 ***“OUR THREE-FOLD TESTIMONY!!!”***

#  Ephesians Chapter 1:15-23

***> (v15a) CHRISTIAN FAITH – OUR FAITH!***

 **- What is true Christian FAITH?**

**Faith (*pistos*)** - A belief in or confident attitude toward God, **involving commitment to His will for one's life**. Faith is part of the Christian life from beginning to end. As the instrument by which the gift of salvation is received (**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 of works, lest anyone should boast.*), faith is thus distinct from the basis of salvation, which is grace, and from the outworking of salvation, which is good works.

- **Saving faith** involves personally depending on the finished work of Christ's sacrifice as the only basis for forgiveness of sin and entrance into heaven. But saving faith is also a personal commitment of one's life to following Christ in obedience to His commands. Finally, in the New Testament, faith can refer to the teachings of the Bible, the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). In modern times, faith has been weakened in meaning so that some people use it to mean self-confidence. But in the Bible, true faith is confidence in God or Christ, not in oneself. (From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

***“The just shall live by faith.”*** This declaration of the Christian’s principle of life is found four times in the Bible: **Hab. 2:1-5; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:10-11; Heb. 10:38. In Hab 2:4** - *"Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.”* The unjust are puffed up and live according to self-sufficiency. Atheism for example is religion of faith in man and not a Creator called God. The term atheist literally means “one without God” and refers to a person who claims to believe there is no Divine Being. It is represented in a variety of philosophical arenas: politics (Marxist communism), education (secular humanism), science (evolutionism), and religion (atheism proper). Atheism is a belief that allows man to live an immoral life without future accountability to a Holy God, so he thinks. This is the height of self-deception. Listen to the self-professed truth of two-world renowned atheist, “I’m an atheist! I am an atheist! God knows I’m an atheist!” said **Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev**. How about **Chairman Mao** who commented to Richard Nixon, “When I go to heaven to see God, I’ll tell him that for the present it is better to have Taiwan under the care of the United States.” (Newsweek article, March 3, 1997, pg. 45)

- But the Bible says, “***the just shall live by faith”***—their confidence is in God. To them, faith is more than a philosophy of life; it is the very principle of life. The just shall live his whole life by faith. **We are saved by faith (Acts 16:31 -** *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved***); we are kept by faith (1 Peter 1:3-5 -** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*), **and we live by faith** (**Gal 2:20-21 -** *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body,* ***I live by faith in the Son of God****, who loved me and gave himself for me.)*. Our faith shall be tried many times and, in many ways, but faith will always be vindicated, because it is more than equal to any occasion. Jesus said something interesting in Luke 18:8 - *“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

**(2) our FAITH GROWS – *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”* (Ro 10:17)**

**(3) we LIVE BY FAITH - *“We live by faith, not by sight*.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)**

**(4) to DEFEND THE FAITH - “*to contend earnestly for the faith”* (Jude 3)**

**(5) we are PROTECTED BY FAITH – “*taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”* (Ephesians 6:16)**

**(6) our FAITH WORKS – *“Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”* (James 2:17-18)**

***> (v15b) CHRISTIAN LOVE – OUR LOVE!***

**- LOVE – Are you actively LOVING ONE ANOTHER? What is this *love*? (Gk. – *agape*) In John 13:34-35 - *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* *Love* is not only one of God's attributes; it is also an essential part of His nature. *"God is love,"* the Bible declares (1 John 4:8,16) – He is the personification of perfect love. Such love surpasses our powers of understanding (Eph 3:19). Love like this is everlasting (Jer 31:3), free (Hos 14:4), sacrificial (Jn 3:16), and enduring to the end (Jn 13:1).**

**- Two distinct Greek words for love appear in the Bible:**

**(1) The word *phileo* means "to have ardent affection and feeling"-a type of impulsive love;**

**(2) The other word *agapao* means, *"to have esteem" or "high regard.”* The warm word *agape* is the characteristic term of Christianity. This word for love is used several different ways in the Bible.**

