

# DID JESUS REALLY LIVE BY FAITH?

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Many will be surprised by my question: Did Jesus *really* live by faith? Yes? No? Well, maybe?

Now let's put our thinking caps on! If Jesus eternally pre-existed as God (or even as Michael the archangel as the JW's believe), then when he transmigrated to earth did he remember the former glories of heaven? If he did, then faith for him was superfluous, for "faith is the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

If Jesus personally pre-existed as 'God the Son', then when he came to earth 'in flesh' did he remember with satisfaction the exhilaration of having flung the sun, moon, stars and planets into space by his creative word? If so, then he did not *really* need the faith the rest of us do, for "by faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God ..." (Hebrew 11:3).

Was Jesus conscious of previous angelic worship of him as God? And as he trudged Galilee's dusty roads did he recall with immense comfort the conversations he had had "pre-incarnation" with the other two Persons in the Trinity? Even more fundamentally and profoundly was he conscious that he *was* God all the while living as man? If so, why would he need *faith*?

The typical response is that Jesus as "true man" had emptied himself of the outward display of his Deity, so he was, temporarily at least, unable to enjoy the privileges of Deity during the days of his humility. For 33 years Jesus was not conscious of the things God is eternally conscious of! Therefore, he could not tap into his omniscience for undue advantage. Hmm. Convenient dichotomy? <sup>1</sup>

As you can see, the popular notion that Jesus was not *really* a human being like the rest of us leaves us in uncertainty where our question is concerned. After all, if Jesus is God-in-the-flesh as the popular notion runs, then would he really need to live by the faith the rest of us must? Yes? No? Well, sort of?

## FAITH IN JESUS OR THE FAITH OF JESUS?

I imagine by now some readers are feeling uneasy about our question: Did Jesus *really* live by faith like the rest of us? Let's look at a significant piece of the puzzle.

Doesn't the NT exhort us to have faith **in** Jesus? The answer is, yes. Of course the Scriptures enjoin us to believe in Jesus. Perhaps the best known Bible verse of all time says that "whosoever believes **in** him has eternal life", right (John 3:16)? True. We are indeed encouraged to take Jesus at his word, to rest in his finished work on the cross, to hope in his Gospel, to rely on his victory over death, to rest in his proven character, and to await for his glorious return to complete our salvation. Jesus Christ is indeed the proper object of our trust.

But I want to show that this is only part of the matter. For there are many NT texts that also call us to walk according to "the faith **of** Jesus", that is, to exercise the same faith Jesus himself lived by.

Texts that are typically translated as "faith in Jesus" include;

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<sup>1</sup> This theory of 'Kenosis' or 'emptying' is the official Trinitarian doctrine teaching that the so-called "two natures" of Jesus are "unchangeable, indivisible, inseparable" and that the "properties" of His Godhood and Manhood are "preserved" in the one "hypostasis" (Person) all the while not being "as though he were parted or divided into two Persons". Still doesn't answer our question!

The righteousness of God [is] through faith **in** Jesus Christ for all those who believe (Rom.3:22).

That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith **in** Jesus (Rom.3:26).

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith **in** Christ Jesus, even we have believed **in** Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith **in** Christ (Gal.2:16).

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith **in** the Son of God ... (Gal. 2:20).

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 (Phil. 3:9). <sup>2</sup>

However, most Bible readers are not aware the Greek grammar in these verses literally reads “through **the faith of Jesus**”. <sup>3</sup> But our King James readers who have these verses tucked away in the memory bank already suspect this (even if you don’t read the Greek) because for instance, Romans 3: 22 and Galatians 2:16,20 respectively read,

The righteousness of God (which) is **by [the] faith of** Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ... Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but **by the faith of** Jesus Christ ... and the life which I now live in the flesh I live **by the faith of** the Son of God ...

It has to be said that either translation is permissible from the original Greek text. So we must now ask if there is a way to rule in favour of one or the other, or is it best left open because it does not really matter?

## THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

Let’s now compare the same linguistic structure --- “the faith **of** Jesus” --- with the exact same construction in Romans 4:16 --- “the faith **of** Abraham”,

For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are **of the faith of** Abraham, who is the father of us all.

