

Christianity Clarified Volume 17

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society.

At times it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified. Faith requires and produces obedience. With the Apostle Paul in writing to the church at Rome, declaring at the outset of his letter in chapter 1 why God saved him and made him an apostle, and then repeating the same at the close of his letter in chapters 15 and 16, one gets the impression it was of real importance.

Paul opened his letter with it and closed his letter with it. And what was it? It was so he, as an apostle to the Gentiles, might bring those Gentiles to the obedience of faith.

Why was that so important? Because the obedience of faith changes absolutely everything. It radically impacts one's present attitude and actions, and it radically changes one's eternal destiny, from a deserved hell to an undeserved heaven.

[1 : 22] It was God's gracious disposition that reached down and regenerated Saul of Tarsus. He would be sent to the Gentiles in exercise of his apostleship.

His singular goal was to preach the gospel of the grace and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ, so that upon believing the message, these Gentiles would come to the obedience of faith.

Scholars have debated whether faith itself was an act of obedience, or whether the obedience was the result of that which stemmed from faith, and a strong case can be made for both.

Before faith, the Gentiles were clearly living as children of disobedience. Disobedient toward God is also mentioned in Ephesians chapters 2 and 5 and Colossians 3.

It was with their will that they were disobedient, and it is with their will that they move from disobedience to obedience upon believing the gospel.

[2 : 26] Their belief or faith in and of itself is an act of disobedience, in the same way that continued unbelief is an act of disobedience.

One cannot come to faith without an act of their volition. So in this sense, believing in itself is an act of obedience.

Despite our spiritual and moral fallenness, our disposition to sin and selfishness, nevertheless our volition and our ability to exercise it is ever in place, before and after our conversion to Christ.

And on the other side of the issue, we can agree that the obedience of faith may include the obedience that comes as a result of having exercised faith.

This too is certainly true. Because no one has ever had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ by placing their faith in Him without their attitude and actions being altered, sometimes very dramatically.

[3 : 31] In both cases, whether faith itself is an act of obedience, or whether the obedience of faith is that behavior that becomes obedient after belief, both are a part of the reality involved.

There is no escaping the undeniable impact made by faith in the life of anyone who places theirs in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Preaching is designed to produce faith.

Part 1 Our Lord's high priestly prayer, recorded in John 17, was given the night of His betrayal. And in His prayer, He voiced concern for you and me 2,000 years forward from the time He was there praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.

After praying on behalf of His twelve apostles, His thoughts turned to you and me. Here is what He prayed for, for us, after He prayed for the twelve.

He said, Neither do I pray for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. For the immediate, we may be sure, Christ was referring to the word the twelve would be

preaching after His resurrection and ascension.

[4 : 51] The preaching of the twelve is recorded in the book of Acts. The twelve would major on the Messiahship of Jesus their Lord, and they would succeed in bringing many of their fellow Jews to faith in Jesus.

They would constitute the first believing converts of Christ. But what about us? 2,000 years removed. We never heard the apostles give their testimony about who Jesus really was and call us to faith in Him.

Oh, yes, we have. We have indeed believed on Christ through the word of the apostles. This is what Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul and their writings are all about.

It is as if they personally are preaching to us through the gospels God inspired them to write. And this is precisely why they wrote them. It was to provide a written record of the events and words they experienced through the earthly ministry of Christ.

The plan was, and still is, for people to read and understand the information given in the Bible by Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, and others, believe it, and place their faith in the Christ they revealed in those writings.

[6 : 08] It always comes back to the necessity for information. It has to be available in order to be processed for the reaching of a conclusion. That's what the written word of God does.

It provides information. That's what the very act of preaching is designed to do. Provide information. Because information causes and allows people to assess what the information tells them and compare it with the information they already have in their mind.

If this new information reveals that their old information is wrong, they then have a decision to make. Do they stick with their old information?

Or do they embrace the new? If they embrace the new, they will need to change their mind. The Bible calls this repentance. It means the rejecting of one's old information and previously held belief in favor of embracing the new information and placing one's faith in it.

This is the entire rationale for preaching. Preachers inside the Bible and outside are charged with informing people with vital information so they have a basis for changing their mind.

[7 : 27] It's called repenting toward God and exercising faith in Jesus Christ. Preaching is designed to produce faith.

Part 2 No one makes a decision or chooses a course of action about anything without a reason for doing so. And this reason we then call information or data.

Information is content. Information is content. And the content is about what we believe to be reality or our perception of reality. Decisions are to be based on facts, things that correspond to reality.

So, upon hearing information about anything, we then have to assess it, determine its validity or lack thereof, and then decide what we will do about that information.

And we may do one of three things arrived at from our evaluation. We may reject the information as untrue. We may embrace it as true.

[8 : 37] Or we may be undecided because we seek further information. So, upon first hearing the gospel of Christ regarding his substitutionary death in our place, it is very common for an intellectual tension to be produced within one's mind.

An argument goes on such as, This does not compute with what I have always believed. In fact, the whole idea of the Son of God dying for my sin is ridiculous.

So, the natural tendency is to reject the whole notion. And most do. Especially upon an initial hearing. And this rejection, the Bible tells us, is to be expected.

1 Corinthians 1 tells us that It pleased God through the message we preach to save those who believe. And it further states that The world, upon hearing our message, will call it Foolishness, absurd, folly.