**(a) *Agape* love indicates the nature of the love of God toward His beloved Son (John 17:26), toward the human race generally (John 3:16; Rom 5:8), and toward those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:21).**

**(b) *Agape* love conveys God's will to His children about their attitude toward one another. Love for one another was a proof to the world of true discipleship (John 13:34-35).**

**(c) *Agape* love also expresses the essential nature of God (1 John 4:8). Love can be known only from the actions it prompts, as seen in God's love in the gift of His Son (1 John 4:9-10). Love found its perfect expression in the Lord Jesus.**

**Christian love is the fruit of the Spirit of Jesus in the believer (Gal 5:22).**

***Love* is like oil to the wheels of obedience. It enables us to run the way of God's commandments (Ps 119:32). Without such love, we are as nothing (1 Cor 13:3). Such Spirit-inspired love never fails (1 Cor 13:8) but always flourishes.**

**(from Nelson's Bible Dictionary)**

***> (v16-23) CHRISTIAN PRAYER – OUR PRAYER!***

 **- *Let us cultivate SEVEN KEY COMPONENTS OF PRAYER as exampled in verses 17-19:***

**#1 – (v16) PRAY with *thanksgiving* to God, to Jesus, for all saints and things!**

**#2 – (v17) PRAY for the *spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of HIM!* *Knowledge* is *epignosis* in Greek, which is a *personal experiential intimacy with Christ*.**

**#3 – (v18a) PRAY that *the eyes of your understanding be enlighten!*  *Understanding* is *kardia* (Gk.) the thoughts or feelings (mind). In Hebrew thought, the heart does not refer to the emotions, but to the will. One commentator writes, “The heart is the moral understanding, the essential inward being; it is the sphere of good and evil, of sinful resolve and of repentance, of communion with God and of rejection of God.”**

**#4 – (18b) PRAY *that you may know the hope of HIS calling*! God has called you *"by His grace"* (Gal. 1:15); has given us a *"holy calling"* (2 Tim. 1:9). We have been *"Called out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:9) and have even been *"called to glory”* (1 Peter 5:10). We have *hope* in *the return of Jesus Christ for His church* (1 Thess. 4:14-18; 1 Jn 3:1-3). When we were lost, we were *"without hope"* (Ephesians 2:12); but in Jesus Christ, we have a *"living hope"* (1 Peter 1:3).**

**#5 – (v18c) PRAY to know *what are the riches of the glory of HIS inheritance in the saints!* The New Testament talks about the *“riches of His goodness”* (Ro. 2:4), *the “riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God”* (Ro. 11:33), the *“riches of His grace”* (Eph. 1:7), the *“riches of His glory”* (Eph. 1:18). Be rich in Christ! (Mt. 16:24-27)**

**#6 – (v19) PRAY for *the working of HIS mighty power*! Notice the term *“exceeding greatness of His power”,* His power changes lives, from sinner to saint, from nominal to phenomenal, from dead to alive forevermore!)**

**#7 – (v20-21) PRAY *in HOPE and VICTORY through our Lord Jesus Christ!* (Christ is raised and triumphant and through Him we will be raised and triumphant! – Romans 8:28-39)**

**> Make a list of prayer needs for:**

**YOUR LIFE CHURCH/MINISTRY SOULS TO SAVE**

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**- PRAYER gives you FOCUS, PRAYER builds your FAITH, PRAYER blesses your FAMILY, PRAYER strengthens our FELLOWSHIP, PRAYER warriors FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!**

**(v22-23) Christ is the head of the *“church”,* which speaks of *“called out ones”;* called out of this world into His glorious Kingdom! Christ is the head, and we are His body of believers.**

**- In conclusion: Get saved today! Be filled with the Holy Spirit! Have faith in God! Follow Jesus Christ! Love one another! Pray and be blessed!**