Here there is no doubt the genitive must be understood to mean “the faith **of** Abraham”, for nobody for a moment thinks we are to have “faith **in** Abraham”! The Scripture says, “Abraham believed God, [and] it was reckoned to him as righteousness” (Romans 4: 3). Abraham is a great example of what it means to live by faith. All who follow Abraham’s example of faith are his children.

So, Abraham’s true descendants are those who walk in “the faith **of** Abraham”. Which is to say, anybody --- whether Jew or Gentile --- who takes God at His word like Abraham did, and thus commits himself or herself to the promises of God in Christ, will also be considered right in God’s sight. A true descendant of Abraham displays the same faith Abraham had.

Now here is the crunch. The Scripture also says that Jesus himself walked in the faith of Abraham! How could it be otherwise? If Jesus was to be considered the descendant (lit. “*seed*”) and offspring of

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<sup>2</sup> These verses are from the NASB, but the NIV, the RSV, the NKJV, the RV, and all the main English translations (except the KJV) follow this construction, directing us to have faith **in** Jesus as the object of our trust. The ESV reads “faith in Jesus” but in its footnotes has, “Or, *through the faith of Jesus Christ*”, giving editorial acknowledgment to the literal Greek text.

<sup>3</sup> The question is whether the Greek genitive is the objective genitive to be translated “faith in”, or the subjective genitive to be rendered, “faith of” ... *ek pisteoos Xristou leesou*.

Abraham --- not just according to the flesh, but also after the spirit of the promise (Gal. 3:14) --- then he too must have “the faith of Abraham”.

And since Abraham was justified by faith --- considered righteous before God --- even so the Scripture says Jesus was considered righteous because of his trust in the word of God *to himself* as the ultimate “messianic seed” of Abraham. Jesus applied the messianic promises God had made to Abraham *to himself*, thereby exercising the same faith in God that Abraham had! Let’s see how this happened.

## JESUS’ BAPTISM

God pronounced Jesus was the promised Messiah at his baptism,

This is my Son, the beloved one, in whom I am well-pleased (Matthew 3: 17).

A multitude of Bible commentators recognise that this word of God to Jesus at his baptism comes straight from Psalm 2. Psalm 2 of course, is a prophecy that God will declare to His Messiah, “Thou art My Son ... My king upon Zion”. Jesus will be tested to see if he believes this against all odds.

Immediately after this word of God to him, Jesus was “driven” or impelled by the Spirit into the wilderness to face his nemesis, the Devil. The wilderness temptations are a whole study in themselves of the faith of Jesus. Notice the Devil tries to cast doubt into Jesus’ mind ... “*If you are the Son of God...*” At least twice did the Devil challenge God’s declaration that Jesus was “My Son, the chosen one”.

By rejecting Satan’s temptations, and being in an extreme state of physical weakness to boot, Jesus placed himself in an extremely vulnerable place ... the place of absolute faith-dependence in the declaration of his Father that he was God’s Son, the chosen Messiah.

At each test, Jesus countered by faith in the written word of God. In effect Jesus said, “Yes, although I am the Messiah, I won’t exercise my God-given authority for self-serving ends to turn these stones into bread. And I won’t take a leap off the temple so God bears me up on angels’ wings before the adoring crowds. I won’t short-circuit the path of suffering by the cross. And I won’t bow down and worship you Satan, even though for now the kingdoms of this world are in your power. God will give me His kingdom in His own time and way. That’s what’s written. And I believe it.”

Jesus demonstrated his loyalty and devotion to His Father when all mankind from Adam down had failed miserably. And throughout his ministry, Jesus held onto His Father’s word that after his sufferings, God would raise him up to glory and seat him in the heavenly places (Psalm 2; Ps. 110:1; Daniel 7: 13-14,18,22,27, etc.). Let’s listen to his faith in His Father’s plan for him ...

## THE SON OF MAN ASCENDED

Jesus’ favourite way of describing himself was to cryptically call himself ‘the Son of Man’. Why so? Rheams have been written on the importance of this self-designation. But many sound commentators are on the money when they point out Jesus lifted this term directly from Daniel’s vision of the glorified Son of Man.