And they do today just as they did when Paul the Apostle personally preached it. But, what the world labels as foolishness, the Bible calls the wisdom of God.

[9 : 56] The context reveals that God in his wisdom knew that man, in man's wisdom, would not be able to know God. So, God took it upon himself to become self-disclosing.

He would be a God who could only be known by him revealing himself to man. And this he does through general revelation in the world all around us, And by special revelation, as is found in the Bible.

When the Bible and its truths are preached, you can expect the world to discount it, Discredit it, mock it, scorn it, ridicule it, dismiss its truths as foolishness.

And this they do. And this they are predicted to do here in 1 Corinthians 1. Yet, this very word of God preached that the world calls foolishness, Is in fact the very message by which those who believe are saved from their sin.

And this is declared to be the wisdom of God. That God's wisdom is the opposite of human wisdom is illustrated throughout Scripture. The Scriptures Lead to Faith, Part 1 Near the end of John's Gospel in chapter 20, He tells us why he was inspired of God to write as he did.

[11 : 27] He recalls that Jesus performed many other miracles that are not recorded in this Gospel of John he was writing. And then he adds, But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, And that in believing you might have life through his name.

It is abundantly clear that the purpose of God providing us with Scripture is simply to inform us. It's all about the divine provision of information and its intended purpose.

God is providing the information to the entire world through those human instruments he inspired to write the Bible. His purpose in producing this information is that people, upon hearing it, May come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ of God, And that believing, he may receive life through his name.

There we have it. The sum total of the intent of the Word of God is to give people the information they need So they can make the decision they need to make. Good decisions must be made on the basis of having true and adequate information.

And this is what the Bible is all about. God's disclosure of information. Information as to how he has fulfilled the promise he gave of a coming Redeemer.

[12 : 48] The Redeemer has come. The Redeemer has purchased our redemption. John is telling his readers that they now, by knowing who Jesus Christ really is, They need to place their faith, their belief, their trust in this very one In order to receive the life he came to give.

This is clearly spiritual life. Men already have physical life, which makes them alive to each other. But, man also needs spiritual life that makes him alive to God.

Hearing the truth about Christ provides man with all the information he needs in order to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, Be saved, and be made alive toward God for all eternity.

This life is spiritual, and it is never-ending. This is the ultimate purpose of the Bible. This is why the book has been translated into a multitude of languages, And then published in millions of copies over hundreds of years.

It's all about the dispensing of information that leads to eternal life and the only source who has it to give. This information is not given simply to increase our mental storehouse of information.

[14 : 10] It is given that it may be acted upon. And this action is described as faith, the belief or trust that one places in the person of Christ upon hearing of his death, burial, and resurrection.

He did it for you. An innumerable number of people have done that.

Does that number include you? The Scriptures Lead to Faith Part 2 In being inspired of God to write what would probably be his last letter before being martyred for Christ, the Apostle Paul wrote to his young protegee Timothy some words of solemn reminder.

And here are those words, found in 2 Timothy chapter 3. You, Timothy, from your childhood, have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul gives no indication here or anywhere else that this salvation through faith can be realized from any other source. He will tell the Romans also, in chapter 10, that Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by or from the word of God, the Bible.

[15 : 41] Because the Bible, and it alone, is the vital source of information that man needs in order to respond with his faith or confidence in the information given.

And Paul tells us, it is not faith without an object, but faith or trust in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the faith that makes one wise unto salvation.

After his reminder to Timothy, he follows in the next chapter 4, that he is to devote himself to the preaching of this word, this message, that is able to make people wise unto salvation, because there is nothing else that can get the job done.

Therefore, Timothy, preach the word, and do it with the intent of equipping your hearers with everything they need to know, as pertains to godliness.

Timothy is to provide them with the information they need, so that they too may become wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. But notice, if you will, the scriptures are only able to make one wise unto salvation.

[16 : 56] It does not mean that scripture automatically makes one wise unto salvation, but merely that the scriptures are able to do so.

So, what is it that turns the ability of the scriptures into a reality, so that one indeed is made wise unto salvation?

It is our response to the information provided by the scriptures. This information centers on God's Son incarnated in human flesh.

In the Old Testament, he is portrayed as a promise, the one who should come. In the New, he has come as he was promised and fulfilled the purpose for his coming.

It was to die as a sacrifice for the sins of the entire human race. This he accomplished. And to prove that God his Father was satisfied with the price paid by his Son, he raised him from the dead.

[18 : 01] When people get this information from the Bible, and respond to it by personalizing it, that is, by embracing and taking it to themselves, they then become wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is the ultimate clarification of Christianity, and we can see why it is so. Is this true of you? Faith provides the way of access.

With a very bold stroke of his pen, under divine inspiration, Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, talks about the access to God all believers have gained solely because of their faith in Christ.

Faith opens the way of access to God. It provides us with a welcome and open door we otherwise would not have. He stated in Ephesians chapter 2 that Christ our Lord is he through whom we have boldness and confident access because of our faith in him.

This is not a tentative access, nor a timid access, nor reluctant access, but confident access. A confident access in the sense there is no fear you might be turned away.

[19 : 25] This is not to be confused with presumption or cockiness, which is a product of the flesh. This is a calm assurance, a rock-ribbed confidence engendered by the Spirit.

