

General Topics :: Keep the Fire Burning Update Letter**Keep the Fire Burning Update Letter - posted by PJ, on: 2006/2/4 15:19**

I will warn you now, the following is very long (38 pages)! I hate to submit something this long, and yet at the same time, I see very little that I can cut out.

I realize that the length of this will discourage many from reading (or at least finishing) this. However, this is ok with me.

My goal in completing this was not to attract a large audience. Instead, my hope in completing this is that I will finally find rest from the burden the desire to complete this has created.

It has been a little over two months since I began this writing. Since I first recognized the need to do this, I have been unable to think about or do little else. The desire to complete this has completely overwhelmed my life. I am very thankful to my wife and children for their great patience and support they have shown me during this time. While I lived under the pressure of this strong desire, they willingly gave me the time and space I needed to complete this writing. I look forward to once again enjoying them to the full.

So, whether this is read or not, now makes little difference. I leave the results of this up to the Lord. As for me, I am simply thankful to finally put this task behind me.

With this all said, it is with great joy that I submit to you the following...

(I just realized that I can't submit this in one post - I will break it up in to four or five parts. Please let me complete all parts before responding. Thank You)

Keep the Fire Burning Update Letter

Hello to All,

As I write, I realize that it has been nearly two years since I have posted anything on this site. Part of the reason for this may be the fact that I resigned my staff position, which was the source of my high-speed internet access. However, for the most part it was something else.

Two plus years ago, God began a work in me that has continued until this very day. As God began to work, he began to search out and reveal to me the junk that was in my life. Through this process, it became apparent to me that many of the posts I had written were not written from a true desire to help others, but instead, they were written from an inner pride that simply delighted to hear my own self speak. When God shined his search light on this area of my life, I simply backed away.

Looking back to that time in my life, I am thankful I can honestly say that the one post of mine that remains on this site (Keep the Fire Burning) was not motivated from this "need" to hear myself speak. Because I believed I was experiencing a lengthy, consistent walk with the Lord that I had never experienced before, it was with a true desire for the benefit of others that I wrote "Keep the Fire Burning." It is the existence of this post that once again compels me to write.

Even though I left behind my office with the high speed access, I have continued for the past couple of years to check in to this site every 2-3 months (sometimes more often - sometimes less) on our ancient home computer and slow speed connection (just recently purchased a new computer... much nicer!). It was the last time that I checked in that I happened to really take notice of the large number of views that "Keep the Fire Burning" has had. In addition to this I once again read through my original post as well as some of the replies I had not read before from some of the readers who had been encouraged from this post.

After taking all of this in, I was left with mixed emotions. Part of me wanted to be thankful that what I had labored on with sincere hope for others had not been in vain, but the other part of me knew that I could not entertain this feeling.

God has brought me far and taught me much over the past two plus years. As I stand where I'm at today and look back to the time in my life in which I wrote "Keep the Fire Burning," I recognize that although I was very sincere in my writing, I was also very immature and very unenlightened as to the real truth and power of the gospel. As I wrote "Keep the Fire Burning," I believed that I was nearing a climax in my walk with God, however, it is now very clear that I was only at the very, very beginning.

My present awareness of the lack of knowledge with which I wrote has left me with a feeling of obligation to write some type of update from where I stand today. So here I sit at Taco Bell with my pen in hand (write first type later) and the dau

ning task of trying to convey the journey I have been on during the past two-plus years. I will post this as a reply to "Keep the Fire Burning," and also post it as its own individual thread. If for some reason the moderators feel the need to delete this post, I ask that you'd be kind enough to delete the original "Keep the Fire Burning" as well. I make this request because I believe that without this update, "Keep the Fire Burning" could be doing more harm than good. Thank you!

When I finished "Keep the Fire Burning," I had been consistently seeking the Lord for about four months. Even though I can't remember the exact details or the exact order of the process, some extraordinary things began to happen.

One of these significant things was that for the first time in my life I became truly honest with my self and with God. I believe this honesty came from a new and very real awareness that I was truly going to stand before the judgement seat of God and give account for every detail of my life. At this time in my life I became very aware that God could see right through me. I also became aware that he knew whether I was false or sincere and I realized that the truth of who I really was would be revealed on that "great day."

With this new awareness of his judgement seat, the idea, as I had always been taught, of Christ's death being the coverall for all my short comings, falsehoods, and failures no longer seemed sufficient. I wanted to be clean. I wanted to be pure in every way. In response to this deep desire I began to cry out with a sincerity that I had never known before, "create in me a clean heart Oh God!" I desperately wanted to have my sins dealt with and purged from me in the present, instead of God revealing them on that "great day of judgement."

Another significant thing that happened as a result of my new awareness of the "judgement seat" and "God's all seeing eye" was a commitment to make scripture my only guide. It was at this time in my life I began to notice, as never before, all the warnings of Christ regarding the many false prophets and teachers that were to come. In light of all his warnings, I began to realize just how foolish I had been my whole life to trust my eternal soul to the teaching of every "Tom," "Dick," or "Harry" who proclaimed themselves to be a teacher when I held the very life giving words of God himself in my hands. As I realized the trust worthiness of his word, I resolved to seek it and be obedient to it as never before. At this time I began to believe that anything short of total obedience to God's word could not be called faith.

With my new awareness of God and my unwavering commitment to scripture, my eyes began to open and I began to snap out of a delusion that I had long been under (some eye opening thoughts from the "Ten Shekels and a Shirt" sermon - a rare ray of light in a dark place - also played a role in this). For most of my life I believed it all came down to me getting to heaven, and for most of my life I lived my life as a "Christian" only to get there. But as I woke from my spell, this was no longer the case. As I began to see God for who he truly was and saw what he was worthy of, it became my desire to please him above all else. For the first time in my life I was striving to please the Lord for his pleasure and glory alone. I was no longer seeking him for my own material benefit or selfish ambition. No longer did I seek him so I could have a "powerful ministry," or so I could "perform miracles," or to have lots of rewards in heaven. No! He alone was my purpose. His pleasure was what I now lived for. This was in no way a hard thing (by "hard thing," I mean something that is opposed to my true desires), but instead, this was the strongest desire that my heart had ever known. It was at this point in my life I could for the first time honestly say that I truly feared the Lord.

Proverbs 1:7 tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. How true I have found this to be. Until the foundation of the fear of the Lord is laid in one's life, the door to all spiritual knowledge and wisdom is shut. While one may be able to quote spiritual facts, one will never be able to experience the inward, wonder-working power of the gospel without this foundation. With the fear of the Lord alive in my heart, I was now ready to receive what the good Lord was about to give me and reveal to me.

Even though I did not record the exact day, I will never forget the December night in 2003 in which I had my dark eyes opened and began to truly understand the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ. I can clearly remember sitting in my old blue rocker recliner rocking my baby boy while getting ready to read my Bible. For some reason that night (which I now believe to be the good hand of God) I opened my Bible to Romans, chapter eight. Apart from the few popular verses I had often heard quoted, I was for the most part unfamiliar with this book. For so long, Romans had never made much sense, but oh how things were getting ready to change!

With my wife and daughter gone and with my baby content in my arms, I took some time to reflect on my life before reading. I took some time to look closely at the previous seven to eight months and to examine the changes that had taken place during this time. And WOW, what wonderful changes they were!

The Jason who used to read God's word only out of "Christian" duty or for the sake of developing a sermon, was now in love with the book: At this time in my life I literally could not get enough of the Bible . . .

The Jason who used to need constant noise of some kind going was now in love with simple peace and quiet: I could sit on my deck for hours without a single distraction simply enjoying the peace and beauty of the day. I began to find most music and television an annoying disruption the quiet I now found so wonderful . . .

The same man who used to beat his head against a wall trying to achieve some kind of vain success or notoriety as well

I as some kind of financial success was now completely content with his life: The same success I used to seek now appeared vain and empty. For a man who had always been reaching and yet never achieving, this was a most blessed place to be . . .

The Jason who used to pray only out of a "Christian" duty or from a hope of obtaining some personal desire was now in love with his father and longed for times of prayer: Many hours in my life had been spent in prayer simply because I was taught to do so by all the "Christian" leaders whom I followed. They all taught me that lots of praying was the secret to living a powerful "Christian" life, and so I would do my best to live up to this expectation. These times of prayer were always hard work. It was in no way what I wanted to be doing, but instead, it was what I thought I had to be doing. However, that which was once a duty and hard work was now a delight and flowed naturally from me. It seemed as if prayer was flowing from me 24/7 - prayer that was apart from any effort on my own . . .

The same man, who for as long as he could remember had struggled with lust and lived with misery in his soul because of it, was for the first time in his life truly free. The misery I used to feel around other women or magazine racks was gone. For the first time in my marriage, I was completely content with my own wife. The freedom that I was experiencing from this sin was not the same as the short term "victories" I had known in the past. All my past "victories" were based upon my own will power and strength and they would always end in the same miserable defeat. But what I was now experiencing was real and final, and it did not involve any strain on my part . . .

Finally, the Jason who used to associate with the people of a "low degree" out of obligation now found himself at home around them: What a wretch I used to be as I would "reach out" to those of low degree thinking that I was doing them some kind of favor. How ugly my heart was as I somehow believed that the Lord would bless me for such kindness. I was pretending to be humble while at the same time hoping that someone else would see my kind act and praise me for it. Yes, it was all terribly fake, but now it was incredibly real. In a crowded room, I now longed to be with the lonely and out of place. This was no longer a duty with the evil motive of trying to earn God's favor and praise from others, but instead, this was my true heart's desire.

As I rocked by baby and reflected on my life, I began to question the true source of this change. What had really made this difference? What was the secret to the new Jason?

I wouldn't have to wait long to get my answer, for my answer was literally laying right in front of my eyes.

With thankfulness for all the wonderful changes in my life, I began to read Romans, chapter eight. I wasn't far into the chapter when my soul began to churn. As I read, I could clearly see how for the past 29 years I had been walking in the flesh. For most of my life I had given in to its cravings and let it govern my life and actions. But as I kept reading I began to understand the source of the new Jason. It was with great joy I discovered that the new Jason was "the new Jason" because he was now walking according to a different government. The new Jason was no longer following the government of the flesh, but instead, for the very first time in his life he was walking according to the government of God's Spirit.

This was so totally different than all the miserable days in the past that I tried to "walk in the Spirit" by my own strength. During those "miserable days," I would muster all the strength and will power I could and resolve that I would only think spiritual thoughts and do spiritual things. All these strenuous attempts would quickly wear me out and end in the same miserable failure. But that which was happening to me now was real, and it did not involve any effort of my own. I had truly ceased from my own efforts as the Spirit of God now empowered me and lived through me.

As I continued reading, joy began to build inside me until it finally exploded all over. The explosion came as I read verses fourteen through sixteen . . . "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" . . . And there it was . . . I could sit no longer!

Who knows what my poor baby was thinking as I danced and shouted all over the house. For the first time in my life I knew, that I knew, that I knew that I was a child of God. And how did I know? Not because I held to some lifeless doctrinal statement. Nor because I had repeated some man made prayer. No! I knew for certain that I was God's child because his very Spirit was present inside me bearing witness with my spirit. His Spirit spoke to my spirit and confirmed to me that I was his child.

Yes, I was saved! I was changed! I was, without the slightest doubt, a child of God. While I didn't yet understand every detail of my salvation or the gospel that made it possible, I could in no way deny his presence in my life. How very real it was . . . Better yet - how real it is today!

As my out-of-shape body grew tired and could no longer continue to express the joy that my soul was feeling, the shouting and dancing ceased and quiet once again filled the room. This returning quiet left room for a sobering question to arise . . . If this was true salvation, then what had I been living in for the past 29 years? While I didn't jump to an immediate conclusion, in the days and weeks to come it would become increasingly clear that I, without any doubt, had been a lost man who was living in sin and walking according to the flesh.

Even though I was now aware that I had truly been saved and changed by the spirit of God, I did not yet understand the gospel that had made this wonderful change possible, however, this was all about to change.

