope. It's what punctuates and makes them selfless, godly and profitable.

This is not to say that faith and hope are unimportant. They are both absolutely vital. Notwithstanding, we should never leave love out. Never!

There are times when you may not know what to do in a given situation, as both your faith and hope are based upon your knowledge of God's Word, i.e., you cannot have faith or hope in something you know nothing of. But you can ALWAYS walk in love! It is never wrong to be loving.

I once thought it most important to be right. I was wrong. You can do everything “right” and be unloving. That in itself is wrong. I now know it is more important to be loving than it is to be right.

Consider these:

**Luke 11:42**

But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

**Deuteronomy 10:12, 13**

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Mark 12:29-31

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.

And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Galatians 5:13,14

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

The very Law of God itself is summed up in one word LOVE. And that word in the Greek is *AGAPE*.

If we want to do good in life, we do so not by being right, but by being loving.

James 2:8

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well [act rightly]:

The love of God is a law unto itself. It is the Royal Law and it is always right. We are indebted to the Almighty to be loving because of His goodness and mercy to us.

Romans 13:8-10

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, *namely*, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

And lest we forget:

I Corinthians 13:8a

Charity [*agape*] never faileth . .

No wonder it's the greatest!

Notwithstanding, we are not to forget faith and hope even as the Pharisees were not to omit judgement, faith, mercy and the love of God.

What then is hope?

I Thessalonians 4:13-ff

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [have died], that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

Gathering from the above verse hope as defined by the Bible is in

relationship to those who have died.

Hope beyond the grave is not something worldly people have. For the most part their hopes revolve around gain, e.g., a pay raise, a better job, a nicer car, a big house, a healthy bank account, etc..

Within the structure of God's magnificent Word hope refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Our hope is for our Lord's return even as the Old Testament saints hoped for his birth.

Verses 14-ff

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Our hope is in Jesus Christ and his return when the dead in Christ

are made alive and we are given eternal life.

**I Corinthians 15:51-53**

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [be dead], but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

What a tremendous hope we have!

**Titus 1:2**

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

There's nothing else like it in all of His-story's experience! It is the zenith of expectation. And it is life changing.

**I John 3:1-3**

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Imagine what it will be like when we see Jesus Christ and become as he is!

This, our hope, transcends all other "hopes" and shares nothing in common with any. It stands by itself and is reserved for those who by faith accept the Lord Jesus.

Worldly hopes have their place but we must understand the distinction God's Word places upon our hope.

**Romans 8:24,25**

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

If you can see it, you don't need to hope for it. Why? Because you can have faith in God and believe His Word which, having done, will bring what you see into your life.

Have you ever seen a healthy person? Okay, that means you can be healthy too. How about a person who has all their financial needs met? We've all seen that. Consequently, we need not hope for health nor any material good. We can petition God and by faith in Him and believing His Word obtain all His Word promises. Not the least of which are health and prosperity.

**III John 2**

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

**Proverbs 103:2-5**

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

**Psalms 84:11**

For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Walking uprightly then becomes of supreme importance. What then is the basis of this?

**Romans 1:17b**

... The just shall live by faith.

It is vital that we live by faith. But where does faith come from?

**Romans 10:17**

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

You cannot have faith by the things you see. You must expose yourself to God's Word. The things we see in life often contradict God's Word thus smacking of unreliability and deceit.

**II Corinthians 5:7**

(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

Furthermore:

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them *that* diligently seek him.

Since we want to please God and enjoy the reward for doing so, we must present His Word to our minds. You cannot develop faith any other way. I caution you however, to place your confidence in God and not your mental acumen or vast knowledge of Scripture.

It's as simple as Jesus said.

Mark 11:22b

... Have faith in God.

This English word faith is from the Greek word *pistis* which is a noun. A noun describes a person, place, thing or abstract idea. In this case an abstract idea, i.e., faith.

There is a similar Greek word misunderstood at times as being interchangeable with *pistis* or faith.

This word is *pisteuo* most often translated as believe. Confusion regarding the meaning and significance of both these Greek words is easily rectified.

*Pisteuo* is a verb. Most verbs are action words. A few describe a state of being, e.g., is, are, was, were, be, am, been, have, has, had, do, does, did, can't, could, shall, should, will, would. A verb also facilitates as the predicate in a sentence and usually denotes an action, though sometimes a state.

A verb can also describe an occurrence.

But for our intents and purposes, we can safely consider a verb an action word. This we will do at the expense of failing to revisit our grade school English instruction.

All that aside, how do we understand faith (*pistis*) and believe (*pisteuo*)?

Faith is best explained as having enough confidence and trust in information (the source being of primary concern) to the end that it is acted upon when action is required. Believing is that action which one has taken on that information.

In the case of God and His Word we first must have a hearing of it. We cannot have faith in something we know nothing about. We have faith in God as our source but we must have His Word if we are to act.

Faith may be an abstract concept but believing is not. And it's critical that we understand this.

Believing is NOT a mystical mind-set. It is a literal action taken by an individual on what they have heard.

We hear God's Word and are convinced that it is true. We trust God as our source for truth and are confident that He would not lead us astray. Therefore, we literally act upon His Word.

Here are some examples:

I Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing.

There's the information. If you have confidence and trust in this and God who authored it you will act, i.e., pray.

Ephesians 6:18

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

So, do it, pray. That's believing.

Luke 18:1

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Don't ever give up! Pray!

II Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Do it! Pick up your Bible and study it. That's believing the above verse. Any more "believing" would have to be predicated upon additional verses you come across in your study. In other words, your believing of II Timothy 2:15 is confined to your acting upon the command contained in it, i.e., study.

I Thessalonians 3:11

For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

I Thessalonians 4:11

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business,

and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

Mind your own business! Do it, be a believer.

**Ephesians 4:25-ff**

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Neither give place to the devil.

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

You might be thinking that the above passage alludes to renewed mind. It does, but what is renewed mind if not believing?

To renew your mind you must take the Word of God, hold it in your mind and ACT accordingly.

Here's a great one:

**Philippians 2:14**

Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

That's believing by way of not acting. Isn't it? Our action here is a decision to obey and not do something. Don't complain outwardly or inwardly. Be a believer.

**Mark 16:15**

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

**I Peter 3:15**

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Go speak the Word! Be a believer.

**I Peter 2:13-15**

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

Are you ready? If not, get ready!

**Galatians 6:6**

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

**II Corinthians 9:7**

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

So give! Believing is easy, it isn't complicated and it isn't based upon notions of mental gymnastics. It is based upon our literally taking God at His Word. Either we do or we do not, there's no grey area in action. Having said that I must remind you that we can act on the Word without being loving, which is how I began this treatise. Be a believer, act upon God's Word because of your faith in Him and what He says.

What about verses like this one:

**Genesis 1:1**

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

No corresponding action is required or implied. Just accept this as the truth, no matter what others say. Be a believer!

Now abideth faith . . .

\*\*\*\*\*