Paul writes a similar thought to the Romans in chapter 5 when he speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. This introduction by faith conveys the idea of obtaining something like a letter of introduction from someone well-connected that will allow you access to an important dignitary upon whom you wish to call.

God is our dignitary, and faith in his Son is our introduction or calling card that gives us access.

When one begins giving serious consideration to biblical Christianity, it soon becomes apparent that repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ opens an innumerable number of spiritual doors of a whole new life.

We think of it as a kind of divine formula, and Paul refers to it in Acts chapter 20 when he concludes with a tearful farewell as he parts company with the elders of the church in Ephesus.

[20 : 52] He had labored long among them and taught them for about two years. In his farewell message, Paul reminds them that he had not shrank from declaring to them anything that was profitable and teaching you publicly and from house to house solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the two items that absolutely must be in place before one can receive salvation and the forgiveness of sins. The first needs to be a change of mind about oneself and our sin.

Who Jesus Christ is, why he came, what he did, and why it matters. Then, our faith or confidence must be transferred from whatever we previously had it placed in to the person of Jesus Christ.

It is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These absolutely critical exercises are needful for us all. Faith results in forgiveness.

It is hard, if not impossible, to think of any one thing man more desperately needs than this. This which causes sleepless nights, a guilt-ridden conscience, and an inordinate fear of dying.

[22 : 24] This of which a man may only dream of and wish that somehow he could know it. And this this is forgiveness. It's reality and it's assurance.

For many, it's availability is not even known. And this is truly tragic because so much peace and tranquility could be theirs to relish in a maximum way.

Forgiveness comes from the only one who has the right to grant it. And that someone is the one we all have offended. Forgiveness is extended to the offender, but it can only come from the offended one.

We mortals are all the offenders, and God is the offended. He is in the business of forgiveness as part of his job description. Yet, the basis for forgiveness is because Christ in his substitutionary death paid the full penalty that God's righteous law demanded.

It was death. Physical and spiritual Christ paid physically with the death of his body, which was separated from his human spirit. And he paid spiritually with the death of his spirit, being separated from God his Father, who turned away from him during those three hours of darkness while on the cross.

[23 : 46] Now, with the final and ultimate payment Christ made, the moral scales of the universe have been balanced, and God is free to fully forgive.

One obstacle stands in the way for one to receive that full and free forgiveness from God who truly wants to grant it. And that obstacle is God cannot and will not provide forgiveness to the unrepentant.

He who would be forgiven must admit, acknowledge, confess his sin to God, and be willing to turn from it. Man cannot deny his sin, excuse it, or wish to continue in it, and expect forgiveness to be granted.

God will forgive and save us from our sin, but he will not save us in our sin with an attitude that wants to continue it.

Repentance means to change one's mind. About what? About our sin, about Christ and his salvation, which may previously have been denied.

[24 : 57] And when we approach God and appeal to him for his forgiveness, he extends it to those who are placing their faith in the Son. The Son he gave for the very purpose of allowing himself to forgive without compromising his justice.

Christ, in providing himself as the sinless sacrifice, dealt with that very issue. And this also is why God cannot forgive apart from the work of Christ, because Christ alone accomplished what needed to be done.

The result is the exclusivity of salvation realized only through him. After all, he is the Savior. Do you know of another? Faith Results in Conversion The book of Acts contains numerous dramatic accounts of Christ continuing his ministry through his apostles after he ascended into heaven.

Chapter 11 records one of these. The early believers, all of whom were Jews, were being sorely persecuted by fellow Jews who soundly rejected their claims that Jesus of Nazareth really was the Messiah of Israel.

Those persecuted changed their location, but they never changed their message. Having fled to Antioch, they began to preach the Lord Jesus.

[26 : 24] The text says the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. The Greek word originally used is our word for converted or turned.

In their unbelief, these to whom they preached were turned away from the Lord to idols, as were most in that polytheistic early world.

But when they believed, they turned away from their idols and turned to the Lord. Conversion always speaks of a turning or changing.

There is even a connection of the meaning to the convertible automobile. It turns from a car with a top on it to one without a top or vice versa. It was converted from one mode to another.

Spiritually, one cannot become a believer in Christ without conversion. Whatever one looked to prior to Christ, he no longer does.

[27 : 27] Nor need anyone worry about whether or not they have been converted. Because if you've placed your trust in Jesus Christ, you were converted automatically.

Because conversion, like repentance, is part of the package of salvation. Repentance means a change of mind and heart so you no longer hold the same position about yourself, your sin, and Jesus Christ as you did before you put your faith in him.

And when you did, the instant you did, you were saved, regenerated, converted, baptized by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual body of Christ.

All these, plus much more, occurred instantaneously at the point of your salvation. Conversion is always from something to something.

For in the case of the pagans to whom early Christians were preaching, their conversion was from someone or someones, represented by multiple fictional deities, to someone, namely the Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 34] No one has ever come to Christ in faith without undergoing conversion. It is a consequence of believing, so one needn't pray for conversion or do something that constitutes conversion.

Dr. Lewis Barry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, has compiled a lengthy list of 33 different things that occur in the life of a believer the moment he places his faith in Christ. All 33 are rich spiritual blessings or advantages that come simultaneously with trusting in Christ. Conversion is one of those 33.