In the prophetic vision Daniel saw the Son of Man being “presented” to God (after his suffering) and being “given dominion, glory and a kingdom” which would be an everlasting reign (Daniel 7: 13-14).

The obvious reason Jesus loved to call himself “the Son of Man” was because it was a way of always reminding himself to walk by faith in this prophetic vision: One promised day God was going to give him the Kingdom! Jesus lived by this word of God to ‘the Son of Man’ which was *still in the future*. He often confessed his faith this way;

The Son of Man is to go just as it is written about him (Matthew 26: 24).

It is written of the Son of man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt (Mark. 9:12), but [then] the Son of Man comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels (Mark. 8:38).

The puzzling statement of Jesus in John 6:62, “What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where he was before?” must be considered, not as a statement that Jesus remembered how he had personally pre-existed in heaven before he came to earth as the God-man, but as Jesus’ faith-statement in Daniel’s “Son of Man” vision of God’s promised future. <sup>4</sup>

## THE TRIAL

This is the statement of faith that Jesus gave openly at his trial, and under oath before the High Priest and the Jewish Sanhedrin in answer to their challenge, “Are you the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the Blessed One?” And Jesus said,

I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:61-62).

Jesus’ commitment to Daniel’s prophecy was the mainspring of his mission. It was his public confession of faith that God would make His word to him come true. <sup>5</sup> To all appearances, this affirmation of Jesus’ faith in God’s promise to glorify him must have appeared delusional.

Practically, Jesus’ faith in God’s promises to him as the Messiah meant that daily he must deliberately and consciously choose to walk by faith in His Father’s promised future outlined for him in the prophetic Scriptures. Daily Jesus had to deny himself, take up his cross, and say yes to His Father’s vision for him. And he maintained his unwavering trust in God’s word all through the opposition and disheartening circumstances that screamed everything to the contrary, especially at his trial before official Jewry that mocked and scorned him.

## “BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM”

But what about Jesus’ statement, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58)? Doesn’t this verse show that Jesus was conscious that he was Almighty God? Well, if it does, it cancels out everything we have summarised so far. For if Jesus was conscious that he was the God of Abraham himself (!) then what was he doing pretending to need faith?

I have dealt at length elsewhere with this verse showing, that for strong contextual and grammatical reasons, it is not a statement where Jesus was claiming to *be* Almighty God. <sup>6</sup>

Sufficient for now to say that, in context Jesus is challenging those who considered themselves to be Abraham’s descendents. If they really were Abraham’s children, argues Jesus, then like Abraham who believed the word of God and who looked forward to the promised Messiah, they too would recognize Abraham’s greatest son now standing right in front of their very eyes.

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<sup>4</sup> Jesus cannot be referring to his personal pre-existence as God in heaven before he came to earth, because “the Son of Man” is a human being, and not even trinitarians believe Jesus was a human being *before* coming down to earth! No, the Son of Man is a reference to a human being seen in prophetic vision exalted to heaven. The vision is a promise of the future glorification of the human Jesus, seated in heaven with God *after* his ascension. Jesus held onto this vision by faith.

<sup>5</sup> Compare First Timothy 6: 13 where Jesus also gave this “good confession before Pontius Pilate”.

<sup>6</sup> See *They Never Told Me This in Church!* (First Edition pp 170-172) (Second Edition pp 183-185). Also see my article on this website titled *A Letter To My Pastor*.

Messiah, “*the seed*” of Abraham, was right there, standing in their very midst but they did not know him! If they but had the faith of Abraham, they too would “rejoice to see my day ... and be glad” (John 8: 56). And then Jesus makes this staggering statement, “Before Abraham was, I am (he).”

The possibilities in the Greek text as to how to best translate what Jesus says here in John 8:58 are intriguing, even tantalising. Did Jesus say, “Before Abraham was, I am (he)”? --- meaning, I am the Messiah whom God told Abraham to expect?

