



IBFNA

August 2023

Volume 32, Number 1

THE REVIEW

“Faith Is _____. Just What Is Faith?”

By Pastor Mark Strangman, Moderator IBFNA

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

Last September, CNN published an article on their website dealing with what they called “Rapture Anxiety.”¹ It dealt with several people who grew up in “Christian communities” and who were frightened into strict moral behavior by the teaching of the Lord's return. The article referenced a “growing network of ‘exvangelicals’ who have removed themselves from what they now view as the damaging beliefs of some evangelical, Pentecostal and Baptist churches.” The article goes on to say that “the concept of the rapture, known theologically as dispensational premillennialism, is not prevalent in Catholic or mainline Protestant denominations like Episcopalianism or Presbyterianism, and is most commonly adhered to in evangelical and fundamental churches.” This statement is basically true, but it grossly understates what dispensationalism truly is (it felt like the author threw the term in just to show that she had done some research and could use a big word, which she did not really understand).

The article states that many Christian leaders believe the Apostle Paul's references to the rapture are to be seen as “common examples of poetic metaphor.” Another large error in the article is that the interpretation of a pretribulation rapture is a modern teaching and “only dates back to the 1800s.” Those who propose this theory attribute the literal interpretation of rapture prophecy to the work of John Darby and the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909. Though these were instrumental for giving us a firm framework of dispensationalism, the literal interpretation of prophetic passages can be seen in the teachings of the early church fathers. Justin Martyr (110-165 AD) taught a literal interpretation of rapture theology. A particularly interesting study is the theme of the pretribulation rapture in *The Shepherd of Hermas*, an apocryphal work from the early 2nd century. It was not until Augustine wrote *The City of God*, presenting his amillennial viewpoint, that many began to spiritualize these prophetic passages.

What does this all have to do with faith? To answer this, we must see the biblical understanding of the word. The Greek word translated *faith* (*pistis*) is defined by the writer of Hebrews as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (11:1). But before we analyze this definition, we must carefully study what immediately precedes it. In 10:34, the author reminds his readers of their compassion



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towards him and how they cared not for the things of this life because they were keenly focused on heaven. He instructs them to be confident because they would be rewarded for their patience as they did God's will and received His promise - "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (10:37). Here is where he solidifies their understanding of the rapture with the powerful statement, "The just shall live by faith" (v. 38).

This statement is life's foundation for the child of God. It is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Four times it is used to support God's children (Hab. 2:4, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith"; Rom. 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith"; Gal. 3:11, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith"; Heb. 10:38, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him").

In Heb. 10:39, we read that we who live by faith are those who believe for the saving of the soul. The word *believe* is the same word (*pistis*) translated *faith* continually throughout the passage to the end of chapter 11.

A sinner is saved by faith, but faith must have an object to adhere itself. This is where we must define exactly what faith is, as does the writer of Hebrews. Strong's translates *pistis* as *moral conviction*. According to Heb. 11:1, faith (moral conviction) is the substance (*hupostasis* - a setting under, support or confidence) of things hoped for (*elpizo* - to expect or confide), the evidence (*elegchos* - proof) of things not seen. By this definition we understand that faith is that by which we absolutely trust what we could not know otherwise. It is not something we hope is true, wish to be true or believe is true on our own authority. Through faith we have absolute confidence in that in which we believe. It is based on absolute truth which is trustworthy and guaranteed.

Before the writer of Hebrews goes on to list example after example of life-changing faith, he sets the foundation for this absolute moral certainty.

He starts at the very beginning with the subject of creation in verse 3. He tells us that by faith (moral conviction) we understand the creation account of Genesis. This is the strongest proof he could use because it is the eyewitness account of the Creator Himself. No one was there but God, and He shares with us how He made everything out of nothing. This is the testimony of the Word of God, and we believe it by faith.

But is this circular reasoning? Is it safe to believe something just because it is in the Bible? This is the real key to what the biblical word *pistis* is all about. It is a concrete trust in pure morality. Over and over Scripture has proven itself to be completely trustworthy in every matter it deals with. One need only study the historical accuracy of the Bible, or the countless prophecies whose fulfillment did not fail. Recently, we have been studying the book of Daniel on Sunday mornings at our church, and the amazing perfection of chapters 7-11 leaves me in awe of our perfect God.

