

The following Scripture passages are offered to aid beginning fellowships. The readings and commentary for this week are more in line with what has become usual; for the following will most likely be familiar observations. The concept behind this Sabbath's selection is *interactionism*.

[Printable/viewable PDF format to display Greek or Hebrew characters](#)

Weekly Readings *For the Sabbath of November 15, 2014*

The person conducting the Sabbath service should open services with two or three hymns, or psalms, followed by an opening prayer acknowledging that two or three (or more) are gathered together in Christ Jesus' name, and inviting the Lord to be with them.

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, *To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours* by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. ***For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*** For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. (2 Pet 1:1–10 emphasis and double emphasis added)

1.

There were approximately fifty thousand youth and young adults in the former Worldwide Church of God in January 1986, when Herbert Armstrong died ... where, today, are these now mid-life sons [and daughters] of righteousness? They certainly have not obtained a faith of equal standing with the Apostle Peter; for if they had, they would be walking in this world as Jesus walked. They would not be walking as Gentiles, the peoples of the nations. And where are their parents, a significant portion of whom remain physically alive? Have these parents supplemented their faith with virtue [doing

what they knew was/is right], then supplemented virtue with knowledge? No, they have not. They remain without knowledge, without brotherly affection, and without manifested love toward other Christians, particularly those who absolutely refuse to believe God despite professing with mouths that Jesus is Lord and believing in their hearts that the Father raised Jesus from death.

Last week one of my younger brothers, Ben, a devout Evangelical, sent me a copy of his memoir, *Gift of the Journey*, a private printing that will not be widely circulated nor offered for sale. He is doggedly determined not to grow in grace and knowledge; for he believes he already has all truth, or at least enough that he understands the mysteries of God and will go to heaven upon his death. However, he ignores the Passover and believes that salvation comes entirely through <faith> as American Christians assign meaning to the word and to the concept.

Faith becomes an ontological concept because of the nature of <being>, of *existing*.

Is *faith* merely a mental concept divorced from *existence*, a concept that remains inside the Christian who continues to outwardly live and act as a Gentile? This is the concept of *faith* found in the Federalist Papers, the logic behind imposing State duties upon Dissenters, even to requiring Sabbatarian Christians to physically do what their consciences prohibit.

However, as early as the American Civil War, acceptance of an outward expression of internal beliefs had seeped into the Establishment Clause; for provision was made for religious pacifists, in particular for Quakers [Friends] and for Sabbatarian Baptists, ideological descendants of 16th-Century Anabaptists who had continued their spiritual trek from Babylon to Jerusalem by metaphorically crossing the River Jordan to enter into God's Rest ... Mennonites, Hutterites, and the majority of Old German Baptists figuratively settled on the plains of Moab and remain there to this day. And no argument will dislodge them: it is as if they are terrified of even putting toes in the waters of the Jordan for fear of being contaminated by Jewish legalism.

Is *faith* belief of the person that manifests itself in how the Christian lives in this world, how the Apostle Paul thought of *faith*?

If *faith* is this latter concept that transforms belief into deeds, then faith through a short delay will be present itself—present its quality of *being*—in the virtue of the person; in the good deeds of the person, with these good deeds or good works preceding the acquisition of knowledge, which in turns precedes self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection, and genuine love for God, neighbor, and brother, even for a biological brother who unwittingly denies God, Father and Son, through maintaining the position that *faith* is only a mental concept and is without existence.

The Apostle Paul gave *existence* to faith when he wrote (via the scribe Tertius),

For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the Law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)" or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* For the

Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I [the Lord] have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." But of Israel He says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people." (Rom 10:4–21 emphasis added)

Paul establishes difference between being *justified* [*with the heart one believes and is justified*, the internal or mental belief of the person] and being *saved* [*with the mouth one confesses and is saved*, the physical manifestation of the internal or mental belief of the person].