Praise be to God. Faith is Most Holy In his brief letter found near the end of the New Testament, just before the book of the Revelation, the Apostle Jude pens these words found in verse 20, But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.

His description of the faith of those to whom he writes is your most holy faith, and it speaks volumes upon careful analysis. It is not merely faith of which he speaks, but holy faith.

[29 : 57] In other words, there are innumerable faiths, but Jude is speaking of the holy faith. But that, too, is not sufficient. He labels it most holy faith.

It is, of course, a most holy faith because of the sacredness of the one in whom their faith was placed. How could it be less than the most holy faith?

It reminds one of the compartments in the Jewish temple. There was the holy place where the priests ministered, where the golden lamp stand, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, but then there was, in addition to the holy place, the most holy place.

That is, the most sanctified or holy place. And why did it have this name? Because here was the very dwelling place of God himself.

It contained the Ark of the Covenant, the only item of furniture in the most holy place. The lid for the Ark was called the mercy seat, with the cherubim and their overarching wings outstretched.

[31 : 07] There, said God, I will meet Israel. And only the high priest could enter there, and only on Yom Kippur, the day of Israel's national atonement.

This was the most holy place, and none holier than it could be found. When Jude calls the Christian faith the most holy faith, he separates it from all other faiths.

Whatever else others they may be, it is this faith that is the faith most holy. Jude tells them that they are to build up themselves on this most holy faith.

It constitutes the very foundation for their life. Their faith in Christ is their rock, their underpinning. Now, go ahead and build the superstructure of your life upon that foundation.

He concludes by telling them, as they build, they are to pray for guidance and direction in doing so. For all believers in Christ, whoever they are, wherever they are, whenever they are, they must know their faith is the most holy there is.

[32 : 28] Christ, being the object of this most holy faith, is also the most holy foundation upon which they may construct the superstructure of their life.

We should all take great care to ensure that the structure we build into our lives is worthy of the foundation that underlies it.

Faith is devoid of works, but exhibited by works. Here is, without question, one of the very greatest areas of misunderstanding regarding Christianity, and we are eager to offer an attempt from Christianity Clarified to try and dispel confusion.

In the main, it arises from the misunderstanding about faith and works and their respective contribution to the Christian faith. With great crystal clarity, the Bible insists that we are declared righteous before God solely on the basis of a non-meritorious faith.

All we did was believe the gospel. This is called justification by faith. Most books of the New Testament, particularly the Apostle Paul's writings, greatly emphasize and respect this reality.

[33 : 51] At the same time, and in the same books, solid emphasis is made as to the importance of our good works that are to flow from our having been justified by faith.

It's the old cart-before-the-horse syndrome. Are our good deeds important? Certainly. Are they even expected of Christians?

Definitely. But, and here's the issue, our good deeds are not to be performed by us in order to gain salvation, but in order to display our salvation.

With unmistakable clarity, Ephesians 2 tells us, For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

That's it. That's the package of salvation, loud and clear, in verses 8 and 9. Then, with equal clarity, he adds in verse 10 these words, That we are saved unto good works, that we should walk in them.

[35 : 06] We are not even in a position to render good works that God will accept until they are offered from a believer who has already been saved by grace. Once that is a reality, then roll up your sleeves and get to work, serving the Lord with whatever he has called and enabled you to do.

Faith in Christ is the root, and our good works are the fruit. Please don't think you can bypass salvation by grace through faith, and go right into producing good works or fruit.

To do so, is to put the cart before the horse. A like problem is addressed in James chapter 2 that causes many believers additional confusion. James says, Faith that has no good works to back it up is a dead faith, or we say, not faith at all.

The position James is taking does not contradict Paul at all, as some suppose. James 2 is simply saying if one claims to have faith and be a Christian, he ought to have some evidence of it, some fruit produced in his life by way of good works.

If he doesn't, what good is his faith? It's phony or dead. Clearly, our faith is put on display by the deeds that come out of it.

[36 : 35] Faith is productive. Of what good is a faith that does nothing, but just sits there? Of what benefit is it? The church at Thessalonica is heartily commended, much appreciated by the Apostle Paul.

And in his first letter to them, in chapter 1, he expresses his deep gratitude to this congregation. He himself was a beneficiary of their work of faith on his behalf.

He referred to the output of the Thessalonians as their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope. We focus on this expression, your work of faith.

Faith that is worth anything doesn't just sit there. It does something. It finds ways to express itself, and it does so out of gratitude, not obligation.

This was what Paul so appreciated about them. It should be reflected likewise in all churches where people of true faith gather. Faith properly placed in the person of Jesus Christ is met with acceptance, forgiveness, and the very imputation of the righteousness of Christ to one's personal account.

[37 : 51] One cannot simply let that go by the board. The gratitude is, or should be, overwhelming on the part of the one who exercised faith.

This spirit of thankfulness cries out for some way to give back, not in any kind of payment, but in deep appreciation for what has been received.

The believer's work of faith is never undertaken nor expended in order to gain God's approval, but because we already have it. We look for some way to express our gratitude, because simply saying thank you does not suffice.

Faith seeks to do something, not merely say something. Paul had come to Thessalonica and preached the gospel of Christ and many came to faith.

Their response was, what can we do because of what has been done for us? Well, we can thank God by feeding Paul, his servant. We can clothe him, support him, and encourage him, so he can go on his way and preach to others what he has preached to us.