This is a legitimate explanation of the text, for God promised Abraham that one of his sons was already destined in God’s foreordained and future plan to be the Messiah. Which is to say, *in God’s mind the Messiah already existed before Abraham* --- not because he personally pre-existed Abraham as God --- because he held priority of purpose for the world.

Now let’s look at the second possible nuance of Jesus’ enigmatic statement. Did Jesus intend to be understood as saying, “Before Abraham *comes to be*, I am (he)”? --- meaning, before Abraham is raised (in the future resurrection of the faithful at the end of this age) I will already have been brought back (to life) before him? <sup>7</sup>

There is no contextual or grammatical reason why this could not be what Jesus was claiming. Jesus very well may be publicly declaring his absolute faith that God would raise him up from the dead *before* Abraham is called out of his grave! Jesus believed he would precede patriarch Abraham in the resurrection!

With such (deliberate?) ambiguity by Jesus, it is no wonder the Jews were angrily puzzled, and picked up stones to kill him. And is it any wonder the debate continues to this day?

The only reason why our translators prefer the first option is convention. Or perhaps more to the point, are they driven by popular dogma? I mean, there is absolutely no legitimate reason why our modern translations render John 8:58 with the capital letters, “Before Abraham was, I AM”. <sup>8</sup>

So, whether we prefer the first or the second option, in either case Jesus was expressing his total trust in the word of God to him through Abraham. Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at Miami Dade College in Florida summarises this when he writes;

... Jesus believed God’s Abrahamic promise to bless all nations in Abraham’s seed. According to the NT writers, this in Jesus’ exclusive case meant believing God’s revelation to him that he himself was Abraham’s Messianic seed. Jesus’ faith in God’s promise led him to his crucifixion, and God justified him by raising him from the dead. So it is that God is “the justifier of the one who has [the faith of] Jesus (Romans 3:26). That is, God justifies (counts as righteous) the one who believes the same promise that Jesus --- and his ancestor Abraham before him --- believed.

<sup>9</sup>

Just as Abraham clung for dear life to God’s promise that he would be the father of many nations, even so Jesus clung for dear life to God’s promise that he himself was Abraham’s long-promised Messiah, and that God would give him “the nations” --- an innumerable family of faith to inherit the promised Kingdom (see Psalm 2:8). And just like Abraham who had believed God “against all hope”, even so

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<sup>7</sup> The preposition *prin* + aorist infinitive construction in Matthew 26:34; John 4:49, 14:29 for instance, all point to future possibilities.

<sup>8</sup> I note our translators are not consistent even in this very chapter where Jesus’ exact words *ego eimi* are not capitalised as I AM in verses 24 and 28. In these verses also observe how the translators supply in italics the word *he ... I am he*, meaning, I am the one being referred to. Thus, “Before Abraham was, I am (he)” is Jesus’ claim that he was the subject God and Abraham were discussing!

<sup>9</sup> Robert Hach, *The Passion and Persuasion: A Biblical Deconstruction of the Evangelical Rhetoric of the Cross*. Xlibris Corporation, USA. 2011, p74

against all contrary evidence, Jesus believed God would reverse the world's execration of him, by raising him up from the dead and enthroning him next to the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The phrase "the faith **of** Jesus" alerts us to the fact that Jesus pleased God with the same quality of faith Abraham had. On the one hand Christians have no problem understanding that Abraham was "counted righteous" because he believed God's promise to him, but ...

On the other hand Christians have difficulty comprehending that *God justified Jesus* precisely because Jesus believed God's promise to him that he would be made the Messianic Lord of all the world.

To accomplish his mission Jesus *knew he must himself believe* what God had promised him! Thus, it was Jesus' faith in God's promises concerning himself, that carried him through every single trial and temptation on the way to Calvary. Because Jesus put his faith in His Father's word, God vindicated "the faith **of** Jesus" by raising him up from the dead.

In this way, those who are " **of** the faith **of** Jesus" (<sup>10</sup>), know that God's promises "in Christ" guarantee the same reward, namely justification by faith with its reward of "not perishing, but having eternal life".