In 1st Corinthians, chapter two, we read that the things of God, or the true wisdom of God, can only be discerned by the spiritual man. It is only the man who is truly filled with the Spirit of God who can understand the mysteries of God. To help us understand this better, Paul asks the question, "Who can understand the things of a man except for the spirit of the man himself?" The point that Paul was trying to make was that the only way someone could completely understand what was going on in the heart and mind of another man would be to somehow have that other man's spirit placed inside them. By possessing another man's spirit, one could completely grasp the true heart and thoughts of that man.

While one cannot possess the spirit of another man, true believers do possess the Spirit of God. It is only through the presence of his Spirit that one can fully understand his ways. Through the Spirit of God inside me, I was about to begin a journey of learning that has continued until this very day. His Spirit, as apposed to any wisdom of my own, would be the source of all the understanding I would receive.

The first thing I would come to understand was the reason for my former bondage to sin. Through scripture I began to understand that I had been living all my previous years of life as a full fledged member in the kingdom of darkness. The devil himself was my rightful owner, and I, without fully realizing it, was his loyal servant.

In Old Testament law we read that if a slave has any offspring while under the bondage of his master, then those offspring legally belong to the master of the slave (Exodus 21:2-4). I believe that this is written in scripture for the purpose of providing us understanding as to source and legal rightfulness of man's bondage to the devil.

When Adam, who was born a member of the kingdom of heaven, defected to the devil's ways, not only did he rightfully become the legal property of the devil, but through his defection, he brought all men under the same bondage. Since all men to come would be from the seed of Adam, all men as a result would be the devil's rightful property. While not everyone born into the devil's kingdom would be loyal to it in their hearts, they were nevertheless still his property. And as his property they were subject to all his cruel ways and subject to the force of his whip.

It was the fact of this circumstance that kept me in bondage to lust. No matter how strong my determination may have been in the past to not look with lust or think lustful thoughts, the devil, who rightfully held me in his possession, would crack his whip on my shoulders until I could stand it no longer. Finally, my resolve would break and I would end up doing that which I did not want to do.

For 29 years, not only was I a member of his kingdom, but without fully realizing it, I was loyal to it as well. Even though I tried to resist the obvious sin of lust, I delighted in his other sins and vanities. An example of this would be, my evil pursuit of success.

My pursuits of success were rarely in the secular world (although they were from time to time). Instead my pursuits of this vanity were covered up with religiosity and the deluded belief that God was behind me in this pursuit. My pursuit and ambition was to be like the many other "great" men I had read about in "Christian" books. All my earlier seasons of "pursuing God" were motivated by this selfish ambition.

I prayed so I could "preach with power." I tried to live a rigid life of "holiness" so I could someday have the "power of God" working through me doing "miracles." Oh how I wanted to walk into a room full of people and have them fall down because the power of God was so strong on my life. This same man who is now so gloriously free in Christ used to actually sleep on his hard bedroom floor to practice taking up his cross. I did this so I could be completely dead to self so that Jesus could live in me and do "miracles" through me. I would often set out to fast for long periods of time (always failing). I would carry my Bible with me everywhere (one of my many attempts to imitate Smith Wigglesworth). I'd visit nursing homes (which I hated). I would stand in front of Wal-Mart and pass out tracts (which I also hated). Many a morning I would rise before the sun and drive to my church to spend a couple hours in prayer (well actually it was part prayer, part sleeping and part daydreaming, and yes I hated this too).

While the people watching me may have concluded that I really loved the Lord, the truth was, very little, if any, love for the Lord could be found in my life. This was nothing more than my attempt to imitate all the men I had been reading about so I could someday be like them.

During this time in my life, I did everything except read the Bible for what it really said. I failed to see God for who he really was. I failed to give my obedience to him from a heart of love. The obedience (or what I thought to be obedience) that I was giving to him was only given as a work. It was only given as a man who was hoping to be paid back for it. I thought that if I did "such and such" for God, then God would do "such and such" for me.

In addition to this great evil of seeking "spiritual" recognition and power, there was still another evil at work in my life.

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As I grew up in this world, I often felt like a nobody. One thorn in my side was the fact that my parents always struggled

financially. When other kids had the name brand clothes, I was wearing no name hand-me-downs. Even though our lack of money bothered me, the reality was that even if we'd been "well off," I'd still been out of place. I was the kid who was usually picked last, or at least, close to last. No matter how hard I tried, it seemed I could be good at nothing. So when I saw the possibility of rewards and recognition in heaven, I followed hard after them. I wanted to be the one in heaven whom others envied. I was going to make sure that those who were above me according to this world's standards would be below me in the eternal. I decided to sacrifice my life in this world so that I could have a better life than most in the next world. And so began many years of self effort to take the devil's evil vanity of things and self recognition into the eternal.

Along with the evil of these spiritualized sins, I also paid little attention to other sins. For the most part, I was unaware of my tendency to gossip, slander other, dishonor my parents, and commit many other less blatant (in man's opinion) sins.

I have said all this to illustrate that even though I'd resist some the devil's obvious sins, I was still loyal to his kingdom and had yet to come to a place where I despised everything that his evil kingdom stood for. I had yet to turn my heart and eyes toward the great God of the universe. I had not yet given God my sincere loyalty and devotion. The fact that I resisted certain sin was in no way evidence that I was loyal to God. No. My resistance to obvious sin had nothing to do with love for God. Instead, resistance to sin was only motivated from my own selfish fear of how the sin would affect me in regards to my own vain quest for spiritual power and eternal rewards. I did not resist sin because I cared about how it would affect others. Nor did I resist sin because I cared about how it would affect God. I only resisted sin from concern of how it would ultimately affect me. Without fully knowing it, I was a selfish beast; an ugly and yet accurate reflection of the devil to whom I rightfully belonged.

Thankfully, my loyalty to his kingdom did not last forever. Through the wonderful mercy of the one that I can now call "Father," I began to awake from my slumber. Though the darkness I was in, I began to see the light of who he was and I came to a place where above all else I wanted to please him. I came to the place in which my loyalty completely shifted from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. It was now my desire, above all desires, to do his will and bring him pleasure. This new desire of mine would create in me the greatest conflict known to man. However, this great conflict would soon be resolved through the greatest news ever delivered to man . . . THE GOSPEL

Note: From this point on I am not necessarily relaying the gospel as I personally recall experiencing it, but instead, I will relay it as it is illustrated in the scripture.

The dilemma I faced with my new desire to please the Lord was the fact that I had no capacity to fulfill this desire. Even though I was now loyal to the kingdom of God, the fact remained that I was the rightful servant of the devil. No matter how hard I would try to resist sin, because of the devil's heavy whip on my back, I would most certainly give in.

Not only was I bound to sin, but I was also completely incapable of bearing any real fruit for God. I could not produce a single righteous act any more than a dead thorn bush can produce apples.

This great dilemma of being bound to sin and incapable of doing good is the great dilemma that Paul referred to in Romans 7:19... "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

While the Old Testament saints were to live and die in this great dilemma crying out "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death (Roman 7:24)?" The New Testament saints get to answer the question with joy and say, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 7:25)." It is the gospel that provides the saints with the victory over this dilemma....

Re: KTFB Update Letter (pt 2 of 4) - posted by PJ, on: 2006/2/4 15:22

When the savior entered the world a wonderful thing happened. For the first time since Adam's creation, a man was born into the world who did not belong to the devil. Since Christ came as the seed of God into woman, as apposed to the seed of Adam, the devil had no legal right to touch him.

Now I have a personal belief that until Jesus was mature and of full age, he was hedged in by God. What I mean is, until Christ was fully ready, God did not allow the devil any access to his son (of course this is just my belief and cannot be proved one way or the other). But when Jesus was mature and ready to be tested, God took the hedge down and gave the eagerly waiting devil his chance to ruin all hope.

If there was ever a time for the saints to hold their breath with fearful anticipation, the temptation of Christ was definitely such a time. At this moment in history, all the saints from before may have wanted to cover their eyes, afraid to watch what might happen next.

It was several thousand years before that the devil tempted Adam. Because of Adam's lack of faith towards God, he gave in to the devil's tempting. By making this decision to obey the devil's voice, he switched loyalty to the devil's kingdom, and as we know, brought himself as well as all of his children into the cruel bondage of this kingdom.

When Christ came, he was the first man born into the world since Adam who was not born as the devil's prisoner. Th

The world's only free man was the saint's only hope for deliverance from this cruel kingdom. If Christ's faith was to fail; if he would also give in to the devil's temptation, he too would become the rightful servant of the devil and the rightful recipient of death. If Christ were to sin, he too would be held forever in the chains of death receiving the just verdict for his sin. It was at the moment of temptation in which all the saints' hopes would either be confirmed or lost forever. Thank you God that they were confirmed.

Every temptation that the devil invented was overcome by the great faith of Christ. Even though Christ was truly tempted in his flesh, he knew that the devil's ways were the ways of death. He also recognized that his father's words were the ways of life. Even though his flesh cried out, "give in," his great faith (or trust) in his father caused him to stand strong. He illustrated his great faith in his father's words by using them to counteract every temptation the devil produced. And so, where the faith of Adam failed, the faith of Jesus stood firm.

Although we only read of three specific temptations in the gospels, through other New Testament scripture I get the impression that he underwent several times of testing during his years of ministry. While I can't be certain of that, one thing that I am certain of is the fact that God allowed Jesus to be tested until his faith was found to be solid and pure. He was tested until God had no doubt that Christ would be faithful forever.

Even though I can't be sure of this, I have a pretty strong feeling that the transfiguration of Jesus, as relayed in the gospels, was for the purpose of God showing the saints the perfection of Jesus. I believe the intense whiteness of his garment was to show that he had been tried and tested and found to be pure and true. I believe the transfiguration illustrated God's confidence and knowledge that the faith of Jesus would never fail. He was now ready to become a perfect sacrifice who would serve as a high priest forever. Since the true saints actually walk and live by the faith of Christ (I'll explain this later) it is wonderful to know that the faith that we walk in is sure. Because Jesus stood firm, I can live in complete assurance that I too can stand firm against the devil's temptations.

After the faith of Christ was thoroughly tested, after it proved to be pure and true, and after only a few short years of public ministry, the time came for Christ to be offered up as the perfect sacrifice.

In John 14:30-3, we see Jesus telling his disciples, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of the world cometh and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love my Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do."

Even though the disciples most likely did not fully understand this at the time, Jesus was telling them that the devil himself was coming to take him captive and put him to death. When Jesus said, "he hath nothing in me," he meant that the devil had absolutely no legal right to do this thing.

Hebrews 2:14 tells us that the devil is the one who holds the power of death. When Adam became the devil's servant, he and all of mankind were subject to this power that the devil held. All men born of Adam would eventually face this sword of death. However, since Jesus was not the legal servant of the devil, the devil had absolutely no right to touch him. The only way that the devil could deal the death blow to Christ would be for God the Father to take his hands off of him for a season and freely allow the devil to have his way, and this is exactly what was about to happen.

In verse thirty-one, Jesus let the disciples know that he agreed to what was about to happen because he loved the Father and was completely obedient to him.

And so, for a brief moment in time, the devil was allowed to freely have his way with Jesus. For a brief moment he unleashed years of stored up fury on this only living man who was free from the control of his kingdom. With God's full approval, the devil had his way with beatings, mockery, and painful torture until, with great delight, he pulled out the sword of death and dealt what he thought would be the death blow that would kill all hope for every saint held captive in his kingdom. However, in just a few short days, to the devil's dismay, from a borrowed tomb the hope of Israel would rise again. But no longer would he be just a hope, instead, he would rise to be an ever living reality... A true Christ... A true Messiah.

In the above described death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we have what Paul calls, in First Corinthians 15:1-4, "the gospel." But how does, or how did, this gospel affect me? What power truly exists in this gospel? How did the death, burial, and resurrection of another man take a once bound prisoner of the devil and set him free to serve God through the Holy Spirit? The answer to this relies upon the wonderful miracle of one being baptized into Christ.

