



HELPS Word-Studies

An excerpt from *The Discovery Bible* by HELPS Ministries.

4102 *pístis* (from 3982/*peithō*, "*persuade*," "be persuaded") – properly, *persuasion* (God giving His *persuasion* about what pleases Him); *faith*.

The *root* of 4102/*pistis* ("faith") – 3982/*peithō* ("to persuade," "be persuaded") – signals the *core-meaning of faith in the Bible*: "the Lord's *inworked (inbirthed) persuasion*" (G. Archer).

In its *biblical* sense, faith is always *received* by believers (never self-generated). Faith is always the gift (work) of God, from the moment of conversion, to the end of sanctification (so Wm. Tyndale, M. Luther, J. Calvin, etc., etc., etc.). "According to Heb 11:1-3, faith is a [*divine*] *persuasion* (F. Büchsel, *TDNT* II 476) of *invisible* things" (*DNTT*, 2, 768).

[Ancient, secular Greek literature also uses 4102 (*pistis*) of a *guarantee* ("warranty") based on a *valid persuasion*.]

1. Heb 11:1 refers to *faith* (4102/*pistis*) as "God's *warranty* (title deed)" given to believers *desiring what pleases Him*, and hence *receiving the persuasion* He births within (cf. Heb 11:1 with 1 Jn 5:4). Faith certifies that the revelation of His will *always* comes to pass . . . *His way!*

[Faith is "title" to what God leads believers to hope for (what pleases Him) – which always brings a "divine-assurance" (invisible confirmation) of His will (Heb 11:1).]

Faith therefore is also *an experience with God* as well as divine revelation about what pleases Him. It is all about Him, comes from Him, and glorifies Him. "*Faith* then is not the *same as human belief* (which is a common theological error) explicitly refuted in Scripture" (G. Archer). Faith is always God's work (imparted by the Lord, cf. Ro 12:3; 2 Thes 1:11, Gk text).

[Confusion about this leads some to mistake faith as their "tool" to wield supernatural power . . . *for self-serving ends*.]

2. Faith (4102/*pistis*) is sometimes (rarely) used *collectively*, i.e. of all God has revealed (inworked) concerning His will, as in the *infallible revelation of Scripture* (cf. Jude 3). Here again *faith* is *received* as God's *grace-gift*, guaranteeing that all He says will come to pass, *as He wills*.

One insightful NT scholar well-remarked, "4102 (*pístis*) can only be translated three ways: 'faith *in* God' (objective genitive); 'faith *from* God' (subjective genitive); and 'faithfulness of God.' Since Greek already has a term for faithful (4103/*pistos*), 'faithfulness' is *not* likely. Moreover 'faith in God' still presumes faith comes from Him which prompts *faith*-believing – hence the best choice (consistent meaning) of translating 4102/*pístis* ('faith') when used with the *genitive* (God/*theou*) is 'faith *from* God.'"

Grant Osborne, "Faith in Scripture is the gift of God which persuades the receptive heart of what pleases Him."

[Faith (4102/*pístis*) is regularly followed by a noun or pronoun referring to the Lord in the Greek *genitive* case (like "faith from God"). While this is routinely understood as an "objective genitive" (= "a person's faith in God"), the "subjective genitive" is "more natural and theologically far more likely (i.e. 'faith *from* God,' 'faith birthed by God')" (G. Archer).]

Randy Clark, "The word 'faith' has traditionally been understood as 'believing the correct doctrinal positions about Jesus' . . . they are important. However *in the Bible* these are not the emphasis of the word 'faith.' Instead, faith as *Scripture* emphasizes it is *most often understood as receiving a word of revelation from God*, believing the word that calls for some act of obedience . . ." (*Charisma Magazine*, March 2012, pp 37,38).

[Faith from God inspires (produces) *faith*-believing. For more discussion see 4100/*pisteuō* ("believe").]

Working it out . . .

1. Throughout the Christian life (beginning to end) faith (4102/*pístis*) is an *unearned gift of God*.

Eph 2:8,9: "8For by grace you have been saved through *faith* (4102/*pístis*); and that not of yourselves, it is *the gift of God*; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (*NASB*).