[39 : 01] This is the faith that seeks to work and labor from a sense of gratitude, not from a sense of obligation, but purely out of the joy of a grateful heart.

Other translations rendered the passage, we never fail to recall the efforts that have resulted from your faith, and we cannot forget how your work came from your faith.

This all belongs to the incredible dynamic that faith in Christ produces. No wonder this church in Thessalonica held such a special place in the heart of the Apostle Paul.

And let's be reminded, this is to be the norm, the rule for faith, not the exception. Anyone's faith, or the faith of any church that doesn't do something, should pause and ask themselves whether they are really in the faith.

Faith is dynamic and active, maybe in a small way, maybe in a large way, but surely in some way. Let us go and do likewise. Faith is tried and tested.

[40 : 16] We expect to pay the price of some kind of punishment for wrongdoing, and so we should, and lawbreakers, to whatever degree, may anticipate, if caught, paying some kind of price

for their infraction.

That's as it should be. And in our heart of hearts, we have no quarrel with justice. But injustice, that's another matter. We are naturally repulsed when injustice occurs anywhere, because we know it just isn't right.

Why should anyone suffer punishment for having done no wrong? They shouldn't. But in a world that's gone wrong, that is often what happens. So, when did the world go wrong?

In Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve went wrong, they tainted their offspring with their wrongness called sin, and the world has been a wrong place in which to live ever since.

You have noticed, haven't you? Peter, the apostle, in his first letter, chapter 1, as much as tells us that people of faith will undergo trials, and why this is, is because the world is, remember, wrong, twisted, warped, skewed, broken.

[41 : 31] The world only has the mind it was born with to control its actions. Christians, conversely, have undergone spiritual regeneration upon exercising faith in Christ, and they now possess a mindset very different from the one with which they were born.

They have been born again, and it makes a radical difference. But if the worldlings at large still possess their unregenerate mind that confronts the regenerate mind, what result do you get? Conflict, sometimes leading to hostility, or, as Peter put it, trials. Trials which constitute the norm for Christians, especially in a climate of hostility and intolerance, and we can only expect it to intensify as the end draws near.

Peter reminds his audience of two thousand years ago that their faith is precious, and when they are tried or tested as in the crucible of persecution, it will only serve to refine and strengthen their faith.

After all, one doesn't really know how valid his faith is without it being put to a test. An untested faith is a theoretical faith until it is proved by adversity.

[42 : 51] The hymn writer Isaac Watts well says, Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb, and shall I fear to own his cause or blush to speak his name?

Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? Be reminded that even though the object of our faith is Christ, and that's what makes it perfect and precious, our personal faith as held by us is as flawed as we are. Yet, it will be refined in undergoing trials and testings, all of which reveals what we are really made of. So, let's soldier on.

Faith overcomes the world. The world, fallen and corrupt as it is, has a lot to offer that appeals to the flesh, our baser self.

Left to ourselves, we are simply no match for all its temptations and enticements. Those devoid of faith in Christ are, in effect, a pushover for the world.

[44 : 12] No contest. They have nothing apart from their conscience and willpower for standing against the world and its ways. But, why should they? Why try and stand against or resist something that is on the same wavelength as oneself?

Worldlings have no desire to oppose the world, which would be self-defeating. They are the world, and quite comfortable with it. Those apart from Christ make the world what it is.

It's a mere extension of themselves. So, they not only have no ability to overcome the world, they have no desire to do so. This is one of the marked differences between those in Christ and those without.

The world is seen differently. It is viewed with radically different eyes. 1 John 5 addresses this very issue, and all believers need to take heed.

Here is the way the Apostle John describes it. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.

[45 : 21] And who is the one who overcomes the world? But he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Through faith in Christ, we have been given a new perspective that enables the believer to see and evaluate the world for what it really is.

The world is, John further tells us in this same chapter 5, lying in the power of the evil one. It's described as the world snuggling down and being cozy and comfortable in the lap of Satan himself, and the world doesn't even know it.

And were they to be told, they would only ridicule and laugh at the entire notion. That response also fits their spiritual blindness, and it too is to be expected.

The faith one has placed in the Lord Jesus is that which results in a new set of regenerate eyes to see the world as it truly is. It is this same faith that enables the Christian to withstand the world and overcome it, rather than caving into its demands and enticements.

There is only one victor in this contest. A standoff truce is not available or desirable. Either the world overcomes you and you submit to its terms, or you overcome the world and are quite able to live above it.

[46 : 52] This overcoming of the very environment in which we live is but one of the many enablements that our faith in Christ allows us to realize. And let us also be compassionate to those unknowingly blinded by the world, remembering that before our faith was placed in Christ, we were no more desirous or successful in overcoming the world and its evils than they are.

Our faith overcomes the world. By faith Christ dwells within.

One of the most astounding and yet definitive passages God ever inspired the Apostle Paul to write is in Romans 8. And he, of course, is addressing true believers. See if you can grasp the significance of this.

It starts in verse 8 of chapter 8. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness.

[48 : 11] That passage can be coupled with Ephesians 3.16, where the Apostle speaks of the believer being strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

There's more. Colossians 1.27 reinforces the concept with, Christ is in you, the hope of glory. Does this really mean that the very Spirit of Christ dwells in the heart and mind of the believer?