When I say "baptized," I'm not talking about the symbolic expression of faith in which a believer is immersed in water (though I in no way diminish the importance of this expression), but instead, I'm talking about a wonderful miracle that happens when an individual literally becomes "one" with Christ. It is this miracle that gives the gospel its true power. Without the miracle of "baptism into Christ," the facts of his death, burial, and resurrection would have absolutely no effect in the believer's life.

Knowing from the very beginning of time that he would save man through the miracle of "baptism," God established the law (or rule) that would make this possible. We see the establishment of this law/rule in Genesis, chapter two. This I

aw/rule was established as Adam took Eve to be his wife.

Those familiar with this story know that God put Adam to sleep and took a rib from his side. From this rib of Adam, God made woman. When God brought the woman unto Adam, Adam made a declaration regarding marriage as he said, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh: and she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

One thing that is important to note here is that Adam was not making up his own rule. Instead, Adam was speaking on behalf of God (Matthew 19:4-6). What God was saying here was that just as Adam and Eve were truly one flesh (since Eve came from Adam's body), he would from that point on, through his own mysterious way, make one flesh of every married man and woman. Whenever a husband would take a wife unto himself, God would join them together so that they would no longer be two, but one. Everything that belonged to the husband, would also belong to the wife. In regards to authority, the wife would be under her husband, but in regards to name, they would be equal. How does this happen?

One cannot know. But what we do know is this: God made this rule, therefore, it will be as he says.

It is through this mystery of the marriage union that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ will effect the believers life. Just as Adam declared Eve to be "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh," Christ himself takes the sincere believer and declares them to be the same. This is what "baptism into Christ" really means. One who has been "baptized into Christ" has truly become one with him. This truth of being married to Christ is what Paul was conveying in Ephesians 5:22-32 (look closely at verses 30-32), as well, there are several other passages that refer to this truth.

As a believer becomes one with Christ, they have now become a partaker in the death, burial and resurrection. It is this glorious truth that gives the gospel its power to effect ones life.

Little did the devil realize, as he laughingly delivered the death blow to Christ, the joke was on him. For within the death of Christ, God had a plan of incredible wisdom.

1st Corinthians 2:8 tells us that if the devil had understood Gods wonderful plan, then he would have in no way crucified the Lord of Glory. However, as it was, the devil in his ignorance played a leading roll in God's plan (Oh how he must kick himself now). In the devil's haste to crucify and rid himself of this thorn in his side, he failed to realize that his death blow could have no lasting effect on Christ without the presence of sin. While the devil delivers the death blow, it is mans sin that forever keeps him in the chains of death, for this is the just verdict of God. However, when Jesus died, he did not have any sin to be punished for. This freedom from sin enabled God to raise him back to life again. In fact, to have not raised Jesus from the dead would have been unrighteous. So God, with great joy and complete legal correctness, raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus was once again declared to be the Son of God. He was once again given the nature of his father (the Holy Spirit). Forever he would now be a Son of God.

If you really take a look at what happened you will realize that Jesus was the first man born again. He was first declared to be the Son of God at his baptism. This declaration was then followed by his death and resurrection. Upon his resurrection he was once again declared by God to be the Son of God (Hebrews 1:5). He went from life, to death, back to life. He was truly born again. And even though his second birth was not a necessity for his own salvation (for he was sinless and alive to God during his first life on earth), it is only through his second birth that I can be born again with him.

Through my baptism into Christ, just as Christ was crucified, I was crucified. Just as Christ went to hell, I too went to hell. Finally, as Christ was raised from the dead and was declared to be the Son of God, I too have been raised and declared a son of God. Upon my resurrection with Christ, I too was born again. I was first born into the world as a spiritually dead servant of sin, but after my death with Christ, I, through his resurrection, was born again into the kingdom of God.

It is my baptism into Christ that set me free from both the penalty of sin and the power of sin...

When I was born into this world the first time, it was as a son of Adam. As a son of Adam, I belonged rightfully to the devil. I was to be his prisoner for life. Upon death, I would be free from his service, however I would now have to pay the determined penalty for all my acts of disobedience - eternal death. This is the terrible cycle of all mankind, and yet, this is the cycle that Christ came and broke. By my baptism into him, I was set free from this cycle of sinful bondage and death. As I was baptized into Christ I went to death with him. As I died with him a couple of great things happened. For one, the penalty for my sin was paid for within his death. By my death with Christ, I, through the body of Christ, satisfied the verdict of death that God pronounced upon me.

In my salvation, God in no way became unrighteous by simply overlooking my sins. Christ did die and pay the full price for his sins, however, he died and paid this price, not with his own body, but instead, with the body and blood of Christ. Since I was baptized into Christ, my debt was paid through his body.

This paying of my sin debt is wonderful news, and yet, it is only half of what was accomplished by his death. The other half of what was accomplished is just as glorious as the first half. The second thing that came as a result of Christ's death on the cross is my freedom from the devil's bondage and the sin that comes with it. When I died with Christ, upon the moment of my death, I became completely free from the devil's grip.

Although Paul speaks in terms of the law, as apposed to the devil's kingdom, I first understood this by his writing in Ro

mans 7:1-4 – (1) “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? (2) For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. (3) So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (4) Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

It was with great joy that I first discovered the source of my newfound freedom from sin. I was finally free from the power of sin because I died to it. As a dead man it was completely impossible for the devil to control me in any way. Christ delivered me from my years of terrible bondage through his death on the cross.

How wonderful it is to be completely free from the power of sin. When I say “free,” I’m not talking about my short term victories in the past. Those short term victories were nothing more than the makings of my own strength and effort. Those seasons of short “victory” were seasons of constant misery as I strained with all my effort to not give in. Those seasons of “victory” would always end in the same way – defeat. However, this is no longer the case. This which I have been walking in for the past couple of years has been final and peaceful. Though the devil has the power to tempt me, he has lost the power to force me to yield.

I can honestly and with great joy say, within the past couple of years since my conversion, I have not yielded to a single temptation of the devil knowing that it would be against my father’s will. I can also honestly say that I don’t struggle to overcome sin. Once the Lord reveals an area in which he is displeased, it is finished.

In a deceptive world in which we’re told that this is impossible, most would call me arrogant or puffed up by self righteous thoughts. But I can honestly and humbly say, I am not. This is simply the power of the cross at work in my life. I am completely aware of all my past failures. I know all too well that I had no victory on my own. This wonderful place I am now in has nothing to do with my self (apart from my desire to please the Lord) and everything to do with Christ.

The death of Christ and what it has accomplished in the lives of his followers is truly wonderful, and yet, it is only half of the story. The death and burial of Christ would have little meaning in the lives of his followers without the resurrection. While one who has died with Christ is free from sin, it is the resurrection that provides the power to live unto God. It is the resurrection that transforms one who is a dead, fruitless bush into a living plant capable of producing good fruit unto God.

In his past life, this man who writes to you now used to try with all his strength to produce fruit unto God. I’d read the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians, chapter five, and determine that I would produce these fruits. I’d try to be good. I’d try to be kind. I’d try to be patient. But all of my efforts were just that - my efforts. This was my own work that would always end in failure. It was not a natural out-flow, but instead, a hard effort that was against my nature. Instead of producing good fruit that would be a blessing to others, I would only prick people with my sinful thorns. The reason for this was simple; as a servant of the devil, I was nothing more than a dead thorn bush, utterly incapable of bearing any fruit unto God. But thanks be to God, the good I was once incapable of producing now flows through me just as natural as a river flows down hill. The fruits of the Spirit I used to beat my head to produce are now existent in my life apart from any effort of my own. What is the source of this wonderful change? - THE RESURRECTION.

While the death of Christ removed the thorns from this dead bush, it was the resurrection that breathed life into it and gave me power to produce fruit unto God. And how did the resurrection accomplish this? Once again the answer relies on “baptism into Christ.”

When God raised Jesus from the dead, he once again declared him to be his Son. As the Son of God he was given the Spirit, or, as you could say, the nature of his father. The Holy Spirit of God that was given to him was the true proof (or birthmark) of who he really was. Forevermore Christ would live as the Son of God, bearing the true inner likeness of God, through the Spirit of God. As one who has been baptized into Christ, I joined him in his resurrection and I joined him in his reception of the Holy Spirit. Through the body of Christ, I too have been made alive and have been declared by God to be a son of God with the nature of God (the Holy Spirit) existent in my life. Through the presence of his Spirit in my life, I now bear true fruit unto God just as natural as an apple tree bears apples. There is no longer any striving on my part. I now simply live my life as a child of God through his Spirit that is in me.

And so dear reader, there you have it; the great and glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul summarized this gospel by saying, “I’ve been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...(Galatians 2:20).” He also summarized the glorious results of this gospel when he said, “therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away (through the crucifixion); behold all things are become new (through the resurrection)(2nd Corinthians 5:17).” What a joy it is to be a completely new man in Christ! Thank you Father for your wonderful wisdom revealed in the gospel.

Having personally experienced this wonder working power of the gospel in my life, it grieves my soul whenever I hear a

nyone suggest that the dilemma described by Paul in Romans, chapter seven, could possibly be a post-Christian dilemma (For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Romans 7:19). To suggest that Paul was saying all of this from his present stand point as a Christian is more than just a great error. No, such a statement is not just a great error; it is antichrist! Let me explain...

Although my understanding of exact word meanings is very limited, I have come to understand that the words "Christ" and "Messiah" are pretty synonymous with "deliverer". The coming Messiah, or Christ, for whom all the Old Testament saints hoped and waited, would be their deliverer. That which he would deliver them from is clear in Matthew 1:21... "And he shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

The coming Christ would be the one who would set the saints free from the devils bondage to sin.

In addition to setting the saints free, Zacharias says in Luke 1:74-75 that he would bring the saints into a place of true holiness and righteousness (the state in which a believer can produce true fruit unto God). With all this in mind, it seems clear to me that when someone suggest that Paul's great dilemma was written from a post-Christ point of view, they are in reality denying the true work that Christ came and did on the cross. They are also denying the power that is in his resurrection.. To say that one who has been baptized into Christ will still struggle to do good and struggle not to sin is to deny the very prophecies that were given in the verses just mentioned (Matthew 1:21 and Luke 1:74-75). One who makes such a claim as this is in reality denying that Jesus is who he claimed to be. One who makes such a statement is making a statement is truly denying that Jesus is the Christ (deliverer).

1st John 2:22 says... Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

This idea that one who is truly baptized into Christ can still be a sinner in nature is lie. This is an antichrist doctrine. It is a lie invented and spread by the devil himself with the hope of keeping those who truly desire to please the Lord deceived and locked in his prison without any hope of escape.

For too many miserable years I believed an anti-Christ message. I believed, "Christians aren't perfect, they're just forgiven." I believed that although we should do our best not to sin, complete victory over sin was not possible until we reached heaven. I was taught and believed that the grace of God was that which overlooked all my failures on account of the blood of Jesus. The pitiful gospel I used to believe was one that left me forever with the belief that I would always struggle with sin, and yet, at the same time, it gave me a false peace with God and the hope of eternal life. As I stand in the light and the power of the true gospel, the old gospel (which is not a gospel at all) I used to believe has grown increasingly worthless and pitiful. The false gospel was dead and useless, but the true gospel is alive and powerful.

As much as I hate to, I'm going to veer off for just a moment and clarify what I mean when I say that I am free from sin. By "sin", I mean clear conscious acts that I know displease the Lord. Once something is clear to me that it displeases the Lord, it will not be consciously repeated in my life. I have no fear of failing God by doing something I know displeases him. While the devil still has the power to tempt me, he has absolutely no power to compel me to give in. While every action that flows from me may not yet be perfect (I'll talk more about this later), I am confident that I have not offended my Father by knowingly disobeying him. Once again, this has absolutely nothing to do with my own will power or self righteousness, but this freedom and confidence is completely to the glory and praise of God and his gospel.