What we are saying then, is that whether we translate the phrase as "faith **in** Jesus", or as "the faith **of** Jesus", makes a huge difference to our question, Did Jesus *really* live by faith? Again Professor Hach insightfully spots the significance when he writes;

The Trinitarian notion that Jesus was God-in-the-flesh and, therefore, could not have needed faith may be largely responsible for the penchant of English NT versions to favour the objective genitive rendering "faith in" over the subjective genitive rendering "faith of." <sup>11</sup>

We may also add a practical note: believing in Jesus is more than simply having a right head knowledge and more than a correct creedal statement of faith. We are to be walking in the very same faith in the God that Jesus exemplified. So let's see how this worked out in practice for our Lord Jesus at a few critical junctures of his life.

## GETHSEMANE

Gethsemane is the Hebrew name meaning 'oil press', and it proved a very appropriate description for Jesus on that fateful night of his betrayal. True, he had often been there for rest and prayer with his disciples, but on this night, everything was eerie and unnerving for Jesus. He was about to be pressed, squeezed, big time.

Having settled the main body of disciples down, Jesus took Peter, James and John a little further into the garden. He needed moral support. He was in an "agony".

He seems to have gone through an experience of horror such as most of us only ever approach in nightmares, yet he was the most awake person in the garden. Many have reflected on the fact that his demeanour before death was in sharp contrast to certain other heroes of history ... Even the later Christian martyrs seem to have gone to their deaths with a good deal more equanimity than Jesus. <sup>12</sup>

The weight and the fate of the world were literally on Jesus' shoulders. The adjectives used to describe his mental state in the Garden are very telling. Mark uses a very rare word whose meaning is

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<sup>10</sup> The Greek preposition *ek* in this case may be also mean "from" or "out of the faith of Jesus".

<sup>11</sup> Robert Hach, *Op Cit*, p 74.

<sup>12</sup> David Seccombe, *The King of God's Kingdom: A Solution to the Puzzle of Jesus*. Paternoster Press, UK, 2002. p 533

not at all clear. <sup>13</sup> We do know it indicates an intense emotion of deep sorrow, for Jesus goes on to say, “I am so sorrowful I could die” (Mark 14:33-34).

Many reasons can be given for Jesus’ deep anguish (his beloved Judas had gone off to hang himself; Peter and the rest of the band would abandon him in his greatest need; Israel’s opportunity to enjoy God’s promised kingdom was now on hold and she was to suffer for her national faithlessness, etc.) and most surely the dark antagonist from his Wilderness Temptation was also oppressing him severely. Jesus was very much aware of the spiritual realm of demons and Satan.

I have listened to and seen folk who have had close encounters with demons and the Devil. Not pretty. Loud accusing voices shriek at them. All ability to think clearly is suspended. Wicked and vile thoughts bombard them. Mental tricks are played upon them, chilling hallucinations. Some even tell of a feeling of frosty, icy, deep-core shivering from actual hypothermia. All describe mental harassment with anguish.

We know Jesus was acutely aware of this spiritual dimension, for he had warned his disciples that “the ruler of this world” was coming armed with great power. Indeed, if it were possible, the Devil had also asked God for Peter and the others, wanting him and them to be “sifted like wheat”. The Devil’s object was to make Jesus and the disciples break faith with the Father. The only defence said Jesus, was watchful prayer.

And now in the Garden, Jesus must remain awake, watchful, prayerful, in clear-minded contact with his Father. He prays that “this cup” might pass from him. In the OT “the cup” is a frequent image for the full measure of God’s punishment to be meted out against his enemies. For Jesus to agree to drink this cup was for all intents and purposes to take the place of one under the wrath of God. It was to give the appearance that Jesus was an imposter deserving God’s utter abandonment. What a trial of his faith this was.

We detract from the ultimate victory of Jesus’ faith, if we for a moment think he would automatically win. It is not irreverent to ask, “How close was Jesus to giving up?” As another says,

Without the real and enticing possibility of turning aside from his Father’s will, the obedience, which according to the New Testament achieved ‘our salvation’, would have been an empty show ... more than anything else in the gospels his agony in the choice proves the reality of his humanity. <sup>14</sup>

## A REAL CONUNDRUM

Let’s not rush over this. Now, seriously, how close was Jesus to giving up and denying his faith in God’s plan for him and this world? Some might think it blasphemous to even frame the question: Was it possible Jesus’ faith could have failed the test? Or is this just some kind of pretend theatre?

