

**The Hill**  
**Summer 2010**  
**P.O. Box 13**  
**989 Hardin Wadesboro Rd.**  
**Hardin, Ky. 42048**  
**Phone (270) 437-4172**  
**Email—[contact@lifeonthehill.org](mailto:contact@lifeonthehill.org)** *To receive this publication via email only, just email us your address.*  
*Thanks*

---

In case you need to hear it today, Jesus, the source of truth (John 14:6), remains the ultimate absolute—no matter who might stand in disagreement. Even with as little truth as we know, in comparison to what God knows, it serves us well during times like these. For this reason, I frequently repeat the statement that has become so incredibly sobering, and at the same time, unshakably encouraging. The statement, which for some reason popped in my mind over a year ago, is: “If I didn’t know what I know, I don’t know.” I realize that I have used this in earlier correspondence; but honestly, if I didn’t know the truth that I know, as limited as it may be, I don’t know! Truth is the absolute bedrock of our life; for through it we come to know, to an ever increasing degree, the Being who is Lord of all. The byproduct is an awareness of the error that surrounds us as we function in a society so incredibly dysfunctional. The result is an adventure second to none, an adventure made available to the redeemed alone.

What an amazing time to be alive! To observe the consequence of error, which God predicts prior to the act, creates an atmosphere of expectation second to none. Why? To watch a person, group of people, or nation walk in violation of God’s absolutes, and reap exactly what God has foretold, is amazingly captivating. Yes, it breaks our hearts to recognize what we, others, or nations reap through disobedience; but at the same time, it generates an ever increasing awareness that the God of the Bible is the God in charge. At the same time, to know that He can foreknow the future without causing all events makes Him more sovereign than a thousand lifetimes could imagine. God is never shocked, caught off guard, or surprised by anything that occurs; for He, the omniscient One, sees all things, from eternity past through eternity future, at all times. Consequently, He is the only thing that makes life, with its abundance of variables, some of which seem unbearable, worthy of the journey.

Paul proved that the view from above (2Corinthians 4:18) does amazing things to the thirsty and hurting soul. Therefore, hope thrives in hearts where truth is uncompromised. Such can watch the news with unwavering confidence that God can “fix” all things—no matter what they see that vexes (2Peter 2:7 KJV) their soul. Why? His word confirms that it will need to get worse before it can get better. After all, man must recognize his need before surrendering to the all-knowing One. God knows exactly what it will take for such to occur, for He has foretold it in His inerrant word. However, only the wise can discern the signs of the times, confirmed many times over in His letter to man. The great men and women, whose experiences are recorded there, were charter members of the fraternity of the wise. Oh that we could live as such! Would that not be the supreme adventure! The prerequisite is a proper view of who God is, so we, in turn, can trust Him with our all. Yes, faith truly is the victory that overcomes the world (1John 5:4).

We certainly love and appreciate you, and trust that you are constantly encouraged through God’s unwavering commitment to His truth.

### **Ministry News**

We are more encouraged than ever with what God is doing here. We don’t know why, but in the midst of the adults who visit on a regular basis, larger numbers of youth are visiting as well. In fact, our recent summer camp (thirteen to eighteen year olds) was filled six weeks before camp began. It was the first year to have more applicants than facilities to house them. We can house 160 people; so the 120 youth and 40 counselors and workers made for a wonderful time. We are experiencing an interesting season in that an increasing number of the youth are the children (and sometimes grandchildren) of the students who began studying with us years ago. In other words, we are seeing the fruit of discipleship in an amazing way. It is actually a dream come true; for not only are we involved in that to which we are called; but we are privileged to hang out with people of passion, people who desire the things of God more than the things of the world. For example, kids from a variety of states attended our latest camp, as far away as South Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. They sat through approximately five hours of Bible study each day, and we were amazed by their attentiveness. Obviously, there are families out there doing many things right; and they are to be commended. There are no guarantees that accompany this thing called “parenting”; so I won’t be writing any books on the subject any time soon. However, it is extremely refreshing to rub elbows with parents and kids who are for each other due to their common love for Christ. It gives us much hope for that which lies ahead.

Each year, we have a greater burden for college students. As a result, our goal is to spend more time with 19-23 year olds, realizing that they are the leaders of tomorrow. Our desire is to create a better opportunity for those attending our youth camps to continue their studies during their college years. After college, they can move into our existing adult curriculum, whether single or married. Don't misunderstand. We presently have college students involved, but we are asking God for a wider door of opportunity to minister to that segment of the body of Christ. The Hill began as a college ministry, with a few adults assisting behind the scenes. We look forward to what God might have in store and would greatly appreciate your prayers.