If the gospel which I have just proclaimed is the truth, then why do the multitude of so called teachers and preachers proclaim a different gospel? Why would anyone dare say that Romans, chapter seven is a post-Christian dilemma? How could anyone claim that the Christian can be both sinner and saint?

The reason people declare such falsehood is simply because it agrees with their own experience. Their own personal experience has taught them that even though they believe in Jesus they still sin. Therefore they conclude, based upon their own experience, that "Christians" must still be sinners. However, in light of the gospel that I have just shared one must now ask, why is this their experience? With such a real, wonderful, and powerful gospel available, how could any one who claimed to belong to Christ be still entangled with sin?

Answer: This is their experience because they do not truly belong to Christ. Those who have not experienced the freedom from sin available through the gospel have not because they are not baptized into Christ. Since they are not "one" with Christ, they have not experienced the benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection.

This fact that one has not been baptized into Christ is the result of one's own faithlessness toward God and his Son. Until one turns to God with real faith, they will never experience the power of union with Christ. Until true loyalty is given to the maker of the universe, one can have no hope of entering into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. I will do my best to explain...

Of the few recent revelations that the Lord has given me into his word, the one I am about to share is the most incredible. It is a very clear truth of scripture, and at the same time, I have never heard it spoken in my life. As I prepare to share this, I have a fear that I am casting forth pearls only to have them trampled on. However, I am willing to take this chance with the hope that one of these pearls land in the hands of one who truly has "ears to hear".

Note: What I am about to share relies heavily on some exact wording of the King James Version. I'll make my defense for this later.

In Romans 1:16-17, we read, (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

It is verse seventeen in which I want to focus. To paraphrase a little, this verse tells us that in the gospel a righteousness from God is given to man from faith to faith. The first part of this verse tells us that the righteousness that would come to man is through the gospel. It is only through the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that one can receive the true righteous nature of God. While the first part of this verse tells us what is revealed or given by God through the gospel, the second part of this verse is a reference to how it is received by man, which is "from faith to faith."

Except for these past couple of months, I paid little attention to the line "from faith to faith." I would always skim over this verse without putting much thought into it. I just assumed that it was a reference (as I had been taught) to a believer's growing faith. However, in the past few months, as I have come to a better understanding of what faith really is, a sudden light has shined on this verse. Through this new "light," I have come to understand that this is in no way a reference to a growing faith. No. This is not a reference to a growing faith, but instead, it is a reference to two completely separate faiths. The line, "from faith to faith," is a reference of going from one kind of faith to a completely different, second kind of faith. The righteousness of God is revealed as one moves from one kind of faith into another kind of faith, hence the line, "from faith to faith."

Though you won't find this in plain sight, these two faiths are referred to in scripture as "the faith of Abraham," and "the faith of Christ." With this explanation in mind, let's look at Romans 1:17 again...

"For therein (in the gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith (of Abraham) to faith (of Christ)."

Before one can receive the righteousness that is made available through the gospel. One must have the faith of Abraham. The faith of Abraham will allow them to enter into the faith of Christ. It is only as one enters in to the faith of Christ that one will receive the righteousness of God. Without the faith of Abraham, one will not be able to enter into the faith of Christ by which the righteousness of God is given. (Please stick with me!)

The "faith of Abraham" that I have referred to is a faith that is of our own making. Having this "faith of Abraham" is the only part we play in our salvation. If we have the "faith of Abraham," we will most certainly enter into the "faith of Christ."

Unlike the "faith of Abraham," which is of our own making, the "faith of Christ" is completely apart from ourselves and our own effort. And as I have said before, it is only when we enter into the "faith of Christ" that we will receive the promised righteousness of God. To fully understand this, as well as the significance of what I am saying, let's first look at what faith actually is...

Re: KTFB Update (pt 3 of 4) - posted by PJ, on: 2006/2/4 15:26

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

My whole life I have heard this verse used to define "faith." However, this verse is not a definition of faith, but instead, this verse is a proclamation concerning the absolute necessity and importance of faith in regards to receiving anything from God. This verse is saying that I have no chance of receiving anything I hope for from God if I don't have faith.

Faith, as described here, is not believing in that which you hope for, but instead, faith is the one thing that must be present before God will regard you as a worthy recipient of his promises. For example: The promise that I now hope for is the promise of the new earth. Without genuine faith in God, God will in no way consider me as one who is worthy to receive this promise. I can believe in the promise of the new earth with all my heart, but unless God can see that I have genuine faith towards him, I will have no real hope of receiving this promise. However, if God does see faith present in my life, he is moved by my faith and he in turn includes me as a recipient of his promises.

Through this explanation, I hope you can see faith is not simply believing in the promise, but instead, faith is the condition that must be met before one can receive the promise? It is our faith towards God that gives our hope substance. Or you could say, it is the faith we have towards God that makes our hope a real possibility.

With the importance and necessity of faith given in the first verse of Hebrews, chapter eleven, the writer goes on to later define what faith truly is. We see this definition in verse six...

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

Faith is defined in this verse as believing that "God is." This means that faith is believing "God is" every thing that God truly is...

Faith is: believing that God is the maker of this world. Faith is: believing that God is all wise and that he knows what is

best. Faith is: believing that God's pleasure and glory is the purpose of all creation. Faith is: believing that God is good. Faith is: believing that God is etc, etc, etc.

If one has genuine faith towards God, then that person will respond appropriately to who God is. One who truly recognizes who God is will completely turn their hearts towards him and pledge their complete, sincere, and unwavering loyalty and obedience to him.

One who has faith will recognize that they were created to live for the pleasure and joy of God. This person will bow their knee to the Lord so that his will may be had in their life.

One who has faith will trust in the wisdom of God. They will willingly put aside their own understanding and humbly and eagerly submit to his word as they fully recognize and trust he knows what is best. Faith is not just giving consent to certain facts, but instead, it is a heart that is fully submitted and devoted to God.

When God recognizes genuine faith in an individual, he is pleased. It is only by faith that one can please the Lord and without faith it is impossible to please him. One without faith can have no hope of receiving anything from God.

It was the first man Adam who first broke faith with God. Instead of simply taking God at his word, for a moment in time he trusted the words of a liar. This act of faithlessness brought himself as well as all his offspring into the bondage of the liar he trusted. From this point on, all men would be born into the kingdom of darkness. However, a man's birth into this kingdom does not require a man to be loyal to it in his heart.

At the fall of man, God did not remove his testimony from the earth. Even though God cursed the earth, he did not take away his testimony from it. God left plenty of beauty in which man could see the work of a good and wonderful God. God left a witness to himself in which man could see him and recognize him and turn their hearts towards him. Those who recognized his testimony and turned their hearts towards him were the people of faith. These were the people who—according to Hebrews 11:2—obtained a good report.. Even though they were still in the devil's bondage, their hearts were in no way loyal to him. These few faithful saints had turned their hearts and loyalty to the living God.

While the vast majority of mankind loved the devil's vanities and were happy to stay in his kingdom, the saints saw the emptiness of it all and looked to the one who had true riches. Whenever someone turned their heart to the Lord in this manner, God would take great pleasure in that person. Even though the person of faith was subject to sin and had no capacity to do a single act of goodness, God was pleased with them because of their sincere desire to please him.

There were many Old Testament people who had this "faith that pleased the Lord," however, the most notable in scripture was Abraham. I personally don't believe that this was because Abraham's faith was greater than any other Old Testament saint. Instead, I believe that Abraham is the most notable because his life provides the best picture of what faith really is.

In the life of Abraham we see unwavering obedience and trust in God. This is first seen when he obeyed God and left his home country with no knowledge of where he was going. Next, we see this as he believed God regarding the promise of his child. Finally, and most notably, we see this in his willingness to sacrifice his child.

As for myself, I do not believe that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son was anything that surprised God. I don't believe that this test was for the purpose of establishing God's confidence in the faith of Abraham. Instead, I believe that the primary thing accomplished through this act of obedience was that through it, all could now see what faith really was.

Through the example of Abraham, I know that faith is simple trusting and obeying God. By his life and example I know that faith trusts God's judgements, and faith leaves no room for man's understanding to question his judgements.

Abraham's faith was in no way an extraordinary faith. The faith Abraham displayed was simple, basic faith. As well, "Abraham's faith" is not something spectacular that you grow into as you walk with God. Instead, having a faith like Abraham is the very starting point of one's walk and relationship with God. Apart from a faith like Abraham, one cannot hope to ever enter into the saving grace provided by the gospel.

During the life of Abraham, God gave him a two part promise. Each part was similar to one another, and at the same time, they were also very distinct. We can see the first part of this promise at the very beginning of our introduction to Abraham. We find this introduction to Abraham in Genesis, chapter twelve.

As the Lord calls Abraham from his homeland to a place not yet known to Abraham, God promises to make Abraham's name great, and he promises to make him a blessing. God then caps off this part of the promise in verse three, when he says, "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

God would give Abraham the second part of this promise many years later. It was given after Abraham showed obedience by preparing to sacrifice Isaac. After this great act of obedience, God added to the first part of the promise and said, "in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed."

We can see God first promised that in "Abraham" all nations of the earth would be blessed. God then promised that in "Abraham's seed" all nations of the earth would be blessed.

I have had a good understanding of the second part of this promise for quite some time. Through Paul's letter to the Galatians, I have understood that the second part of this promise was spoken in regards to Christ. I have understood that Christ is the "seed" to which this passage refers (Galatians 3:16). With this understanding, it has for a long while been clear to me that those who are baptized into Christ are the blessed people to whom this promise refers.

Though the second part of this has for a long time been clear, the first part of this promise has been hid from me until recently.

Based upon the gospel I shared earlier, I could easily understand how someone was blessed "in" Christ (the seed). But what I couldn't grasp was how someone could be blessed "in" Abraham (for this is what God promised when he said to Abraham, "in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed"). While I clearly understood the role that Christ played in my salvation, I could not figure out what role Abraham could possibly play. Certainly someone couldn't be baptized "into" Abraham as one is baptized "into" Christ. And even if one could be "baptized into Abraham," what good would it possibly do? For Abraham was a man subject to the same fate as every other sinner. Baptism into Abraham would accomplish nothing. And so, for a long while I would remain blind as to how one could be blessed "in" Abraham.

Thankfully, my blindness to this did not last forever. Little by little, the Lord has opened my mind to the meaning of this truth. Today, I can finally say that I understand how someone is "blessed in" Abraham.

My confusion, it turns out, had always been with the word "in". Since I understood that "to be in" Christ meant to be literally immersed in his body, I would try to use the word "in" in the same way regarding Abraham. This created confusion, for as I stated earlier, I didn't believe that someone could be baptized into Abraham as one is baptized into the body of Christ. And so, the confusion over this word kept me from completely understanding the meaning of being "in" Abraham.

But finally, as the Lord began to open my eyes as to what faith actually was, and as I began to understand the absolute importance of it, Abraham's part grew increasingly clear.

Over time, I began to understand the difference between the two "in"s as used in God's promises to Abraham. While the "in" in the second part of the promise is a literal "in" (as one is literally baptized into Christ), the "in" in the first part of the promise is not literal. Instead, the "in" in the first part of the promise means: in the likeness of.

Even though one cannot be "in" Abraham, as one is "in" Christ, one can be in the likeness of Abraham in regards to his faith. And so, what God was saying to Abraham when he said, "in thee shall all nation of the earth be blessed", was that everyone who had faith like Abraham would be blessed as Abraham was going to be blessed.

This is the exact idea that Paul was touching on in Galatians 3:6-9— (6) Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (7) Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (8) And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (9) So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

It is verse eight that provides the greatest clarity into what I am saying

Since God knew that the heathen would be justified by faith, he told Abraham that "in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed." By saying this, God was telling Abraham that he was pleased with his faith and yet this pleasure would not be only extended towards Abraham. This pleasure God felt towards Abraham would be extended to every living soul who would have genuine faith as Abraham had faith. Just as Abraham believed and was justified before God, the heathen who would believe in God as Abraham believed would also be justified. You can reduce this promise to a simpler form by removing the reference to Abraham and adding the word "faith" in his place. The end result is this— "In (or by) faith shall all nations of the earth be blessed."