I think it only goes to show how far we have removed Jesus from our humanity to think that an irreverent or irrelevant question. What do you, dear reader, think? Was it possible for Jesus’ faith to fail? One theologian comes to a startling conclusion (and which I happen to agree with);

Jesus was completely free and faced real options. The Father would have concurred immediately and unquestionably in His decision for either option. Thus the decision of Jesus was finally decisive. And because he was completely free in the final decision, His decision in

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<sup>13</sup> *ekthambeisthai*

<sup>14</sup> David Seccombe, *The King of God’s Kingdom: A Solution to the Puzzle of Jesus*. Paternoster, UK, 2002, p 535

Gethsemane to drink the cup, and the death that followed, became the authentic decision and act of election ... <sup>15</sup>

Yes, from our point of view the possibility that Jesus' faith really could have failed is quite uncomfortable. Jesus' faith was no lay down certainty, no *fait accompli*. He *could* have dropped his bundle. He *could* have lost faith in God's word at this agonising moment.

Now, listen to one respected Christian academic and preacher as he ties himself in knots by denying this potentiality;

It was not merely the case that it was possible for Him not to sin, but rather, it was not possible for Him to sin. And that is the essential difference between Christ and Adam ... the first Adam was perfect. He had not sinned, but sin was possible. It was possible for Adam not to sin, but you could not say of him that it was not possible for him to sin, because he did sin. But of the Son of God we say that not only was it possible for Him not to sin ... it was also not possible for Him to sin ... because He is the God-Man. Not only human but also divine. But still, because human, subject to temptation, and the devil did tempt Him ... The devil tempted Him with all his might, in a way that nobody else has ever been tempted. It was a real temptation, but He at the same time was entirely free from sin, and it was not possible that He could or should fall. God sent Him to be the Saviour, and because of that there could not be, and there was no failure. <sup>16</sup>

What a conundrum this man's Christology entangles him in! "It was not possible" for Jesus to sin, "because He is the God-Man". It was "not possible that Jesus could fall". Yet confusingly, Jesus' temptation was "a real temptation"? This does not sound like Jesus was a man like the rest of us who are subject to real temptation! How can temptation be real temptation if there is no possibility of failure? This is smoke and mirrors hocus pocus theology!

Would you use a harness to climb a mountain if you knew "it was not possible for you to fall"? It will not do to say, "Well, I wouldn't want to tempt the Lord my God, so I would tie myself on." From a mountain climbing perspective, where would the adrenaline in that be? Where would the victory of the climb be? Lurking deep within you, in spite of the accolades of others for climbing your Everest, you would always have a hollow feeling of pretense that you had tricked folks into their adulations ... success was always guaranteed.

## HOW DID JESUS DIE?

Did Jesus die as other men die? Again, let me ask you what might appear to be an irreverent question: Did Jesus scream with pain when the nails were hammered in? The gospels don't tell us, so it's a question left unanswered. But this has not stopped the question from being asked down through the years.

Depending in which generation the question has been asked, has in large measure determined which answer has been given. For example, early in the Twentieth Century in Europe, theologians depicted Jesus as "the ideal Man". They answered the question by saying that Jesus showed no pain, and that he suffered in silence. He steeled himself magnificently. <sup>17</sup>

In our generation where 'the ideal man' (at least in the West) is a man who can find fulfillment in domestication, and is not ashamed to cry or show his softer side (some even call this his feminine

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Election*. Westcott, Springfield, Missouri, 1970, p65

<sup>16</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *God the Father, God the Son; Great Doctrines Series*. London, Hodder & Stroughton, 1996. pp 275-276

<sup>17</sup> I owe some of these considerations to David Seccombe, *Op Cit*.



side), the question is not so uncomfortable. Of course Jesus was not afraid to show he died in pain. Of course he would have cried and writhed in agony.