Of course it does, and it could hardly be more plain. On what basis or how did such a thing come about? It came through faith.

When you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, his very Spirit, that regenerated your spirit, took up residence in you. Christ in his Spirit dwells within every believer, also referred to as the earnest or the firstfruits of the Spirit, revealed by Paul in Ephesians 1 and Romans 8.

So, how do we know the Spirit of Christ indwells us? Some mistakenly believe it to be by our feelings, but are there not times when you feel like anything but Christ is dwelling in you, like when you are in bed with a full-blown case of intestinal flu?

[49 : 38] So, how do we know? Certainly not on the basis of how we feel. Feelings can be so fickle and often depend upon what our physical body is experiencing at the time.

We need confirmation of Christ indwelling from a far more reliable source, and we have it, from God and his Word. The Spirit of Christ indwells all believers because God says so.

Whether you have the feeling of warm fuzzies or not, Christ is in you because he says he is. Not only that, but his being in us is our absolute guarantee that these bodies he indwells will one day be glorified.

Christ in you, the hope or the assurance of future glory, is the way Colossians 127 states it. He is there within you because you are in him, and that solely through your faith.

He is in you, and you are in him. You belong to each other. He came in when you put your faith in him, and he will never leave you nor forsake you, regardless of how you feel or what your body is experiencing.

[51 : 03] Faith is temporary. A beautiful triad of virtues concludes an equally beautiful description of love in the familiar 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians.

After a divine explanation of what real love is and does and does not do, the apostle concludes with his summation, and here it is.

But now abide faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love. It appears Paul is saying that for the present, or but now, we have faith, hope, and love.

And then he adds that the greatest of these is love. Faith and hope are present and needful, but the time is coming when faith and hope will not be present or needed.

But our need for the presence of love will never become passe. This is because faith, along with hope, both have an ongoing future in mind.

[52 : 08] But when once that future gets here, neither faith nor hope will be around. Their absence will be due to their both having come to completion or fulfillment.

Both of these lovely virtues will be unnecessary. We stop hoping for something when once it is realized. And we no longer need faith because it too will have become a fulfilled realization. A girl no longer hopes her boyfriend will ask her to marry him when they are on their honeymoon. Likewise, faith that is so critical on this side of heaven and eternity will have no venue for operation after faith is fulfilled and we are eternally in the presence of our God.

But love? Well, we never outgrow our need for that. Love will always be in vogue, never out of style in this world or the next.

Probably that's the reason Paul identified love as the greatest because it is the one of the three virtues that will endure forever. Love will never be finished.

[53 : 18] Love will always have an objective. There will always be someone to love and be loved by. And that's a wonderful thought in itself. The fact that life's greatest pleasure is to love and be loved and to know that we'll continue in the eternal state is just more icing God has put on our cake.

Faith and hope can then be dismissed. Thank you. They both were critical and served us well, but they were needed only before everything was fulfilled.

Yet, let's be reminded we are not there yet. Here in this present state, faith is not only essential, it is the modus operandi. Faith is the operative medium God has commissioned for connecting with Him.

And without faith, we are reminded, it is impossible to please God. And you may be quite certain as surely as God is God, there is nothing that should top our mere mortal's agenda than pleasing the immortal God.

Faith, trust, reliance, dependence upon Him will do that, and nothing else will. Faith is temporal, but for right now, it's very essential.

[54 : 41] Information Must Be Appropriated by Faith A very sad passage is recorded in Hebrews 4, where the writer speaks of entering into God's spiritual rest.

So, whatever does that mean? It means when one comes to the place of personal salvation, a process is completed. It's true, of course, that another process is beginning, but the initial phase of our redemption is complete.

We are complete in Christ. Therefore, we enter into spiritual rest or relaxation. Of course, there is much to be done after one comes to faith in Christ, but not in order to come to Him.

It is to be done because we have come to Him. As regards our salvation, the believer is at rest. As regards our service, because of our salvation, there's lots to do, so we need to get with it and not be a lazy believer.

One comes to spiritual rest only by connecting with God. A connection made by a response of faith or belief upon hearing the information. We call that information the gospel.

[55 : 53] What will we do with it when we hear it? Only one of two things. We believe it, or we do not believe it, and there is no middle ground. The writer of Hebrews in chapter 4 refers to the nation of Israel and their response to the information they were given.

Listen to how he put it. Let us fear, lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.

For indeed, we have had good news preached to us, just as Israel also. But the word did not profit them, because it was not mixed or united by faith in those who heard.

It's simply another way of saying one may hear the good news and the information it imparts, but if it is not met with faith, or if it is not believed when it is heard, it does not profit the hearer at all.

It's a very simple but important concept. It doesn't matter how much or how frequently we have heard the truth of the gospel if we haven't done anything about it. When the information we receive is responded to by our faith, we are then mixing the message with our volitional belief.

[57 : 09] We are then they whom the message and information profits. And those who refuse to mix the message with their belief in it are referred to in the previous third chapter of Hebrews and are described as those who provoked God by hardening their heart.

This means they stubbornly refuse to believe the message. They did not exercise faith in the information they were given. So whatever you do, says the writer of Hebrews, don't be like them. Profit from their negative example of stubbornness and disobedience, but make sure you don't follow in their train. Each time someone hears the gospel of Jesus Christ and his death for sinners, it is a time of decision.