Notice what the author says about our faith in God's Word. He says "by faith we understand" - it is a mental exercise. As we study God's Word and see its truths tested over and over, we make a mental decision to stand firm on what God says. To put it simply, faith is taking God at His Word. We make a conscious decision to accept His Word because it is morally accurate and correct. But true faith (*pistis* - *moral conviction*) goes much deeper than merely an intellectual response. When we truly decide to make this moral conviction, we must apply these truths so that our lives are forever changed. This is exactly what the author of Hebrews says in 10:39: We "believe to the saving of our souls."

Let me conclude with an excellent example of true, biblical faith. In 2 Peter 2, the Apostle warns of false teachers who were in their midst. He even calls them "natural brute beasts" whose workings are so vile that it would have been better if they had never "known the way of righteousness." Are these once-saved men who lost their salvation? The key to the correct interpretation of Peter's testimony about these men is the use of the word *epiginosko* translated *known* in verse 21. This is an intellectual understanding which goes no further.

Some have labeled this a head-knowledge which is never acted upon and applied to one's life. They know the facts about the Lord Jesus and the gospel but have never made a moral decision based on it. They are tragically lost, knowing the truth but never having been set free by it.

Compare this to John's admonition in 1 John 5:13 to those that have believed on the Lord Jesus and therefore know (*eido*) they have eternal life. They not only have a mental understanding of the gospel, but also have decided through their moral conviction – faith – to apply it to their sinful condition and receive the free gift of Jesus' salvation. They know by deep understanding and experience because they have acted upon their knowledge –

the moral conviction that they are saved by grace through faith.

How is your faith today? Are you standing firm upon your moral conviction in all that God has spoken. Have you received and applied the promises He has wonderfully made to us as He guides us through his Word. Remember what Prov. 3:5-6 tells us: “Trust (have faith) in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge (yield to) Him (applying His Word to your life), and He shall direct thy paths.”

May God richly bless the IBFNA.

¹ cnn.com/2022/09/27/us/rapture-anxiety-evangelical-ex-vangelical-christianity-cec/index.html

Conference Report

Pastor Kevin Hobi

The Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America gathered in conference June 20-22 under the theme: “Integrity: Holding the Mystery of the Faith in a Pure Conscience.” Pastor Brian Demers and the Bible Baptist Church of New Hartford in beautiful update New York were welcoming hosts. Our conference theme was a response to the loss of integrity, which many institutions have suffered in recent years. We passed the following resolution on our conference theme:

The Apostle Paul maintained a good conscience for gospel ministry. Making his defense before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, he began, “Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1). Leading a religious establishment that had lost its integrity long before it chose to crucify its Messiah, the High Priest Ananias directed his underlings to pummel Paul in the mouth for making such a claim. The cynical priest found Paul’s stand outrageous.

After the foiled plot to assassinate Paul and in response to the lying accusations of Tertullus, the Apostle again affirmed his integrity: “And herein do I exercise myself to have

always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). The “most noble” Felix, as Tertullus’s flatteries referred to him, imprisoned Paul for two years after this show-trial, in spite of his obvious innocence, hoping to extract a bribe from his prisoner (vv. 26-27). Clearly, Paul’s calling required a life of integrity in a world of duplicity. He had determined to “hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” while facing a world of lies (1 Tim. 3:9).

To live with a pure conscience, one must live with integrity. Like our word *entire*, the word *integrity* comes from the Latin word *integer*, which word English speakers use in mathematics to refer to whole numbers. Noah Webster defined integrity as “wholeness; entireness; unbroken state” and “the entire, unimpaired state of anything, particularly of the mind; moral soundness or purity; incorruptness; uprightness; honesty.” Integrity is the virtue James encouraged when he warned that “a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (Jam. 1:8). Integrity yields stability, courage, and allegiance to truth.

