



# Short Course in Theology

The Biblical Foundations of the Theological Virtues

*The meaning of life...*

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# Assumptions!!!

## Canonical Critic and a Pauline Scholar

- The Canon of the Bible tells a single story – From Creation (Genesis) to the Eschaton/Endtime (Revelation)
- Intertextuality – every author in the Bible is probably reacting to and engaging with other earlier biblical texts
- Paul (like all other early Christians) was operating out of a metanarrative that was deeply rooted in the Scriptures of Second Temple Judaism/Diaspora (LXX; cf. our Old Testament)
  - Law (*Torah*) and the Prophets (*Nevi'im*)
- This study will therefore focus on Paul as an exemplar of an early Jewish-Christian interpreting his Scriptures in the light of the Christ Event
- But, first, what are the “Theological Virtues” and why are they “Theological”?

# What are the Theological Virtues?

Virtues are gifts from God that lead us to live *in a close relationship with him*. Virtues are like habits. They need to be practiced; they can be lost if they are neglected. The three most important virtues are called **theological virtues** because they **come from God (theos) and lead to God**. We can compare these to the **cardinal virtues** are human virtues, acquired by education and good actions. Cardinal comes from *cardo*, the Latin word for hinge, meaning “that on which other things depend.”

“Catholic Basics” Loyola Press

<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/scripture-and-tradition/catholic-basics/catholic-beliefs-and-practices/theological-and-cardinal-virtues>

## Theological Virtues

- Faith
- Hope
- Charity (Love)

## Cardinal Virtues

- prudence
- justice
- fortitude
- temperance

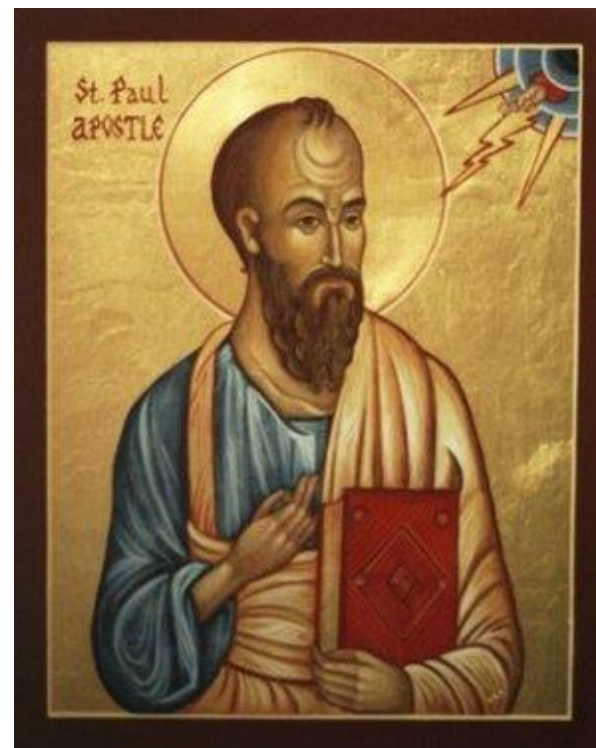
# Most notable Biblical reference: 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing...

Love is patient, love is kind...It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...

Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing...

At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor 13:1-13)



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What did Paul mean by Faith, "Hope" and "Love"?



# Forged the theological debates of the first century...

Beginning of the emergence of the Gentile mission (50s CE)

Paul



Community in Rome (Jews and Gentiles) c. 58 CE

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith [in Christ]...we boast in the hope of the glory of God...we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:1-5

↓  
Justification by (Works of) Faith  
Rom 3:21-5:21

Who is "saved"?

How are they "saved"?

What difference does being "saved" make?

From what are we "saved"?