[Exegetically, the Greek *neuter* noun ("gift") includes *faith and salvation* (cf. Wm Hendriksen and most other commentators, *in loc*).]

Gal 5:22,23: "22But *the fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, *faith* (4102/*pístis*), 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

[4102/*pístis* ("faith") should never be translated "faithfulness."]

Faith is related to (yet distinct from) *believing* (4100/*pisteuō*). *Faith* (a Greek noun) refers to "God's *persuasion* birthed in a believer." *Believing* (a Greek verb) relates to the human choice to have confidence (affirm, trust).

Faith is not exactly the same as *believing*, and *believing* is not exactly *faith* so the common statement, "*Put your faith and trust in Christ*" is easily misunderstood where both terms become only a *human* choice.

["Faith from God" is *distinct* from human *belief* and *confidence*, though they overlap in meaning.]

Reflection: Many people *believe* . . . *without* having faith – and have faith . . . but lack enough belief to carry it through! The goal of life is to only do works that are truly of faith, i.e. only what is inspired by God. These works become God's works through us, "because as He is, so also are we in this world" (1 Jn 4:17).

["Good works" in Scripture always require God's inworking of faith – which makes them good!

1 Tim 6:18: "Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share" (NASB).]

2. Through faith (4102/*pístis*), the Lord shares a personal knowledge of His *preferred-will* (cf. J. Calvin; see 2307/*thelēma*). Accordingly *faith* (4102/*pístis*) and "God's *preferred-will*" (2307/*thelēma*) are directly connected.
3. Ro 12:2,3: "²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what *the will* (2307/*thelēma*) of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as *God has allotted to each a measure of faith* (4102/*pístis*)" (NASB).
4. 2 Cor 8:5,7: "⁵And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the *will* (2307/*thelēma*) of God" (NASB).
⁷But just as you abound in everything, in *faith* (4102/*pístis*) and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also" (NASB).
- Heb 10:36,38: "³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the *will* (2307/*thelēma*) of God, you may receive what was promised" (NASB).

"³⁸BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY *FAITH* (4102/*pistis*); AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM" (NASB).

Reflection: Faith (4102/*pistis*) is a grace-gift from the Lord, constantly birthed in those wanting what *pleases* Him (hear His voice, lay hold of His preferred-will).

- Hab 2:1,4: "¹I will stand on my guard post
And station myself on the rampart;

And I will keep watch to see *what He will speak in* (Heb *b^e*) *me*.

"⁴Behold, as for the proud one,

His soul is not right within him;

But the righteous will live in his *faith*" (= 4102/*pistis*, 'faith from the Lord')" (NASB).

- 1 Jn 5:4: "For every [occasion of faith] having been birthed from ('out of,' 1537/*ek*) God conquers the world. And *this* is the conquest having conquered the world: our *faith* (4102/*pistis*)."

In brief

In Scripture, 4102/*pistis* ("faith") – "God's *persuasion*" birthed in the redeemed heart – is *only experienced by true believers* (cf. 1 Jn 5:4). Biblical faith (4102/*pistis*, "divine *persuasion*") is *always and only the Lord's work* (never produced by people). *Believing* (human choice) is our responsibility – something *related* to faith but *not identical* with it. "Self-produced" faith, by definition, *is not biblical faith*. Nor is faith a *human virtue* which can be "worked up" at will.

2 Thes 1:11: "To this end (glorification) – indeed each time we pray *about* (4012/*peri*) you for the *purpose* (2443/*hina*) of our God counting you worthy of the call – even that He may fulfill [His] every good-pleasure that comes from [His] goodness and [His] *work of faith*, in [His] ability." See also Col 2:12 (Gk text), "through the faith produced by the energy (operation) of God . . .".

The Lord continuously *births faith* to those wanting what *He prefers*, i.e. the *persuasion* about what pleases Him (His will, cf. Ro 14:23). Faith (4102/*pistis*) is always *received from God* (never generated by people).