And the only right one, the one that pleases God, is to mix your faith with it by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. And doing so will allow you to enter into that spiritual rest.

Gaining a grasp on biblical faith. The subject of faith is greatly misunderstood and evidenced by the way many moderns use the term.

[58 : 29] When they say, just have faith, well, what is usually meant is, think positively and just hope and pray that everything will turn out okay. Well, a positive outlook may have its place, but it's a far cry from what biblical faith is.

The faith that is biblical is faith which has an object. It has some depository in which it is placed.

Faith is not its own object. That is, we are not to have faith in faith.

Faith in and of itself cannot do anything for anyone. It is confidence in one that can do something for the person who exercises faith.

It is why faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is presented throughout that results in a declaration of our being accepted or received by God. It is further called justification by faith.

Faith is the vehicle that consciously entrusts oneself to Jesus Christ on the basis of His having paid the price for our sin and His offer to us as our personal Savior.

[59 : 38] We respond to that offer with our belief, our acceptance of Christ. Upon exercising faith, Christ saves us. So, while we are not saved by faith, but saved by Christ, faith is the necessary vehicle God has ordained for the process.

Faith and salvation are inseparable. It's like repentance in that sense. While we are not saved by repenting of our sin, yet we cannot be saved without it.

So it is with faith. We are not saved by faith, but we are not saved without it. Grace is another inseparable term in the dynamics of our salvation. Grace is the basis of our salvation.

That is, it is by grace. But faith is the instrument by which grace is applied. And both are contingent upon the first part.

That is, one's repentance or change of mind about our sin. All of these God-ordained dynamics are distinct in themselves. Yet, each one is a vital contributor or a link in the chain to the entire process that moves the believing sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life.

[60 : 58] So one may well say, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone. And repentance is that change of our mind that must occur when we hear the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for my sin.

Because if I do not repent of my sin, that is, change my mind about my sin, so I now see it as God sees it, and need to be saved from it, if I don't come to that conclusion, I will not place my faith in Christ because I do not even see myself as needing a Savior.

But if I do repent, acknowledge, admit my sin, then I know I need a Savior, and Christ is waiting to receive and embrace me.

Do you know where you are in all of this? Imperfect Faith is All We Have It is a truly magnificent thing to realize that one really doesn't have to know very much in order to be saved.

A childlike example is sometimes cited in saying, just have the faith of a little child, that's all that's needed. And it's quite true. While it's spiritually enriching to understand the distinctions and definitions of theological terms, they, happily, are not required for salvation.

[62 : 29] John Newton, the old 18th century converted slave ship owner and master, was gloriously saved and gave us the words to that immortal hymn, Amazing Grace.

Nearing the end of his life, Newton was heard to say, My mind and memory are not what they used to be, But I still clearly remember two great truths.

I was a great sinner, and Christ is a great Savior. Just how much faith need one place in Jesus Christ in order to be saved?

Interesting question. How do you know you have had enough faith? Maybe you came up short and didn't quite believe enough. The Bible does talk about faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, about O ye of little faith, and I have not seen such great faith, no, not in Israel, Jesus was heard to say.

Our faith that results in salvation is our trust, our confidence, our reliance, our dependence. But they are all deposited in the person of Christ, and nothing is ever said about quantifying them.

[63 : 45] This can only mean the faith we place in Jesus Christ is not something to be measured out, as in coming up short by half a pound of faith, so go back and try to work up a little more faith.

Nothing of the kind. It isn't whether we have a certain amount of faith in Christ, but whether we have any at all. Let's ask another question. What would a perfect faith look like?

Well, we'll never know, because none of us has it. We all believe with an imperfect and woefully immature faith. An imperfect faith is the only kind that we imperfect persons can muster.

We always leave room for doubt that makes our faith imperfect, just like it did for Abraham, John the Baptist, Peter the Apostle, and others.

The amazing thing about our imperfect faith is that God does not respond with an imperfect salvation when we place our imperfect faith in Him.

[64 : 48] None of us is into perfection on any plane, because it would be totally foreign to our fallen humanity. But God gives us salvation that is not part of our fallen humanity.

It is part of His provision that makes us whole and complete in Him. We are to Him as a bride adorned for her husband, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

In essence, we come to Christ with the only kind of faith we have, which is as imperfect as we are, and we can only humbly say, Lord, I believe.

Help thou mine unbelief. Faith does not deny facts.

It isn't unusual for non-believers to accuse Christians of being Pollyannish, unrealistic, or terribly naive. Some even mistakenly think Christians ignore or deny facts so as to maintain their faith.

[65 : 50] This is patent nonsense, and simply proves how pervasive is the spiritual blindness of the unbeliever. But don't blame him for that, because it's all he has, and it was all we had before Christ opened our eyes and allowed us to see things as they really are.

Christians are not people who try to create their own reality because they don't like the one there is, nor are we a people who ignore or deny facts.

For instance, we do not place our faith in Jesus Christ, contrary to what all the facts and evidence tell us about His death and resurrection, but because of what they tell us.

Listen to how our reputable physician and historian Dr. Luke put it, as the Spirit of God inspired him to write his account. Here's what he said at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles.

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

[66 : 55] To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

Many convincing proofs, evidence, facts, testimonies given by multiple credible witnesses.