Faith like Abraham's is the only thing that God requires from any one. It is pleasing to God when ever someone looks to him with complete trust, obedience, and loyalty. Without the "faith of Abraham" it is impossible to please God, and it is also impossible to enter into the "faith of Christ"...

While it is a person's faith like Abraham that pleases the Lord, a person cannot be saved by this, "faith like Abraham," alone. If Abraham's faith alone could have saved him, God would have had no need to send a savior. But as it was, Abraham's faith did not save him. Instead, it was Abraham's faith that made him a candidate who would receive the salvation to come.

Even though God was pleased with Abraham's faith, the fact remained that Abraham was a bond servant of the devil. The fact also remained that Abraham was completely incapable of doing anything that was truly good. Despite his faith towards God, in his present state, Abraham was in no way fit to receive the inheritance of the new earth. This "new earth" is the promised inheritance for all of God's true children, and it is also the dwelling place of righteousness (2nd Peter 3:13).

While I may have vaguely eluded to this earlier, let me now plainly say; righteousness is not just the state in which one's sins and bondage to sin is removed. Instead, through my understanding of scripture, as well as my own personal experience, it seems clear to me that the righteousness that comes through the gospel is the positive input of God's good

and loving nature into one's life. Someone who has received the righteousness of God is not simply someone who just doesn't sin, but rather, this person is one who is filled with the goodness and love of God. A person who has received the righteousness of God will be a person through whom the goodness and love of God flow naturally.

As mentioned before, the new earth, in which the saints will someday live, is the dwelling place (or home) of righteousness. It's the presence of God's righteousness that is going to make the new earth a truly incredible place to live. Everyone there will be a great blessing and joy to others as they forever bear the righteous birthmark of their father. How wonderful it will be as every single person is as concerned for others as much as they are concerned for themselves. What a joy it is to know that not a single ounce of selfishness will exist to disturb this wonderful place of peace and love.

Without the birthmark of righteousness, one will not be allowed to enter into this eternal place. For without the righteous nature of God, one could not be a blessing to others. Instead, such a person would only be a burden. Such a person as this is in no way fit for this wonderful place, and yet, despite his faith towards God, Abraham, without a savior, was just such a person.

Even though Abraham believed in God, he did not have the righteousness of God present in his life. Despite his faith, he was still subject to times of failure. Despite his faith, he could still be from time to time a thorn in the lives of others. His faith did not change the facts of who he really was. He could have no hope of entering into the new earth unless a way was made for this dead branch to become a living, fruit bearing plant.

No, Abraham's faith, on its own, could not save himself nor anyone else who had his same faith. True salvation would only come as Abraham and all his children (the people of faith) would move from their own faith and enter into the faith of Christ. It is only as one goes from faith (of Abraham) to faith (of Christ) that they will then be saved.

Since the day Adam entered into the devil's bondage, his faith and the faith of his children has been tainted with weakness and failure. Because of these failures, all men have been condemned to death. Despite God's pleasure and happiness he felt with Abraham and those like him, he could not ignore their sin, nor could he go against his preset sentence for sin—death. On their own these people of faith had no hope. Without a savior, they would forever be separated from the God they loved and from the God who loved them.

While Adam and his children were burdened with weakness and failure, Christ was not. Christ was not the offspring of Adam, but was instead, the direct seed of God. Since Christ did not belong to the devil's kingdom, his faithfulness was not at all effected by the devil's driving force. The devil could not force Christ to sin as he did to every other man born into his kingdom. The devil could not taint the faithfulness of Christ by forcing him to commit an unfaithful act. This does not mean that Christ was incapable of sin. It just means that he couldn't be forced to. If Christ were to sin, it would have been an act based upon rebellion to the Father as apposed to simply yielding to the unmerciful blows of the devil's whip. Whether Christ would stand or fall was all up to him. It all came down to the sincerity of his faith towards his Father. If Christ's faith was sincere, he would most certainly stand, if it wasn't, he'd most certainly fall.

Thanks be to God, we know that Christ stood strong. The faith of Christ did not fail. By his faith, he never once sinned against his Father. Because of his faithfulness, God was able to raise him from the dead. Because of the faith of Christ, God was able to once again place his righteous Spirit inside his Son.

As a coheir with Christ, the saints receive all that Christ has received as a result of his faith. The Holy Spirit that is in me, is only in me because Christ was faithful. Because Christ was faithful to the Father, I am today a child of God. Because Christ was faithful, I have the sure hope of inheriting the new earth. Everything that I have is a direct result of the faithfulness (or faith) of Christ. And this is exactly what is meant when Paul says that he has a righteousness that is by (or through, or because of) the faith of Christ. Let's look at such a passage...

Philippians 3:8-9 — "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

And so, this is what it means to go from faith (of Abraham) to faith (of Christ). For a man to truly be saved, for a man to receive the righteousness of God, he must enter into Christ (baptism as described earlier). As one enters into Christ and becomes "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh", he becomes a coheir with Christ and will receive every benefit that was given to Christ as a result of his (Christ's) faith.

Earlier I said that it is not a person's faith like Abraham's that actually saves them. While this statement is true, it in no way diminishes the importance of one's own faith. Even though it is not a person's faith that actually saves them, it is through the presence of one's own personal faith that they enter into the saving faith of Christ. It is only for those who are of faith like Abraham that God made this way of salvation. God's plan of salvation will only be effective for those who truly fear him. One who fears the Lord as Abraham feared the Lord will most certainly be saved by the faithfulness of Christ.

Just as a faithful saint will certainly be saved by the salvation that is in Christ, it is equally certain that those who do not have this same faith will not be saved. Those who do not have faith like Abraham have no hope of salvation. No matter how much they confess or believe the facts of the gospel, if they have no true desire to serve the Lord, such confession

and belief is useless.

Many people are eager to be saved— that is to say, they want to go to heaven instead of going to hell— but unfortunately, they have no real faith towards God. Wanting the gift of eternal life, these same faithless people come to Christ. Despite the lies that have been spread throughout the world, these faithless people have no hope of being accepted by Christ. We can witness and learn this truth in the book of John....

Re: KTFB Update Letter (pt 4 of 4) - posted by PJ, on: 2006/2/4 15:30

In John 6:53-58, we can read the words of Jesus as he tells some of his followers that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood. Whether they understood what Jesus was trying to say and just couldn't accept it, or whether they just didn't understand at all is a mystery to me for now. However, it is clear that this teaching caused many of his current disciples to turn away from him. This "turning away" in no way surprised Jesus, for verse sixty-four tells us that he already knew those who did not truly believe.

In response to the doubt Jesus saw in the hearts of these soon to be deserters, Jesus said; "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father (John 6:65)."

For the longest time, I completely misunderstood this passage. I used to believe that this passage had everything to do with election and predestination. I used to feel sorry for these defectors who just couldn't handle the words of Christ. It seemed to me, due to no fault of their own they were not allowed to come to Christ. I believed that these poor people would be eternally lost simply because they were not the lucky ones chosen by God.

Even though I do not yet affirm or deny the idea of predestination (as we think of predestination), I can say with certainty that this passage has nothing to do with that idea. Yes, God did prevent them from truly accepting the words of Christ. And yes, those who could accept his words, could only do so because God allowed them to. However, none of this was simply an effect with no cause other than God's random choice. No, it is now clear that the effect of these people not coming to Christ was the result of their own cause. These people could not come to Christ because God did not allow them to; God did not allow them to because they had no true faith towards himself. These people did not first have the "faith of Abraham", and so, they could not enter into the "faith of Christ".

This conclusion that I have reached is not without merit. Instead, this very truth is taught by Christ himself in an earlier part of this same chapter (six). Let's look at verses 45 through 46...

"(44) No man can come to me, except the father draw him: And I will raise him up at the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, And the shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

First, Jesus says that no man can come to him except the Father draw him. However, he goes on to tell us who these people are whom the Father chooses to draw to him when he says: "Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

Through this passage it is apparent, those who are able to come to Christ are the same people who have first "learned of the Father." It is those who have turned their hearts towards God in true faith who will be able to come to Christ. It is those like Abraham— those who listen to and believe every single word of the Father— whom God will bring to the salvation of the world.

Once these people of faith are drawn by the Father to Christ; just as they believe in and desire to obey the Father, they will also eagerly embrace the Son and cling to his each and every word. Now the only question that remains is this: Will the Son accept the one who has come to him?

Once God the Father brings someone to the Son, it is now up to the Son as to whether or not he will accept this person or reject them. Just as a husband has the right to decide whether or not he will accept a bride, Christ has the right to decide whether or not he will take someone to be one with himself through baptism. However, a true believer in God need not to fear rejection, for Christ promises that he will not reject or cast out anyone whom the Father draws to him (John 6:37)

Neither the Father nor the Son play the whole role in the salvation of man. Instead, they both work together and they both play an important part. As the father and Son cooperate together, the people of faith are brought into the wonderful place of salvation. Through the words of Jesus found in John 5:21-23, we can begin to get a picture of how they work together...

"(21) For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. (22) For the Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgement to the Son: (23) That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

In verse twenty-one Jesus says that he quickeneth whom he will, and then in verse twenty-two, he goes on to say that the Father judgeth no man, but hath left all judgement unto the Son.

I am pretty confident that the "judgement", to which Christ is referring, is not the final judgement of man at the end of the world. Instead, I believe that the "judgement" he is referring to is the judgement that Christ uses when deciding whether or not he will take someone to be one with himself (through "baptism" as described earlier).

What Jesus is saying is that the Father does not force him to take anyone into himself, but that the Father allows the Son

n to judge for himself as to whether or not he will accept someone to be his bride. God allowed this to be (as seen in verse 23), so that all men would be sure to honor the Son just as they have honored the Father.

So in light of what has just been stated, we can see a process that goes something like this: First, man places their faith (like Abraham) in God. Second, as God sees the sincerity of this faith, he brings them to the Son. Next, those who are brought to the Son, recognize the Son for who he is. As they recognize the Son, they will in turn, with all sincerity, give the Son the honor, the respect, and the obedience that he deserves as the Son of God. Finally, Christ makes the decision as to whether or not he will take this person to be, "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh". If Christ accepts this person, this person will then be baptized into his own flesh. As one who is baptized into Christ, this person now has the same name and position as Christ. God now sees this person as he sees Christ himself. Just as Christ is the Son of God, this person is now a son of God. Just as Christ is going to receive the inheritance of the new earth, this person will be a coheir with Christ. This person, in regards to position, will be under the authority of Christ (just as a wife is under the authority of her husband), but in name, he is equal. This person has truly become "one" with Christ. This person now lives and exists in Christ.

While it is Christ who gets to make the judgement whether to accept this person or not, no true believer in God should fear rejection. The true believer walking in the faith like Abraham has the complete confidence that, as stated in John 6:37, he will cast out no one whom the Father draws to himself.

While Christ has the authority to make his own judgement as to whom he accepts or rejects, he more than anything wants to do the will of his Father. Since it is the Father himself who brings someone to Christ, Christ would in no way reject someone against the Father's will. Instead, he will eagerly accept that person as his own so that the will of his Father may be accomplished (John 6:38-39).

The only people who should fear rejection, are those who try to come to Christ for their own selfish reasons. As there are many stories of men or women getting married for the sole purpose of obtaining another person's wealth, there are many who come to Christ just to take part in his riches. Seeking eternal life, they come to him and try to woo him with false words and works. However, Christ can not be fooled. He will only accept them who come to him in true faith; those who recognize him as Lord. He will accept no one who comes to him only to share in his inheritance. No, it is only those who love him for who he is that he will accept.

And there you have it! This is the reason (as mentioned many pages ago) why multitudes of people who claim to belong to Christ are stuck in bondage to sin. This is why a multitude of "teachers" proclaim that the Christian can be both a sinner in nature and a saint at the same time. Those who are locked in the bondage of sin are so bound simply because they have never been baptized into Christ. The fact that they have not been baptized into Christ is evidence that they have no genuine faith towards God.