Though still hailed by many as “the most noble,” many influencers in today’s world continue to lead with duplicity rather than integrity. They speak “lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron,” just as many did in the days of Paul (1 Tim. 4:2). Government officials lie about their political opponents; election officials lie about the accuracy of their vote-count; social media outlets lie about the neutrality of their platforms; mainstream media lies when they claim disinterested objectivity; medical professionals and pharmaceutical companies lie about the harmlessness of their technologies; corporations lie about their “woke” agendas; and ecclesial leaders lie about the true nature of Christianity. “Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Tit. 1:15).

Therefore, the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America, meeting at our 32nd annual family conference, June 20-22, 2023, at Bible Baptist Church in New Hartford, NY, resolves to follow Paul’s example of a good conscience for gospel ministry. With the help of our Savior, whose integrity is “the same yesterday, today, and forever,” and who has purged our “conscience from dead works to serve the living God,” we shall “hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (Heb. 13:8, 9:14, 1 Tim. 3:9). Recognizing our weakness and remembering that to lose faith and a good conscience is to experience spiritual shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19), we shall make the goal of the commandment we have received from the Lord our own, which is “charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1:5). By God’s grace and through the power of His Spirit, we will “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but

rather reprove them” with faithful ministries of trustworthy integrity (Eph. 5:11).

A second resolution titled “Resolution Warning Against the Inroads of Marxist Ideology, the Destruction of American Freedom, and a Growing Hatred for Biblical Christianity” and the audio for the preaching sessions are available on our website (www.ibfna.org/2023-family-conference). The centerpiece of the messages on integrity was a series focused on the life of Robert Ketcham, one of the founding fathers of our Regular Baptist separatist movement, delivered by Pastor Dan Greenfield of Orwell Bible Church, OH. Pastor Greenfield serves as the Executive Director of the American Council of Christian Churches, of which the IBFNA is a constituent member.

These three messages focused on scriptural ministry lessons and examples of integrity from the life of Ketcham: (1) his early life and ministry; (2) his pastoral ministry; and (3) the trials he faced. We learned that every servant of God is a flawed and weak human being, but also that commitment to truth with integrity is possible through God’s grace and the power of His Spirit.

Other messages available for your listening include “Integrity in the World” by Brian Demers; “Three Convictions Ministering Encouragement to a Missionary with Integrity” by Tim Berry of the Gospel Fellowship Association; “Integrity in Separation” by Bob Payne of The Baptist Church of Danbury, CT; “Integrity in Handling God’s Word” by Laurence Brown of The First Baptist Church of North Conway, NH; “Integrity in Finances” by Jim Brown of Vernon Forest Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, NC; “Integrity Within” by Mark Strangman of Swissvale Baptist Church, PA, Moderator of the IBFNA; and daily morning devotions by IBFNA co-founder, Pastor Chick Dear of Crescentville Baptist Church in Philadelphia.

Jack Keep, IBFNA Co-Founder and Korean War Veteran

Pastor Paul Gustine

I came home from preaching Sunday night, May 30, 2023. I turned on the PBS Memorial Day concert from Washington, DC. There were some heart-warming accounts of military heroes and

their families. Then they did a tribute to Veterans of the Korean War. This concluded by introducing ten veterans on stage. The last veteran stood up tall. It was Jack Keep. JACK KEEP. I had not seen him in years.



The program moved on quickly. I had no technology at home to confirm what I thought I saw. The next day I contacted Donna Dear to see if she could confirm that Jack Keep was honored on the program. She captured the image and put it up on FB to pass the information on to all Jack's friends in the IBFNA, the PARBC, the Parsippany Baptist Church and others. After Memorial Day I was at the library, and I found her post and shared it on my page with other research on Jack that I found on the internet.

Jack has been busy with Veterans Affairs after he retired. He found the Korean War Veterans Association and a few Korean War Veterans in his area. They started the Shenandoah Valley Chapter 413. They became one of the most active chapters in the country with over 100 members. Going to parades and speaking to community organizations about the Korean War or experiences as veterans are some of their activities. "Tell America" is a project to get into schools to interpret the Korean War and to infect students with their patriotism.

Being only about 75 miles from Washington, D.C., the Shenandoah Valley Chapter of Korean War Veterans is frequently called on to come to Washington. They were at another Memorial Day concert ten years ago. When South Korean government officials come to Washington, our government will send a bus to pick up representatives

from their chapter so that they can be there as a welcome committee. The South Koreans are so appreciative of the Korean War Veterans. They love to meet them.

