

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

10 January 2016

Topics

A.M. Bible Class:

TBA

A.M. Lesson:

TBA

P.M. Lesson:

What is the Trinity?

Wednesday:

Christian evidences special study, in the Annex

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

*Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2
Please silence your cell phones and other electronic devices.*

Convicted—special study on Christian evidences

On Wednesdays, we will begin a special study that includes DVD lessons by Brad Harrub. We will be meeting in the Annex for those lessons.

Faith and “the working of God” in Colossians 2:12

(a little technical)

Jack Cottrell, jackcottrell.com



QUESTION:
Colossians 2:12 says that we are buried and raised with Christ (i.e., regenerated) IN baptism, and THROUGH faith. But the rest of the verse describes this

faith as being *tēs energeias tou theou*. This is usually translated as faith “IN the working [or power] of God.” But there is no preposition “in” in

the Greek text. In fact, the genitive case is used; and in the Greek language this case is usually translated with “of.” So, is not Paul actually saying that our faith is OF the working of God? Does the genitive case then support the Calvinist doctrine that faith is not our choice, but is the gift of God? Is Paul actually saying that we are regenerated through a faith caused by “the working of God”? Is he saying that God is the source of our faith?

ANSWER: You are correct in saying that “the working of God” is in the genitive case. And you are correct that the genitive case is often translated as a possessive, using our preposition “of.” (There is no actual Greek preposition here meaning “of”; this meaning is drawn from the genitive case of the noun for “working.”)

The question is whether the use of the genitive case always and necessarily means “of,” in the sense of possession. IF that were the case, then the “faith” in Colossians 2:12 might indeed be something “belonging to” or “drawn from” the working of God. But here is the fact (and this is very important): the genitive case simply does not ALWAYS and NECESSARILY have this possessive meaning. It has other connotations, according to the context.

This is especially true when the Greek noun *pistis*

("faith") is followed by a noun in the genitive case. The following data will show very clearly that the genitive case is often used with "faith" to show the OBJECT of that faith, and is NEVER used to describe its source.

I have limited my search to Paul's writings, using a Greek-English concordance. I found 20 instances (including Col. 2:12) where the word "faith" is followed by a noun phrase. In these 20 instances, TEN of them are using the genitive case, and ten are using a preposition. Three different prepositions are used: *en* ("in"), seven times; *pros* ("toward"), twice; and *eis* ("unto"), once. Now, here is the important point: besides Col. 2:12, *every phrase is describing the OBJECT of the faith, and never the SOURCE of the faith.*

In fifteen of the twenty instances, the object of the faith is Jesus himself. Philemon 5 uses *pros*: "faith toward the Lord Jesus." Colossians 2:5 uses *eis*: "faith unto Christ." Six texts use *en* (Gal. 3:26; Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:15), with the simple meaning of "in Christ Jesus." But here is the important point: the remaining seven texts describe faith IN JESUS by using the simple genitive case: Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16 (twice); 2:20; 3:22; Eph. 3:12; Phil. 3:9. These last seven texts show that the genitive case is being used to indicate the OBJECT of faith. (Some have attempted to interpret them to mean "the faith of Jesus," in the sense of "the faithfulness of Jesus"; but this is extremely faulty theology. The texts are clearly referring to OUR faith IN Jesus.)

In the other five texts, the noun "faith" is followed by five other nouns. First Thessalonians 1:8 speaks of "faith toward [*pros*] God." Romans 3:25 speaks of "faith in [*en*] his blood." The next two use the genitive case to describe the object of faith: Philippians 1:27, where "faith (of) the gospel" clearly means "faith IN the gospel"; and 2 Thessalonians 2:13, where "faith (of) the truth" indisputably means "faith IN the truth." This leaves Colossians 2:12, where "faith (of) the working of God," following the consistent pattern everywhere else, MUST mean "faith IN the working of God."

The false idea that the genitive case ("of") in Colossians 2:12 must mean that the working of God is the source of faith is simply an instance of Calvinist propaganda, and ignorant propaganda at

that. As shown above, in all of the other cases where the genitive case follows the noun "faith" in Paul's writings, the OBJECT of the faith is meant. There is no reason to think that Colossians 2:12 is any different.

[ADDENDUM. Outside of Paul's writings there are but a few other uses of a phrase combining "faith" with a following noun. Here are the ones I found: (1) In Mark 11:22, Jesus says, "Have faith in God." "In God" is actually just the genitive for God (*theou*). This supports the conclusion above regarding Col. 2:12. (2) Acts 3:16 has two phrases, "faith (of) His name," genitive, meaning "faith IN His name"; and "faith THROUGH (Greek, *dia*) Him," speaking of the faith that brought about the lame man's healing. (3) Acts 20:21 and 24:24 both speak of faith *eis* Jesus. (4) Hebrews 6:1 speaks of "faith TOWARD (*epi*) God." (5) Finally, in Revelation 2:13 Jesus speaks of "faith in Me," using the genitive *mou*. This is a pronoun, not a noun; but the use of the genitive is significant. It obviously indicates Jesus as the object of faith.]

News:

Ken Cocke fell and hurt his shoulder. He is expected to have a lengthy recovery.

Ken Knowlton had surgery on his lip on January 6.

His recovery time is expected to be around a month.

Bob Banfield is Greg and Louella's son-in-law (husband of their daughter Tracy). He has kidney cancer. Surgery treatment is scheduled for January 25.

Extended prayer list:

Robin Richards—depression, back pain

John Cunningham—cancer

Norma Robinson—health

Linda Boling—health

H.L. Boling—general health and complications from leukemia

Ken Knowlton—cancer on his lip

Tatyana Knowlton—macular degeneration

Nic and Ani Self—health and personal needs