One's current bondage to sin is evidence that one is only using the name of God and his Son with false motives. This bondage is evidence of one's misplaced loyalty.

Dear reader, do not be deceived by vain words. If you continue to sin on a regular basis, if you find that you keep doing that which you do not want to do, then rest assured: You are not in Christ!

I did not say this to judge. I did not say this in anger. I did not say this with a ounce of evil in my heart. I said this with the sincere hope of waking you up from this delusion that you may be in.

Let your struggle with sin serve as convincing evidence that your faith is not truly in God. Let this struggle serve to convince you that your motives in using the name of God are false. Unless you repent and truly turn your hearts towards God, you will forever remain an "outsider" who is trying to resist sin and serve God by your own efforts.

It is the faith of Abraham that ultimately brings someone to Christ. It is a faith that comes from our own personal recognition of who God is. It is by our own personal "faith like Abraham" that we are baptized into Christ, but once we are baptized into Christ, we cease to walk and live by our own faith and instead begin to walk and live by the faith of Christ.

Walking by the faith of Christ does not nullify my own personal faith. I still keep my own faith in God, but as one who is now in Christ, I no longer rely on the strength of my own faith. Instead, I now draw all my strength from his personal faithfulness to God. It is my personal faith that desires to please the Lord, however, it is through the steadfast faith of Christ that I can be sure that I will. While my own personal faith cries out, "please don't let me ever fail the Lord," the faith of Christ that I now live by ensures that I won't. Because I walk and live by the faith of Christ, I now have complete confidence that I will never turn back nor fail the Lord through disobedience or doubt.

When Jesus walked the earth, his faith was tried and tested over and over again. Yet, over and over again, his faith was found to be perfect. Through every temptation, Christ remained absolutely faithful to his Father. He was faithful to his Father's commands, as well, he was faithful to do his Father's will. It was the unwavering faith of Christ that ultimately led him to the Cross.

As I look at the life of Christ, as seen in the gospels, I am left with complete confidence that regardless of the test or temptation, Christ would remain faithful to his father. I am confident that Christ is now sitting by his father's side with a faith that will never fail. How wonderful it is to know that I now live my life through this strong, unwavering, perfect faith of Christ.

Christ!

Even though I have been freed from the power of sin through my baptism in to Christ's death, I am still tempted to sin by the devil. The devil wants nothing more than to lure me back into his dreadful kingdom. And so, from time to time the devil comes at me with various temptations. He knows that if he can cause me to willingly yield to him just a single time, he would then once again and forever have ownership of me. However, he is not the only one who knows this. I too know am very aware of this.

The writer of Hebrews has given me plenty of warning that if I willfully commit an act of disobedience from my present state of enlightenment and freedom, I will then be left with out any hope. Instead, I would be left to only dread my future day of judgement (Hebrews 10:26-27).

While this warning causes me to remain sober and alert in my walk with God, it in no way leaves me with a fear of making such a dreadful mistake. Even though I certainly walk with caution, I do not walk around scared. I have complete confidence that I can stand against any and every temptation that the devil brings my way. This confidence is not a confidence in my own personal faith, but instead, this is a confidence in the faith of Christ by which I walk. Since I am certain that the faith of Christ will never fail, I too am certain that I will not fail. As my own faith desires to stand strong, I do stand strong through the faith of Christ.

Any act of surrender to the devil's temptation at this point in my life, would be the result of a deliberate, faithless decision on my part. This act of failure would not be the result of some momentary weakness, but instead it would indicate the true state of my own heart. At this point in my life, such an act would indicate an evil heart that was truly unfit to have any part in the eternal inheritance. The faith of Christ will cease to be of help to me if such an evil heart arises in me (Hebrews 3:12 warns me to not let this happen).

The faith of Christ does not work in spite of someone's evil heart. Instead, the faith of Christ is only a benefit to those with a sincere, unwavering desire to please the Lord. As long as I continue to guard my heart and stay sincere towards God, I can be forever confident that, through the faith of Christ, I will stand strong. How wonderful it is to go from faith (of Abraham) to faith (of Christ)!

Walking and living by the faith of Christ is not an invention of my own, but instead it is a wonderful reality taught by Paul himself. This is what he meant when he wrote, "I am Crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

In addition to this passage, there are several other additional passages in which Paul refers to the "faith of Christ". These include: Romans 3:22; Galatians 2:16 & 3:22; Ephesians 3:12; and Philippians 3:9.

Now, if you are reading anything other than the King James Version, you will most likely see nothing regarding the faith "of" Christ. If you are reading any other version, you are probably scratching your head, wondering where in the world I am coming up with all of this, for all you can see in these passages is "faith in" Christ.

I have no desire to be considered as one who is in the "King James Only" camp. From all my experience, it seems that most who are in this camp have a ugly stench of legalism about them. For many, their devotion to the King James Version is just another way in which they can be more "righteous" than others. In addition to having the smell of legalism, many of them also come across as ignorant as they use baseless arguments and seem to have no knowledge concerning the history of Bible translations. However, with all this said, I must now admit that I myself have become very committed to the original King James Version..

When I first started my journey towards the salvation in which I now live, it was only the New International Version that I read. For several months after my Romans Eight experience, I remained faithful to this version. Throughout this time in which I was committed to the NIV, I had a mistaken assumption that it was a "word for word" translation. I had great confidence in this version until I just happened to one day pick up an original King James Bible and read a Psalm. As I read this Psalm in King James, it seemed to say something completely different than the NIV. I wouldn't have given this much thought except it seemed to say something that made a lot of sense in light of my conversion experience and the understanding I had at that time. As I reread the passage in the NIV I couldn't help but think that its translators had completely missed it.

Upon noticing this difference, I started checking into translations. It didn't take long to learn that the NIV was not a true "word for word" translation, but rather it was more of a "thought for thought" Realizing the potential for man to distort the word of God in a "thought for thought" version, I decided to seek out and remain committed only to actual "word for word" translations. Since that time I have been, for the most part, committed to my King James Version.

My current commitment and endorsement of this version is in no way a claim to its perfection in every way. Yes, I understand that we now have both a greater supply of manuscripts and earlier dated manuscript than what the translators of the KJV had in their possession. And yes, I also understand that there are a few select text that, in light of the evidence we have to day, may not actually belong in scripture. However, with all this aside, it appears to me that those involved in this translation did a very good job of

simply translating the scripture into English without any (or at least very little) attempt to explain things in the process. T

he King James translators left it up to the readers to interpret the meaning of scripture, instead of, through slight changes, explaining things for us.

Since the time I switched to the King James Version, I have recognized many truths that are not visible in other versions of scripture. I believe that these truths are invisible in other versions because they have been converted by ignorant men into their own mistaken idea or what is being said (by saying this, I am not accusing these men of intentional evil). In the translator's effort to help readers along, they have changed that which seemed hard to understand into that which they believed to be the easier to understand truth. However, many of these translators have missed the true truth, and as a result, they have only produced error.

The most obvious example of this I can give is in regard to that which I have been writing about for the past several pages, which is, the faith "of" Christ. Among the six plus translations of scripture that I have in my home (this even includes some that are supposed to be "word for word"), I can find nothing in any of them about the faith of Christ. Instead, in every other version I have managed to get my hand on, where the King James refers to the "faith of Christ", they chose to interpret it as "faith in Christ".

While many of you are ready to accuse me of "straining at gnats", let me stand up and with great confidence say, "THIS IS NOT JUST A GNAT". The difference between these two phrases is as different as night and day.

When my eyes were first open to the "faith of Christ", a surge of joy began to fill my heart (this same joy seems to accompany every eye opening revelation I have received). However, along with this joy came a surge of doubt. I was afraid that this just might be my own idea with absolutely no basis whatsoever instead of true revelation from the Lord. Despite the joy and confidence I had that this was truly from the Lord, I realized that every other version I owned chose to say "faith in Christ". Since every other version chose to do it this way I reasoned that it was possible the word "of" as found in "faith of Christ" may not have been in the original text. I reasoned that it just might have been a word added for the sake of our own language and sentence structure.

Wanting to know the truth of this, I began to search out the matter. The results of my search filled me with joy, for I found that the word "of" was in Paul's original writing. It turns out that the only question surrounding the word "of" is in regards to its meaning. While there is disagreement as to what he exactly meant by "faith of Christ", there is no disputing as to whether or not Paul said it in this way.

The only question that remains today is, what exactly did Paul mean when he said, "the faith of Christ". There are two ways in which one could interpret this phrase.

The first way that you can read this is with the idea that this is talking about the faith that we have towards Christ. If this is what Paul was saying, then there is no harm in translating this as "faith in Christ".

The other way to view this phrase is with the idea that Paul is not talking about our faith towards Christ, but instead, is talking about the very faith that Christ himself has. According to this view, when Paul says, "the faith of Christ," he is literally referring to the faith that belongs to Christ.

As for me, you know which of these I hold to. It is without the slightest edge of doubt I believe that the "faith of Christ" is nothing less than the faith that Christ himself had towards his father. I believe that the faith "of" Christ is totally different than the faith I have "in" or towards Christ.

Even though the accuracy of my view can be called into question, there is one thing I can't. It cannot be argued that by reading the King James Version, I at least have this choice. Those who read other versions have already had this decision made for them. The other versions have taken away the possibility that this could mean the faith that Christ had/towards his father. Instead of leaving this decision up to the readers, by translating this only as "faith in Christ," they have made this decision for the readers already – a decision I consider to be a terrible error....

To see the difference that this can make in scripture let's look at a passage I used previously in this writing; Philippians 3:8-9.. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"

If, as I believe, "faith of Christ" is a reference to the faith that Christ held towards his father, then Paul is acknowledging through this passage that the righteous Spirit he now has is a direct result from the faithfulness of Christ. Since Paul is in Christ, he is a direct recipient of the righteousness that was given to Christ upon his resurrection. Christ was only able to be resurrected and receive this righteousness because he remained faithful to God. If "faith of Christ" is a reference to the faithfulness of Christ, then this passage directs the emphasis and credit for Paul's righteous state to Christ and his faithful life.

Now let's look at this passage as it appears in other Bible translations/versions. We'll only look at verse nine in each of these translations...

Philippians 3:9 – NIV ...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Philippians 3:9 Â– RSV ...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

Philippians 3:9 Â– NAS ... and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. (Note: The NAS is considered to be a Â“word for wordÂ” translation)

As the previous translations/versions are written, the reader can only see Paul's role in his salvation. In these passages, it is Paul's faith that gets the credit for his righteous state instead of the faithfulness of Christ. These passages completely put the focus on man's faith Â“inÂ” Christ, and ignore the faith Â“ofÂ” Christ. The perfect, sinless, faithful life of Christ is in no way referred to as the source of man's righteousness from God.

If Paul was truly referring to our faith in Christ when he wrote this passage, then there is nothing wrong with this. However, if Paul was strictly talking about the faithful life of Christ when he wrote this passage, then these other translations are badly mistaken.

Though I sometimes struggle to express my thoughts, I hope you can see the difference that can be made through the change of one simple word. While the translators could possibly have been right in the way they translated this (though I myself do not believe in such a possibility), they are most certainly wrong to take such an important choice away from the reader.

The effect of this error goes beyond the misplaced emphasis on man's work versus the faithfulness of Christ. If this were the only effect, the damage from it would be minimal and I might say nothing about it. After all, if a man has sincere faith Â“inÂ” Christ, he will most certainly be saved through the faithfulness of Christ whether he understands it or not. No, this error is not an error that will ultimately keep one from being saved through Christ, but it is an error that will keep the one who has been baptized into Christ from discovering a lot of wonderful truth.

I was saved during a time in which I was only reading a NIV. There was enough truth there to bring me to God. However, if I would have stayed with this version, I would have missed many glorious truths that would only be revealed as I read the King James Version.