Tuesday night Bible study begins August 17 with a continuation of our discussion of Depravity. This study is being taught in a manner that allows new students to join at any time. My goal for the semester is to finish Depravity and Election and get to Atonement, Grace, and Perseverance as soon as possible. You can follow on line if you like, for the notes and lessons will be posted there. This issue of Thoughts From The Hill (which follows) is an abbreviated form of the last three lessons of the previous semester. It addresses faith, a subject that I have taught in the past, but never in great depth. The source of faith is a highly debated topic these days and is the topic of this publication. If you would like additional input, we will be happy to send you "the rest of the story."

The notes from the last three semesters of Tuesday night Bible study are in their final edit, soon to be published in booklet form. This study, titled *God's Heart*, will probably continue for two more semesters (five in total), finishing in the spring of 2011. There is much territory yet to cover. We will then generate an electronic file, containing all of the written materials (all five semesters), for a specific purpose. This series covers the majority of the highly debated verses relating to predestination, election, foreknowledge, the believer's chosenness, atonement, the security of the believer, etc. It also addresses how they are viewed by a variety of schools of thought. The electronic file will allow searches to be performed, permitting the student to study the different views associated with a particular verse of interest. Never have I invested so much time researching a subject. I am grateful that God has generated an environment that has allowed me the opportunity to do so. A course on Romans 9-11 will follow.

### **Events to Consider Attending on the Hill**

August 17, 2010 Tuesday night Bible study here on The Hill (7:00 pm). Topic: Depravity and Election

September 3-4, 2010 Discipleship Retreat—a variety of critical topics will be addressed

October 15-17, 2010 Annual Fall Retreat—for anyone of any age. No child care provided

January 14-16, 2011 Annual winter youth retreat

April 28-May 1, 2011 Annual men's retreat for men of all ages, married or unmarried

July 10-16, 2011 Annual summer camp for youth (ages 13-18)

### **A Word of Thanks**

It would be impossible for this ministry to function without your prayers and financial support. Therefore, we are humbled by your generosity and commitment to what God is doing here. Thank you, and please visit when you can.

### **Thoughts From The Hill**

There is a difference of opinion as to the source of "saving" faith. Is it God's gift to man, or does man, in his depravity, exercise such for salvation? We will begin our study by addressing Ephesians 2:8-9:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Paul emphasizes that salvation is most definitely by God's "grace" (read Romans 3:24 and Titus 3:7 as well). He also affirms that salvation is attained "through faith" (as do passages such as Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:17).

As to what the word "that" (Ephesians 2:8) makes reference in the phrase, "and *that* not of yourselves" (emphasis mine), is a major source of contention between those who believe that saving faith is God's gift and those who believe that it originates with man. Those who perceive saving faith as God's gift view "that" as pointing to "faith," while the opposing school views "that" as pointing to "saved."

If you are unfamiliar with the Greek language, the next statement will be "Greek" to you, but it is much needed information. I view "that" (in Ephesians 2:8) as pointing to "saved" because "faith" is a feminine noun, while

the demonstrative pronoun “*that*” is neuter, making it impossible for “*that*” to refer to “*faith*.” Alford, F. F. Bruce, A. T. Robertson, W. E. Vine, Scofield, and additional Greek authorities would agree. In my opinion, Ephesians 2:9 also substantiates the fact that “*salvation*,” not “*faith*,” is the “*gift*.” Note how Ephesians 2:9 applies:

*not as a result of works, that no one should boast.* (Ephesians 2:9)

For one to suggest that “*faith*” (Ephesians 2:8) is not of works makes no sense, for such is taught nowhere in the Scriptures. However, to argue that salvation is not of works is exactly what Paul teaches, not only in Ephesians 2, but elsewhere as well. Read Romans 3:27-28, for example, realizing that “*justified*” points to salvation:

*Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.* (Romans 3:27-28)

Obviously, Paul’s message in Romans 3:27-28 is that salvation is not “*Of works*”—that salvation is attained through saving “*faith*” originating within the one choosing to believe. Paul also confirms that “*boasting*” is “*excluded*” among those who exercise personal saving “*faith*” (Romans 3:27). Therefore, saving faith is not a work; for Paul contrasts “*faith*” with “*works*” on many occasions in the Scriptures. Consequently, choosing to exercise personal saving “*faith*” (in the midst of one’s depravity) can never be viewed as a meritorious deed. Paul teaches the same in Romans 4:5, contrasting “*work*” with believing:

*But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,* (Romans 4:5)

Romans 9:30-32 confirms the same:

*What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works...* (Romans 9:30-32)