Christianity is not built upon fluff, but upon facts not to be denied, but embraced.

Facts build a case. Facts constitute evidence to be evaluated that enables one to arrive at a conclusion. And if the conclusion reached is not based on credible witnesses, it is suspicious at best, and a lie at worst.

There is no virtue or validity in incredulity. Believing something in spite of the evidence, to the contrary, is intellectual suicide, and not worthy of anyone who calls himself a believer in Jesus Christ.

There are multitudes, and we do mean multitudes, of believers, who originally set out to disprove the claims of the person and work of Christ, only to have gotten too close to the evidence.

[68 : 12] So close, they, being people of intellectual integrity, could no longer maintain their position of denial and unbelief. The evidence was simply overwhelming when examined honestly and thoroughly.

Very often, those who ridicule and berate Christians for their faith are simply trying to reinforce their own unbelief. And the more they can convince themselves that Christians have this thing of faith all wrong, and it's only so much nonsense, then the better it makes them look in their own eyes, and the better it makes them feel justified in maintaining their unbelief.

This is not at all uncommon, but has even been acknowledged by many in those multitudes we mentioned earlier. Christianity must be based on facts.

No one with any intellectual integrity has any business embracing anything else. Faith is precious.

The Apostle Peter opens his second letter with these words, Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us.

[69 : 27] Precious is a word of peculiar value assigned only to someone or something far out of the ordinary. About the most the world can do is assign the word precious to gems, stones, rare, irreplaceable art objects, and the like, all of which are perishable and thus temporal.

But Peter, in this second letter, applies the word precious to the subject of faith. He says, To those to whom he writes are they who have obtained like precious faith with us.

Here the word faith is used as a noun, something to be obtained. And he speaks, of course, of those who have exercised their faith or trust in Jesus Christ and have, as a result, become a possessor or a member of the Christian faith.

There is, Peter says, no adequate description to be placed upon such a possession as faith. It is precious, priceless, which, of course, means no price in any commodity could equal what one possesses in the Christian faith.

The reasons this should be obvious was the cost that was paid to make our faith available. It's Peter also who puts the price tag on the Christian faith in his first letter when he declares, For as much as you know you were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious there's our word, the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

[71 : 09] Christ's precious blood provided for a precious faith. How could it be otherwise? Couple that with the duration of the life he has provided for us, eternal life.

What kind of price could one assign to that? What Peter is saying is that the great cost paid to secure our privilege of faith, our opportunity to even exercise our faith in Christ came about because of the unfathomable substitutionary death Christ paid.

Well described by our word precious. And the benefits he purchased for us are likewise precious, irreplaceable, incalculable, incalculable.

What a package! It even makes the word precious seem inadequate. But being mere humans it's about the best we can do. Precious.

This is why Christians with a different value system than the secular world describe all human life as precious. This is why people with biblical values struggle and defend the life of the unborn.

[72 : 17] It's a precious human life at stake. And the world has an entirely different set of values. The world is unable to assign preciousness to that which really is precious.

But for redeemed believers we know what truly is precious even our faith and Christ who is the object of it. You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman.

Preview of CD Volume 18 There are numerous theological concepts found throughout the Bible that produce great appreciation when understood.

Many of these truths are things nearly all of us have always wondered about but were never able to grasp so as to produce satisfaction and in some cases to literally put our hearts and minds at ease. These too numerous to mention here will be examined and explained in the upcoming 18, 19, and 20th volumes of Christianity Clarified with of course each volume containing 20 of these brief segments.

[73 : 44] The goal of Christianity Clarified remains the same. It is an ongoing effort to address the great truths of the Christian faith as set forth in the Bible and explain them in an understandable fashion that the average person is able to grasp.

We do not minimize the depth or complexity of many of these truths because they do reflect the great profundity of our God. Nonetheless, while we agree about our inability to fully grasp any aspect of the triune God or His Word, we are eager and compelled to admit that all of us are capable of grasping far more than we do.

And if these topics can stimulate and motivate each of us toward a serious reflection of the Almighty, we all will be immeasurably enriched and God will be honored.

This is what Christianity Clarified is all about and its precise rationale for its efforts. We trust that you who are hearing this present segment have already had the advantage of the preceding 16 CDs and perhaps have them in your possession or maybe have passed them on to others to share. And that would amount to 320 segments total so far, covering every major doctrine of the Christian faith as well as many more minor truths. They constitute a comprehensive compendium of theological concepts in a plain language manner that makes for a miniature biblical education available to everyone who wishes to embrace it.

[75 : 31] Christian This is Pastor Marv Wiseman thanking you for giving Christianity Clarified a hearing. We do sincerely appreciate your interest and we also so much appreciate the many names

and addresses you have sent us of people you think would enjoy and benefit from Christianity Clarified.

You may be assured that none of the names given us will ever be targeted for financial contributions of any kind. And if you send us names and addresses of those you would like to recommend, we will of course send them the first six CDs of Christianity Clarified, free of charge, no strings attached, and they can then decide if they wish to receive more.

on the same basis, all free, no strings attached. The project of Christianity Clarified has been underwritten by Grace Bible Church folks who have generously contributed to the Barbara Wiseman Memorial Fund.

I sincerely hope you're looking forward to Volume 18 of Christianity Clarified and I'm certainly looking forward to providing it for you. God bless you.

God bless you.