For Example: had I have never learned about the faith of Christ, I would not have ever received the joy and confidence that comes from knowing that I walk and live by the faith of Christ. I might still be tip-toeing around thinking that I lived on by the strength of my faith instead of enjoying the confidence of living by his faith.

In addition to this, if I had not learned about the faith of Christ, I would never have come to understand the difference between his faith and the faith of Abraham. I would still be in the dark as to the true meaning of going Â“from faith to faithÂ”. There are so many glorious truths I would still be in the dark on if I had not recognized and learned about the faith of Christ. I am very thankful that there is at least one version of scripture available that did not alter this particular word (of).

Note: With all of this said, I do realize that there is a vast number of translations in existence of which I have never heard or seen. If you are familiar with a version that says Â“faith of ChristÂ” vs. Â“faith in ChristÂ”, I would be interested to learn of them. Thanks!

With this all said, I think I can now say that I have shared some of the most significant things that I have learned and experienced over the past couple of years. I would now like to share with you how this has effected my everyday life...

Life More Abundantly

Jesus said, Â“I have come that they (his sheep) might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,Â” (John 10:10)

In the days of my harsh, pharisee like, Â“ChristianityÂ”, I would only let myself believe that this verse was referring to the eternal state of his followers. From my misguided interpretations of scripture, it seemed to me that Christians would most likely be miserable in this life as they just sacrificed everything and lived for the Lord. I didn't despise this Â“miserable ChristianityÂ” because to me it seemed like a fair exchange Â– to be miserable in this short life in exchange for a great eternal life. Thankfully, I can say that I am free from such terrible thinking. Today I can say with great joy; I truly live an Â“abundant lifeÂ”.

As I have entered into Christ, every single area of my life has been enriched. In the past, such words as Â“joyÂ” and Â“peaceÂ” were foreign to me. While I used them often as a Â“pastor,Â” in reality I had no understanding of what joy and peace really were. But Praise the Lord! Today I can say our house is filled with joy and peace.

When I say Â“joy,Â” I am not talking about some happy feeling that comes and goes. What is in me now is something that is constant. While I may not always be dancing around the house (and yet I often do), inside me there is a constant amazement at how good God really is. I can see his goodness everywhere and this leaves me constantly amazed and thankful.

This joy I live with is nothing that I have worked up. Instead it is a fruit that has grown as a result of obeying the Spirit of God. True joy can not be worked up. It is something that is apart from our own up and down emotions. It is something deep in the soul and something that is very hard to explain to those who don't have it.

Not only does the joy of the Lord abound, but so does his peace. As my family and I have grown in the Lord, nearly all the turmoil has ceased in our lives.

The turmoil of worry is nearly gone: As I have grown in Christ, my confidence in the Father has grown. I am very confident that he is aware of every single thing that happens to me. I recognize that he is always working for my good, regardless of the situation. This is not a belief that I have to constantly work myself into believing, but is a very solid confidence that remains regardless of the situation. While sickness and other troubles come our way from time to time, the peace of God remains as I recognize that he is in control and that he is working through each and every situation to make me more like his Son.

As the turmoil of worry is gone, so is the turmoil that was caused from the sin of covetousness. In the past, I lived in misery as I was always reaching and longing for things that I didn't have. These desires kept me from ever resting in true contentment. But today all desires are gone. Free from this sin of covetousness, I now live in the beautiful place of contentment. I am beyond satisfied with every area of my life. While many would look at some of the circumstances of our life and pity us, I can honestly say that I believe we are the richest family in the world..

As a child of God, I know that he knows what is best for me. If I truly need something that would be a benefit to my life, I can be confident that the Lord will provide it for me. At the same time, I trust that he will not let me have anything that would not be in my best interest. The fruit of this knowledge and confidence is peace.

Finally: The turmoil that once existed in our marriage is now gone. In the past, my wife was stubborn and I was a jerk. This combination filled our house with constant fighting and misery. However, as I came to the Lord, my wife came also. As she bowed her knees to God, she came to recognize her place as a wife. She has realized that the husband is over the wife as Christ is over the Church. As a result of this recognition, she has come to a place of submission. No longer does she fight for power or the right to make the final decision, but instead, she rests in my final word.

While many women think this is a terrible thing, for my wife has done nothing but produce great peace and joy in her life, not to mention the peace it has produced in our home. No longer are there the fights of two wills clashing. Even though every decision I make may not be perfect, I can honestly say before God that I want nothing but the best for her and our children.

Another part of this abundant life has been a newfound enjoyment of the simple things.

As I have grown in the Lord, my recognition of his goodness has also grown. I can see more and more of his goodness each and every day. I now recognize that he has filled the earth with a great many things that are intended to be enjoyed. I am learning to enjoy many of these wonderful gifts.

I am filled with much thankfulness towards my Father when I do such simple things as – rake leaves and watch my children jump into them – sit in front of the fireplace and roast hotdogs or play games – watch my daughter help her mother cook – listen to good quality music (music that promotes both joy and peace) – wrestle with my children – watch my children play with their toys and with each other – catch lightning bugs with my children – sit on my deck and play guitar. I could continue on for at least a page or two, but I'll spare you all of this and simply say that every day is a rich and wonderful experience. Everyday is a day that gives me just another glimpse of what is waiting for those who inherit the new earth.

This is just a brief introduction to the abundant life that I and my family have found in Christ. Through the body of Christ, I died to the devil's dark kingdom and I was raised into abundant life. I am so incredibly alive, and yet I know that this is only a glimpse of what is yet to come. Thank you Father for abundant life.

Free Indeed

In John 8:36 Jesus says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Since entering into my new life in Christ, there are many freedoms that the Lord has brought into my life. However, the one I want to focus on now is the freedom from self effort and outward ordinances. Before describing this freedom, I want to first explain the role that ordinances played in the Old Testament...

Before the coming of Christ, whenever someone turned toward the Lord with true faith, this person was counted (or regarded) by God as righteous. This means that God was pleased with this person's desire to please him. He was pleased that they had turned their hearts from the devil's kingdom toward his kingdom. However, even though these people of faith were regarded as righteous, the reality was that these people had no true righteousness in them. Even though

they were loyal to the Lord's kingdom in their hearts, they were still the devil's prisoners who were completely incapable of bearing any fruit unto God.

Through creation, and later on through the law, man could see just how good God really was. However, along with this recognition of God's goodness came the recognition of how completely un-good man actually was. How naked one must have felt to see all that they were not in light of all that God really was. How frustrating it must have been to want to do good and yet not be able to. For those who recognized the goodness of God and the utter un-goodness of themselves, it would have been an unbearable existence had it not been for God's kind gift of ordinances.

Ordinances were outward actions by which a person of faith could express an inward desire of their heart. These ordinances would include such things as offerings, sacrifices, and other acts performed by the flesh that would illustrate a reality that would one day come through Christ.

Most of the offerings up until the time of Moses were a demonstration of man's desire to bear fruit unto God. Since man could not produce true righteous fruit, God allowed them to make an offering to demonstrate this desire. It was not the offering itself that pleased the Lord (we have plenty of scripture that confirms this), but instead, it was the faith that motivated these offerings that pleased the Lord. It was the faith behind the offerings that made them a sweet smell (Genesis 8:21) unto the Lord.

Once the Law was given to Moses and sin was revealed, a whole system of sacrifices for sin, offerings, and many other ordinances were added for men to express their faith. For Example: Obedience to the strict rules regarding the putting away of lepers and all the surrounding this could have served as a way for a saint to show their heart's deep desire to be separated from sinners.

As the saint would turn his heart towards the Lord, it was only natural that they would desire to be free from the family of sinners to whom they belonged (speaking of the devil's kingdom). However, freedom from this family of sinners would not be a reality until Christ would come. So in the mean time God gave them this ordinance. By obeying this ordinance, the believer could express this great heart's desire to the Lord. Through these actions of the flesh, they could display their faith towards God and their great desire to no longer be a part of the family of sinners. If the action was prompted by faith, God would find pleasure in the saint's obedience to this ordinance and the spiritually dead saint could find some satisfaction from the frustration of not being able to bear fruit unto God.

While this system of ordinances was a blessing to those who had faith, to those who did not have faith, there was nothing more than a duty that one had to perform to buy God's favor.

This group of people had no true desire to please the Lord, and yet at the same time, they wanted to receive his promises—namely, eternal life. These faithless people thought that they could gain God's favor by performing these lifeless actions. They thought that they could keep all the secret idols they wanted as long as they performed these actions for God. In a sense, these people were trying to purchase the promises of God. These people believed that God would pay them for performing this duty. However, without the motivation of faith, instead of earning God's favor, these performances only served to infuriate God. He called these faithless acts of duty, "abominations" (Isaiah 1:11-15).

The motivation of faith, vs, the motivation of duty is what made the difference between the offerings of Cain and Able. The rejection of Cain's offering had little or nothing to do with the fact that it was not a lamb. The problem with Cain's offering was that it was given only as a duty. Able's offering was accepted because he offered his by faith (Hebrews 11:4). Unlike Cain, Able gave his offering with a sincere desire to please the Lord.

This system of ordinances would stay in effect until Christ would come and bring in the reality that all these ordinances expressed. No longer would one have to separate themselves from lepers to express a desire to be separate from sinners. For through the body of Christ, the saints would die to the sinful family they had been born into and be raised into a new righteous family. Now truly separated from sinners, this ordinance of separation was no longer needed; the reality was now in Christ.

After the coming of Christ, not a single outward ordinance would be needed. The believer who had been baptized in to Christ was now complete before God. The believer would now live unto God by the Spirit of God. All outward duties and expressions are now in the past.

In the early days of my conversion, I was burdened down with a lot of baggage. Young in my faith and still ignorant as to the complete truth of the gospel, I carried around various ordinances of my own. However, through the process of time, as I have learned and grown in my faith, Christ has set me free from all works of the flesh.

Just a couple weeks after my "Romans eight" experience, I left the "children's pastor" staff position I had held for the previous three years. As I left this position, I was left with a wonderful feeling of freedom. This was the first time in ten years that I had not been obligated to attend any certain "church" just because I belonged to the staff. For the first time I could attend any "church" I wanted, and I decided to take full advantage of this opportunity.

Having belonged to the "Assemblies of God" my whole life, I had very little experience visiting other denominations on a Sunday morning. So with our new found freedom, my family set out to experience other denominations. I must admit, at this point I was not concerned about the doctrine of each "church," but instead, I was only attending for the experience.

nce. Some of the "churches" we visited included: Baptist, Lutheran, Christian, and a small Charismatic "church".

At first all of this visiting around was fun. It felt good to simply get up, get dressed, and attend "church" as a participant without the burden of being in charge. However, that which was fun at first, quickly turned into a duty.

Throughout all of these visits, I did not find a single "church" that proclaimed the gospel as I was beginning to experience it. It seemed that they all had the same basic message that God loved us and wanted us to be in heaven with him.

They would all offer the same remedy to ensure us that we could someday be in heaven. This remedy usually included coming forward to ask Jesus to come into your heart.

Even though everything I heard seemed to be miles away from what I was beginning to believe, the thought of not attending "church" was in no way an option. I knew how people viewed church attendance (or the lack of it). I knew what people would think of us if we stopped attending church. Since we weren't yet ready to give up this "Christian duty", we continued on in our visiting until we came to a large Baptist "church" in our town.

After attending for a couple of weeks, I told my wife that we would "settle down" and call this our church home. I was not at all happy with the church, but instead, I was simply tired of looking around. And so for a few more weeks I continued in this ritual of getting up on Sundays and going to "church."

Our life continued this way until God revealed to me what I was actually doing. I was reading Galatians when it all came clear.

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written for the primary purpose of rebuking them of an error they had entered into. The Galatians, who were supposed to be completely free in Christ, had once again begun to take part in certain Old Testament practices. They had once again begun to observe special days, seasons, and years. It seems that the main reason they were doing this was because they did not want to continue to be persecuted by others for this freedom they walked in.