All speculation aside, what we are told is that Jesus refused the drugged wine offered to him at the end of a sponge (Matthew 27:34; Mark 15: 23). He fully took in the insults of the crowd, "He saved others, let him save himself (Mark 15:31)!" He fully endured the abuse of the two insurrectionists crucified on either side who "were hurling abuse at him" (Mark 15: 29). He fully received the indignity of Pilate's mocking sign over his head, which in effect announced, "You call *this* the King of the Jews?"

And to add to the horrendous moment of abandonment, God sends a thick darkness over the land for three hours. Heavy silence from above. For all his ministry Jesus had announced the coming of the Kingdom of Israel's dreams. But this day would offer no miracle. Instead, it grew terribly dark. The sun hid its light and warmth. And every Jew knew that darkness was the sign of abandonment by God. It was to the world as if Jesus was accursed by God and rejected by Heaven. What misery! <sup>18</sup>

And so Jesus cried out what is popularly called his cry of Dereliction, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" Here is a final cry of pure despair, surely? Has Jesus' faith at last been extinguished? Let's see ...

It's common knowledge that Jesus' cry of Dereliction is a quote from the opening line of the messianic Psalm 22. The suffering Psalmist is pouring out his lament to the God He knows has allowed his afflictions. If God has allowed his pain, surely He can remove it. The psalmist says, "I cry, but You do not answer." But then, his prayer transitions from despair to hope;

Yet You are holy ... You are enthroned ... our fathers trusted in You and You delivered them ... and You are my God from my mother's womb ... do not now be far off ... against all appearances and the ill treatment I endure, He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted ... Neither has He hidden His face from [me] ... all the families of the earth will praise You and worship before You ... For the Kingdom is the LORD's, and He rules over the nations ... He has performed [finished] it (Psalm 22)!

Do you see that? Although Psalm 22 starts with the cry of Dereliction found on Jesus' lips on the cross --- "My God, my God why have You forsaken me?" --- it ends with a triumphant faith-declaration, "the Kingdom is the LORD's ... all the earth will serve Him ... He has performed it!"

In other words, ***Jesus died with a kingdom psalm on his lips!*** Jesus' faith was triumphant to the end. You will note that the final words of the psalmist are, "He has performed it", however the NT witness is that Jesus rendered it, "It is finished!"

Against all attempts by man and demon to extinguish "the faith of Jesus" he holds on to the word of prophecy. He will be vindicated, that is, justified by faith! He has faith in God's word to the very end. Because Jesus' faith did not fail, we are justified by his faithfulness! He declares,

For the Kingdom is the LORD'S, and He rules over the nations ... it will be declared to a people yet to be born, that he has performed [finished] it (Psalm 22:28,31).

As another observes, when he cries out in his death-throes;

Jesus' words, then, are quite the reverse of an admission of failure. The sense of forsakenness is unmistakable, the agony unimaginable. The darkness that pervades the scene shows that

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<sup>18</sup> Messiah's coming was anticipated to bring light to Israel and to the world (Isaiah 9:2; 60:1-3). Darkness was interpreted to mean the absence of God, even His abandonment.

even the gospel writers believed God had in some manner turned away. Nevertheless the man of faith continues to pray, and in a form which anticipates a glorious end.<sup>19</sup>

So, did Jesus *really* live by faith? What say you? Yes? No? Well, maybe?

Oh, my friends, what a wonder is this --- “the faith **of** Jesus”! Against horrendous odds and with the very real possibility of failure, Jesus clung to the word of His Father God even in the accursed darkness. By his faith we are justified.

Ours is the call and the privilege to walk in the faith of Jesus, to believe the same Kingdom promise of the Gospel of God that Jesus himself believed, taught, lived and died for. Ours it is to have both faith **in** Jesus--- resting in what God by His free grace has accomplished in and through him for our salvation --- and to live by following the example of his faith --- “by the faith **of** Jesus” in God’s unfailing word.

“The faith **of** Jesus”! Oh Lord Jesus, you are the “author and perfecter of our faith”. Indeed you are the hero of our faith. Grant us this day to walk in your faith.

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<sup>19</sup> David Seccombe, Op Cit. p 559 (My emphasis).