The Scriptures have a great deal more to say regarding the word “*faith*.” We have already determined that saving “*faith*” (Ephesians 2:8-9) originates within the heart of the depraved (also read Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:8-10). It is not God’s gift, but springs forth from those who desire to be saved. I personally exercised saving faith when I said (in my depravity), “God help, I need a Savior.” In stating such, I exhibited, not only saving faith, but repentance as well (we will address repentance shortly). Thus, saving faith was not granted to me by the Father. However, it (saving faith) could not have been exercised without the assistance of the Father’s drawing (John 6:44) and the Spirit’s conviction (John 16:8). Saving faith, therefore, is not God’s gift. Salvation is the gift (Ephesians 2:8-9) once saving faith has been exercised. Some would suggest that Romans 12:3 refutes this fact:

*For through the grace given to me I say to every man 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.* (Romans 12:3)

The “*faith*” addressed here cannot be saving faith. We will confirm that the gift of “*faith*” granted (by God) in Romans 12:3 is the faith required to function within the area of the believer’s spiritual gifting, not the saving faith exercised by the depraved prior to spiritual regeneration.

According to 1Peter 4:10, Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12 and 14, Ephesians 4 and etc., every believer (during the church age) receives a spiritual gift. This occurs in conjunction with being placed into Christ’s body through the avenue of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:3). Therefore, the “*faith*” addressed in Romans 12:3 is of utmost importance if the believer is to function properly within the area of his/her gifting. This is not saving faith, but the faith that God allots (as a gift) to those who have previously exercised saving faith. In fact, once the depraved believe (exercise their own, personal saving faith), they are baptized into Christ’s body through the avenue of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13), are born again (John 3:3-6), become new creations (2Corinthians 5:17), and become part of the body of Christ (Ephesians 5:30). Thus, in association with being placed in Christ, God gives “*faith*” (Romans 12:3) to every member of Christ’s body, the church, so each gift within the body might function as efficiently and powerfully as possible. This “*faith*” is God’s gift (Romans 12:3), unlike saving “*faith*” (Ephesians 2:8-9), which is the seeker’s personal faith prior to spiritual regeneration.

The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* records the following regarding Romans 12:3:

Paul is not here speaking of "saving faith"... "Saving faith" would be no standard for correct self-judgment. Only pride would say: "See how much saving faith I have." But it is a humbling experience to say: "Here is the faith I have for carrying out this or that particular task for God." This can only lead to the prayer, "Lord, increase our faith" (see Luke 17:5). In the account of the heroes of faith in Heb 11, we see

that the measure of faith given corresponds to the task to be accomplished.

It is apparent that the “*saving faith*” of Ephesians 2:8-9, exercised by the depraved (once they see their need for a Savior), must not be confused with God’s gift of “*faith*” (Romans 12:3) granted to those who have previously chosen to believe. Yes, God gives believers faith (Romans 12:3), but it is the faith needed to function within the area of their spiritual gifting—not saving faith. Why can we conclude such? Paul is addressing spiritual gifts in Romans 12. This “*faith*” cannot be equated with the saving faith exercised by the depraved. Those who fail to make this distinction find themselves entangled in all sorts of theological contradictions. After all, why would God plead with the unregenerate to exercise saving faith (all of which will not be saved) if He (God) should be the source of saving faith, determining who will or will not receive it?

One final question. Is the repentance needed for salvation God’s gift, or does it originate with man? Note Acts 5:31:

*He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:31)*

Some suppose that God must give saving faith and repentance to the “elect” before they can believe. Does this idea line up with the full counsel of God’s word? After all, “*Peter and the apostles*” (Acts 5:29) stated that both “*repentance*” and “*forgiveness*” have been granted to “*Israel*” (Acts 5:31). Obviously, the word “*Israel*” points to everyone of Jewish descent, not just believers. Consider as well that the apostles were speaking to the leaders of the Jews, most of which had rejected Jesus’ Messiahship. Had the apostles been speaking of Jewish believers only, and not the entire Jewish nation, they would have stated such in the text.

Here is where our study becomes extremely interesting. First off, note that “*repentance*” (Acts 5:31) is granted in the same sense that “*forgiveness*” is granted. Second, if repentance should be God’s gift, then the entire Jewish nation had been given “*repentance*” and “*forgiveness*.” If this were the case, every Jew would be saved, which the Scriptures vehemently deny. How then is Acts 5:31 to be viewed? God grants “*repentance*” and “*forgiveness*” to Israel in the sense that He offers all of Jewish descent the opportunity to repent as well as the opportunity to receive forgiveness. The choice is theirs as to whether they, in their depravity, will or will not repent and exercise saving faith for the purpose of receiving the forgiveness given (by God) to all who believe. The same applies to both Jews and Gentiles in passages such as Acts 11:18 and 2Timothy 2:25.

This is only bits and pieces of the twenty plus pages that faith and repentance cover in our present study of “*God’s Heart*.” Therefore, if you need more input, just get in touch. Thanks for your time.