At one website I found Jack was the National Chaplain for the Korean War Veterans Association. He had published an op-ed (27 July 2018), "The Silent Generation of the Forgotten War" [<https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/07/27/op-ed-silent-generation-forgotten-war.html#:~:text=Jack%20Keep%20is%20the%20national,as%20it%20was%20called%20then.>].

Jack explains, "Melinda Pash, in her excellent book *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation*, calls us the 'silent generation of the forgotten war.'" Jack explains the silence:

The veterans of Korea did not receive the welcome home that greeted the WWII warriors and, for many years, were not welcomed into the membership of the major veterans' organizations, because President Truman had dubbed it a "police action" rather than a war. This despite the fact that one out of ten combatants were killed or wounded in action, as opposed to one out of fifteen for WWII and one out of seventeen for Vietnam.

In addition, 51% of prisoners of war died in captivity as opposed to 9.6% for WWII and 18% for Vietnam. In fact, most Americans hardly knew what was going on over there. Korean vets came home to find that their friends had no idea where they had been. When my eldest daughter reached adulthood, she asked me, "Dad, how come you never talked about your life in the Navy and going to Korea?" My answer was, "No one ever asked, and no one was interested in listening."

The chief reason why it was a forgotten war was a ceasefire by an armistice.

For most of us, there was a sense of frustration that somehow we had failed, and that the general public looked on us that way. WWII vets came home proud that they had accomplished a victory, but those who fought in Korea felt that, after the loss of more than 37,000 killed in action and more than 8,000 still missing in action, there was not a lot to celebrate. Most Americans, if they thought

about it [at] all, viewed it as a stalemate. Because Korea was sandwiched between WWI, WWII (the good war), and Vietnam (the bad war), it became known as the "Forgotten War."

Vividly, Jack sees this as a mistaken viewpoint because of the trip he made with his youngest daughter back to Korea in 2015.

And I was really amazed at the progress that had been made and the modernization of everything in the city of Seoul. I've also been immensely impressed when I meet Korean people and...they thank us for our service to their country and...I tell people, of all the countries that we have assisted in wartime and rescued from their enemies, the Koreans are the only people who ever said thank you.

The results from the Korean War are important.

Well, I think it's only since I retired and got involved with Veterans Affairs and particularly with the Korean War Veterans Association that we became more involved not only with those who had the same experiences as we did, but we became more involved with the Korean people that we met as a result of our organization interacting with...Korean people, and through these contacts with Korean people we learned really how much had been accomplished through preventing the Communists from taking over South Korea.

I guess...for the Korean people...it was a slow beginning from the ceasefire, but as things began to develop there...we became more aware probably through Korean products like automobiles...and things that were produced...in Korea that...South Korea was becoming a really developed nation, and in a small way we began to feel that maybe we had a part in that. Today I feel we had an important part in it.

Jack has made two trips back to Korea. Now the South Korean economy is 11th largest in the world.

Jack was born in 1934 at Rockaway Beach on Long Island. "Many of the men of our family were in the 'service,' as it was called then. They were,

and still are, our heroes. I had a love for the sea and, from my youth, I wanted to be a sailor." Jack did not wait to graduate from high school.

[D]uring the Second World War, we lived near the water, and during the Second World War there was a Navy patrol boat that was stationed at the end of our street, and I would see the sailors going on liberty at night in their uniforms and also some of my mother's cousins were in the Navy during the war. So from [the] time I was a boy I always wanted to be a sailor, and my plan was when I graduated from high school that I would join the Navy.

In 1950 when the Korean War broke out, I was still too young. I was sixteen years of age in 1950, and I was too young to enlist, so I had to wait until 1951. I still tried to join the Navy at 16, but they told me to go home and come back when I was 17. My parents had to sign for me, and so...right after my birthday in October 1951, I went down to the recruiters...and enlisted. I went to boot camp in Bainbridge, Maryland, and I was assigned to a destroyer, the USS Gatling DD671, and I picked up the ship in Guantanamo Bay...And for the next four years that was my home.