Justification precedes salvation, or as Paul previously expressed the ontology of *faith*:

And we know that *for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose*. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and *those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified*. (Rom 8:28–30 emphasis added)

A foreknown and predestined person—a natural Israelite or a Gentile—will through being raised from the dead by God the Father (John 5:21) and drawn from this world, the Father delivering the person to Christ Jesus (John 6:44), “believe” God with the heart, believing that God the Father raised Jesus from death. Now to this *faith* that is still without *being* [*existence* in this physical world], the mouth of the predestined person must profess that *Jesus is Lord*, an act done in this world that transforms a mental thought or concept into an ephemeral but real *thing* in this world.

James expresses the assignment of *being* to faith when he writes,

Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. What good is it,

my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. (Jas 2:5–26 emphasis added)

Martin Luther considered James an epistle of straw; for Luther held that *faith* alone is adequate for salvation ... in other words, Martin Luther quibbled mightily with the Apostle Paul in that for Luther, *faith* had no *being* or *existence* in this world, the underlying rationale for him arguing that the master of the house can have sexual relations with the serving wench when the mistress of the house is unavailable. The master of the house, in having sexual relations outside of marriage does not sin for *faith* alone is all that is necessary for salvation ... Luther's writings about sex outside of marriage has long been an embarrassment for Lutherans as these writings should be, but understanding Luther's theology requires deconstructing his ontological position on the *being of faith*, with the *faith of Christ* personified in the Christian who walks in this world as Christ Jesus walked, meaning that the Christian strives to keep the Law, resists breaking the Law in any manner, and therefore walks in this world as Paul walked, as Peter walked, as Jesus Himself walked (see 1 John 2:6).

For far too long, the Christian laity has accepted whatever came from pulpits as coming from God. The laity was taught that the Bible was the infallible Word of God ... even Luther knew better although he discounted both James and Revelation. He would have done better rejecting the Pastoral Epistles from which he accepted the concept of a Christian clergy that delivered to the laity *sound doctrine*, such as Luther didn't express when it came to marital fidelity.

The Christian laity, long ago, became fossilized in its ignorance, willingly accepting the epiphenomenalism that holds mental states do not influence physical states. Thus, for the Christian laity, Christians can have *faith* mentally, but simultaneously have the body do nothing concerning what the mind believes is true. The laity can feel compassion for Christ Jesus, but this compassion becomes a causal dead-end: the laity ignores that the Apostle Paul wrote,

- For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved— (1 Thess 2:14–16)

- For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. (1 Cor 4:15–16)
- Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (1 Cor 10:32–11:1)

Christ Jesus did not walk in this world as a Pharisee or a Sadducee, but He did walk as a Judean, a person who believed Moses and walked without sin; without transgressing the Ten Living Words forming the Royal Law ... is that too much to ask for anyone? Moses didn't think so; for on the plains of Moab, he told the children of Israel,

For ***this commandment that I command you today*** [the Moab Covenant, Paul's *righteousness based on faith*] ***is not too hard for you, neither is it far off***. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of [YHWH] your God that I command you today, by loving [YHWH] your God, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His rules, then you shall live and multiply, and [YHWH] your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving [YHWH] your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that [YHWH] swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them. (Deut 30:11–20 double emphasis added)

Epiphenomenalism is property dualism, the assertion that the mental state[s] of a Christian does/do not exert influence on the physical state[s], ontologically or causally irreducible. While the material world can produce sensations or ideas, these mental phenomena cause nothing to happen: they are causal blind alleys, box canyons. They are the antithesis of *interactionism*, which will have mental causes [*faith*] produce material effects, such as professing with the Christian's mouth that *Jesus is Lord*.

The person who in sincerity declares that *Jesus is Lord* will act like Jesus did, thereby keeping the Royal Law because Jesus did. My brother is not, today, such a person. He might, however, be such a person tomorrow if he can overcome his own obstinate self. And if he can, American Christendom can.

The corollary is that if he cannot, neither can greater Christendom in America.

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