Those who did not have the freedom that was in Christ would persecute those who were in Christ. They would put them down and speak evil against them because they did not do the religious duties that they themselves were so faithful to do.

Seeing this pressure that was being put on the true saints, Paul warned them not to enter back into the bondage they had once been enslaved by. He told them that they were to be free in Christ. He warned them that if they were to give into their persecutors and go back to the religious duties, then Christ would do them no good at all.

As I read Paul's letter to the Galatians, the rebukes that once had no meaning to me were now directed right at me. As I read, I saw clearly that my whole reason for attending church was simply because it was the "Christian thing to do". It did absolutely nothing for me spiritually and it brought no joy whatsoever. I had absolutely no desire to attend and yet I kept it up week after week simply because I was afraid of what others would think and say if we gave up this popular "Christian" practice. Just as the Galatians were observing days and seasons to minimize their persecution, I too had been holding to a law simply to avoid the persecution of others.

As I recognized this rebuke from the Lord, I immediately shared this with my wife. I then let her know that our days of doing this were over, and over it has been. Apart from a few visits sparked by curiosity, we have not attended "church" as a family since.

It's only as I look back that I now realize what a bondage this was. Week after week of getting up early, getting dressed up, and sitting through a service that couldn't get over soon enough, all in the name of trying to please the Lord.

When I stand back and look at the mountains, rivers, trees, animals, and everything else that my wonderful Father has created, it frustrates me greatly to see him expressed as a stiff character who wants people to gather in a stiff building, while dressed in stiff clothing, to take part in a stiff service. How sad to think, as a child I only knew God as someone who wanted me to sit down, be quiet, and close my eyes when I pray. I am very thankful to be free from the bondage of the institution that portrayed my father in this dreadful way.

As wonderful and abrupt as this change in our life was, it was just the beginning of the freedom that would penetrate our lives.

The next area of freedom we would enter into would be in regards to tithing. Since the beginning of our marriage, my wife and I have paid tithes without miss. This faithfulness to paying tithes created a problem after we stopped attending "church".

Since I was still fairly new in the faith, I did not yet understand how my new life in the Spirit effected the tithe. Since I was in doubt, we continued to tithe. However, since we no longer attended a "church", we now had no place to direct our tithe. Eventually we concluded that we would start our own tithe account. We would then use this money for any need we might hear of. While this seemed like a good idea at first, I eventually began to notice something I did not like...

As time went by, our tithe account grew until it eventually contained a couple thousand dollars. During this time, it seemed that very few needs came to our attention. However, when the occasional need did arise in which we could help, our attempt to meet the need seemed to produce very little joy. Eventually I realized our error.

As a new creation, walking by the Spirit of God, I truly longed to be generous and share all that I had. However, even though I now lived by the Spirit, I was still giving as one who lived by law. Instead of completely trusting God to prompt me when to give, I was only giving out of duty as I continued to set aside the required ten percent. When we did give from

this account, instead of feeling joy, it merely felt as if we had only performed an obligation. In addition to this, I recognized the potential for the tithe account to create selfishness.. I saw the possibility of choosing not to help if the tithe account was empty.

Eventually I realized that the tithe was not to be a part of our life. Through tithing, I was not walking by the Spirit of freedom. By tithing I was living by law. Now that we have abolished the tithe in our home, our giving is from a sincere desire to help or bless others. Our giving is no longer legislated by a written law, instead, our giving is the natural behavior of those who bear the generous nature of their Father.

The more I have come to understand the gospel, the more my freedom has grown. It has been a long joyous process by which I stand here today in this wonderful freedom. After these past couple years of growing, I believe that I have finally reached a point in which I have ceased from every outward action that I was performing merely out of duty. I have finally learned to trust that I am a new creature whose day to day living pleases the Lord. If I find that I am doing something only because I feel I have to, then that's a pretty good indication that I shouldn't be doing it. Whenever I do something from duty, I am doing it according to law. Nothing that I do from law pleases the Lord. He is only pleased by that which flows naturally from me. That which flows from the good Spirit that he has placed inside me.

It is a natural desire of mine to gather with other like minded believers at a decent hour and rejoice together and encourage one another. However, it is not a natural desire to attend a stiff service and hear a message that has nothing to do with what I believe. To do this would simply be performing a duty; therefore it will have no place in my life.

It is natural for me to want to give to others when the opportunity arises. However, it is not natural to set aside a certain amount simply because a written law says to. God's generous nature exist in me and no such law is necessary.

It is natural for me to want to read God's word. However, to pick it up and read a chapter just because a good Christian is supposed to would be performing a duty. I refuse to pick up my Bible for the purpose of saying that I have read it. Instead, I let the natural hunger of my soul be the deciding factor as to when I read or how much I read. I read the scripture only for my sake and for my edification, this is in no way a duty by which one can please the Lord.

It is natural for me to desire to get away and spend time alone with God on occasion. However, it is not natural to set a certain time in which I will do this. Once again, I let the hunger of my soul determine whether or not I get alone with God.

Contrary to popular belief, prayer is not a means by which one pleases God. God is not sitting up in heaven proud because I have locked my self away in a room just to talk to him. Instead, prayer is for my sake and for the sake of the Church. Prayer is a time for me to examine my life and a time to present my needs to the Lord. My times of prayer are never driven by a desire to make God happy. God is already happy. He takes great pleasure watching me as I walk and live according to the love and goodness he has placed in my heart.

Praise the Lord! I have ceased from all my own works and efforts. The Spirit of God now lives in me and through me. Through his Spirit, it is the natural desire of my heart to do what pleases the Lord. As a son of God, I simply rest and allow his goodness and love to flow through me. As an apple tree bears apples, this son of God naturally produces the good fruit his Father desires. It's who I am. It's what I do. And all the glory goes to God. Thank God I am Free!

While this freedom has been a most wonderful thing, it has definitely come with its share of persecution. On more than one occasion we have been reprimanded for not "attending church" or paying tithes. I have several times been told that I have a dangerous attitude by thinking that I can "make it" on my own. I am not exaggerating at all when I say that we have sensed much anger from various people in our lives due to our newfound freedom. While such persecution is very frustrating, I at least know that it is to be expected. As well, I also know who it is that is persecuting us - It's the children of the bondwoman who is persecuting the free (Galatians 4:22)

In Galatians, Paul let his readers know why they were suffering persecution. The persecution they were suffering came from the persecutors own spirit of jealousy. Those who were persecuting the saints that were free in Christ, were only doing so because they themselves were not free. This group of people are considered bond children. They have come to the house of God, but only as a servant. They did not come to his house because they loved him, instead they came only from a spirit of greed. In hope of earning the master's riches they labor day in and day out. Since they are not the natural children of the master, they have no natural inheritance. Their tireless effort is their attempt to earn his inheritance.

In the same house as the servant children are the true children. These are the children who are born of the master's seed. These children do not have to work to earn his inheritance, nor do they work to earn their keep. As the master's children, the inheritance is already assured to them. As the master's children, all provisions are provided for them simply because they are children.

As the bond children watch the free children, they are filled with jealousy. They scream out in rage that they should be doing the same work that they themselves have to do. They apply constant pressure on the true children hoping that they will choose to enter into the same service they are forced to perform by their own covetousness.

While one might be tempted to pity the circumstance of the bond child, one should not. The bond children deserve no pity because their bondage is both a result and evidence of their true hardness towards God. The bond children are the

evil children who want to both continue in the devil's evil vanities as well as receive the promises of God. So with this goal in mind, these rebellious children try to earn God's favor by performing various religious duties for the Lord. If they would simply turn their hearts towards God, he would also make them his own free children through the gospel. But due to their own stubbornness, they refuse to turn to him in love and instead keep performing their duties hoping to somehow earn his favor and promises. However, they try in vain. For the scripture says, "cast out the bondwoman and her sons, for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman (Galatians 4:30)." The children of the free woman are the true children of God. Those who have been baptized into Christ have become God's natural children. These children do not have to do a single duty to earn God's favor or inheritance. They are recipients of both simply because they are his children. As the free children of God, they will always be persecuted by those who are in bondage to duties and law. This is how it has been and this is how it will be until the day God is ready to give his children their promised inheritance. At that time, God is going to cast the bond children out of his presence forever, to a place where they can no longer trouble us who are free.

The children of the free woman are the true children of God. Those who have been baptized into Christ have become God's natural children. These children do not have to do a single duty to earn God's favor or inheritance. They are recipients of both simply because they are his children. As the free children of God, they will always be persecuted by those who are in bondage to duties and law. This is how it has been and this is how it will be until the day God is ready to give his children their promised inheritance. At that time, God is going to cast the bond children out of his presence forever, to a place where they can no longer trouble us who are free.

Well as you can see, much has happened in my life in the past two plus years. It has certainly been an incredible journey. In light of the past two years it is exciting to know that my journey is not over. I'm still growing, and I'm still learning. Along with Paul, I do not consider myself to have yet attained. I will keep pressing ahead until God has finished his work and considers me ready for eternal service in his eternal kingdom.

Even though my bondage to sin was broken long ago, I was not at that time perfect in action. Even though I was pulled out of the muck of sin, I still had the muck on my body that needed to be scrubbed off. Slowly and patiently my Father has scrubbed here and there, washing away old ideas and habits. It has been with great joy that I have watched these chunks of "muck" fall off to never cling to me again. There have been many times in which I thought this work was complete, and each time he'd show me another speck that needed to be removed.

As I write, I picture a muddy child who is placed in the bath by his father. Even though the child scrubs his best, he inevitably misses a few places. Time and time again, convinced he is clean, he presents himself to his father only to be shown a place that he has missed. The fact that the child has missed a spot does not reflect any rebellion, but instead, it's just that the child can't see everything his father can.

Eventually, through the patience of the father and the willingness of the child, the child will pass a close examination and be found pleasing to the father.

This is the best way I can explain my life today. As I write, I can personally see nothing to work on in my life. However, this in no way makes me clean. It is the Father who will make that final decision. Since it is truly him that I want to please, I can be confident that even though I may not yet be clean, he will show me that which needs to go. I am confident that he will complete the work that he started long ago. I am confident that the day will come in which my Father will examine my life and be completely pleased. Through his goodness and patience, a day will come in which I will be a perfect reflection of his perfect Son through whom I was saved. The day will come in which he will be confident that he can forever trust me with his eternal kingdom, and OH WHAT A DAY THAT WILL BE!

With sincere hope and love to all who truly love the Lord,

PJ

Re: Keep the Fire Burning Update Letter - posted by JFEdgar (), on: 2006/2/5 13:56

Hey,

I just wanted to say, I haven't finished this yet, but I do plan to as soon as possible. I have read the first and second post and have so far been hugely blessed. I just wanted to recommend that others who may be discouraged from reading it because of the immense size of it, at least read the first page to see if it speaks to you. It has spoken to me. Thank you for taking the time to write this pj

:)

Re: Keep the Fire Burning Update Letter - posted by JFEdgar (), on: 2006/2/9 15:00

hey pj,

I just wanted to ask, where do you think you were at when you wrote the original Keep the Fire Burning, and what brought you to the place you talk about in the update letter? (I mean, practically as it is lived out, not doctrinally). I am personally struggling right now with the Lord pressing on my a firm conviction about freedom from sin, yet I do not know how to go there practically. I believe it is up to me (1 corinth 10:13) yet I still give in. I believe doctrinally that I am free, yet for some reason I struggle practically. I have times of great faith in God and victory, and yet it fades and that is when I fall. I have times where eternity is very real to me, yet that reality fades and it becomes more of a dream and I fall. I have times where God is real, and close, and yet that fades, and I fall. Although, I shouldn't say that I 'fall'. I should say I give in. I know that I do not have to sin because God has made a way out for every temptation, I know that my flesh is dead, yet when that reality fades, I usually give in.

Re: JFEdgar Question - posted by PJ, on: 2006/2/12 19:50

JFEdgar,

I tried to send you a PM, just wanted to make sure you received it.

Jason