For newer members of the IBFNA, Jack was saved in 1950. He married in 1958. Following the call of God in 1959 he prepared to preach at Northeastern Bible College in NJ. He planted the Parsippany Baptist Church and Christian School in NJ, served as PARBC state representative, was active in Regular Baptists for Revival, helped organize the IBFNA, and served as the first editor of the *IBFNA Review*. He was pastor at Dale City, VA, and served in the Delmarva Association and college and mission boards. He is the author of *What Is a Baptist Association? A Study of the Principles and Practices of Baptists in Colonial Times* (RBP, 1989).

At 88 Jack said he is now on emeritus status as the National Chaplain for the Korean War Veterans Association. When he attended the national conventions he would preach and share the gospel. For the first maybe 15 years of retirement he served as interim pastor of churches, preached at conferences, and substituted for missionaries on furlough. He and his wife, Saye, continue to reside in Front Royal, VA. They have five children, 13 grandchildren, and 10 great grandchildren. Chaplain Keep, thank you for your service.

An Important Question for Our Times—Is Music Amoral?

Kurt Woetzel

Editor's note: Brother Kurt Woetzel serves the Lord as a member of Village Chapel Baptist Church in Weare, NH. Brother Woetzel co-authored Music in the Balance with Frank Garlock (Majesty Music, 1992). This article is the first part of a multi-part series.

To be absolutely clear, the question must be stated several ways. Is music neutral? Is sound capable of moral influence? Does music alone, with or without text, carry and communicate moral value? Is music amoral? The answer to this watershed question divides much of the Christian community and greatly influences the character of the music which may be heard in a particular church. When I posed this question to Robert Shaw he responded, without a moment of hesitation, "All the arts are moral." It was very obvious that the most celebrated choral conductor of the twentieth century had seriously pondered this matter prior to our discussion. During a rehearsal with his Collegiate Chorale in February of 1953, he is reported to have said and later clarified in a letter to the group, "music is the most moral of the arts" (*Dear People*, Joseph Mussulman, p. 108).

It is interesting to note that the neutrality controversy is a relatively recent phenomenon and is primarily limited to the Christian community. Although secular sources from the time of the ancient philosophers to present-day writers allude to the topic frequently, one is indeed hard pressed to find anyone from that contingent who sides with the position that music is amoral. My library includes over seventy books on this general topic. I have yet to find a secular author who even hints at making a case for the neutrality of music. Perhaps the only exception is Stravinsky, who reportedly commented that his music was an "object," a "thing," with no particular meaning beyond itself (*What to Listen for in Music*, Aaron Copland, p. 12). Virtually all others write eloquently and with great passion for the music-has-great-moral-impact position. It must be understood that their motivation is, unlike ours, primarily sociological rather than spiritual. The artist and the social scientist are concerned about

the impact of music on individuals and society as a whole. Our interest and plea, as believers, comes from a sensitivity regarding the influence of music on the Christian and subsequently on the body of Christ. Of equal concern is our testimony before the world.

Those who belong to Christ are called to be separate from the world (1 John 2:15-17). There ought to be a distinguishable, on-the-surface difference between that which is worldly and that which is sacred. The sacred and the profane should coexist and mingle about as comfortably as oil and water. In a society and culture where a clear Christian testimony with an overt witness is becoming more difficult and increasingly restricted (2 Tim. 3:13), music is one of those vehicles which still allows for an uncluttered, distinctive, and telling witness.

Rather than finding believers making a conscientious effort to display biblical values through Christian music, the non-believer discovers a community which strives to mimic the world in its sound, sensibility, sensuality, and degeneracy. This practice does not go unnoticed. Joseph Eger is well known in secular music circles. He has conducted and guest-conducted major orchestras of the world. He is considered to be one of the greatest French horn players alive. In 2005, he authored a fascinating book with the title, *Einstein's Violin: A Conductor's Notes on Music, Physics, and Social Change*. "Songs of Praise," the seventh chapter in the book, is a brief (only four pages) commentary on "religious music." This man of renowned and celebrated artistic stature makes an observation which clearly speaks to the discussion of this article and blisteringly lays bare the testimony consequences of music-is-amoral thinking. Even though Mr. Eger gives no indication of knowing the Savior, he uses language which echoes the conditions in Ezekiel 22:26, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and the profane" [to be continued].

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