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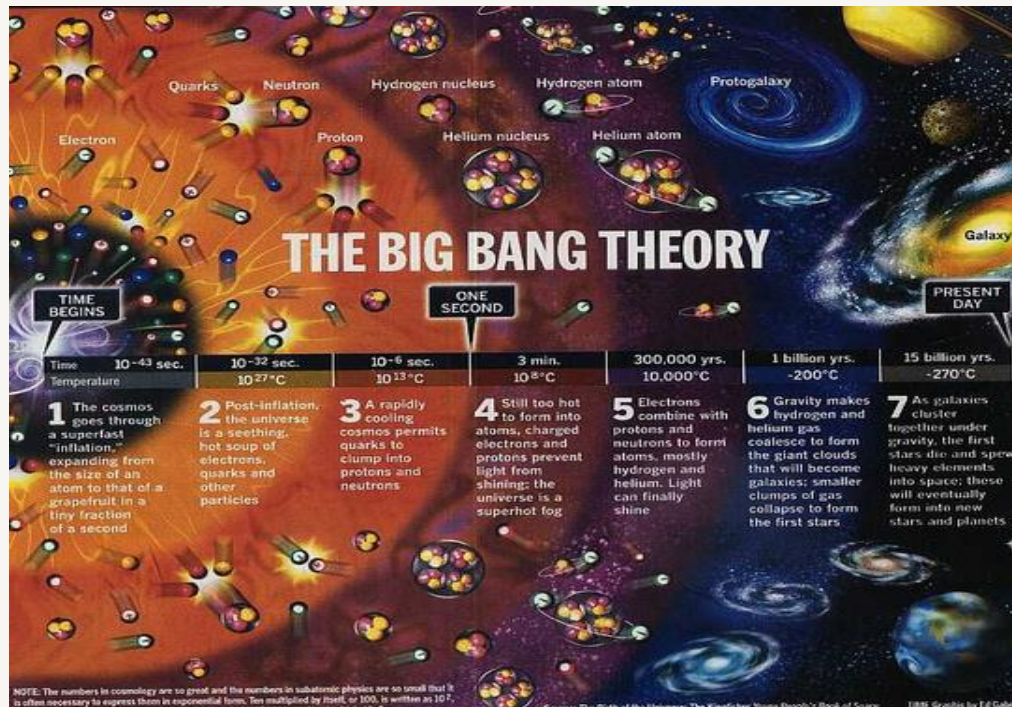
To answer those questions we must go much further back in time...

Source: <https://youtu.be/7dTnBAImSfE>



# Life, the universe and everything...

[with apologies to Douglas Adams]



Source: <https://bhargavbassi.weebly.com/>

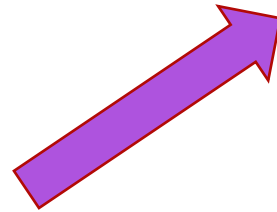
## Life as we know it

1. Universe began 15 billion years ago as an unimaginably small, dense, hot compressed ball of matter
2. Rapid inflation, expansion, cooling, coalescence of matter, gas....stars, galaxies...life
3. ...and all of it evolving, expanding, growing, dying, and, then, the emergence of consciousness, humans (2.5 million years ago)...who continued to die, evolve, grow and die
4. Questions: What is the meaning of life, the universe and everything?
5. Two factors:
  - Complexity and relationality – interconnectedness, interdependence
  - Cost of evolution – indeterminacy, disease, earthquakes, pestilence and death (necessary for development of greater levels of complexity and cohesion)
  - What Paul calls "affliction"...or what we might call...



# The Problem of Evil

Life, the universe and  
everything



...for monotheists in any case



Source: Ken Catalino on <https://townhall.com/political-cartoons/>



Source: Ken Catalano on <https://townhall.com/political-cartoons/>

# Answering the problem of evil

## ...which brings us back to the Bible



### The Bible

1. The bible didn't drop down from heaven
    - Collection of various texts/genre written at different times, by different authors, for different reasons
    - Evolved out of the prayer, reflection and liturgy
  2. Primarily the fruit of ongoing reflection on the problem of evil
  3. Three (observable) factors
    - Complexity, wonder and relationality of the cosmos – interconnectedness, interdependence
    - Cost of an ever-changing world (evolution) – indeterminacy, disease, earthquakes, pestilence, war and death (and, ironically, how that can lead to the development of greater levels of social cohesion, technological development, learning)
- A God who reveals the divine being as both creator and “Father”, a God of majesty and power working through nature, love and relationship working through people – “covenantal relationship”

# Biblical View of the Problem of Evil

## Genesis 1-11

- Genesis 1-11 tells a tragic story of relationship breakdown
  - Man and Woman in the Garden
  - Cain and Abel
  - The Flood
  - Tower of Babel
- Escalation in tension and ultimate disruption
  - God's relationship with humanity
  - Humanity's relationship with self
  - Humanity's relationship with others
  - Humanity's relationship with the environment

***What is God's answer?***

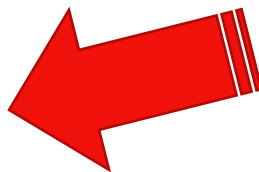


Table adapted from Margaret Nutting Ralph *And God Said What? An Introduction to Biblical Literary Forms* Rev Ed. (New York: Paulist, 2003).

Relationship	Adam & Eve	Cain & Abel	Noah & Flood	Tower of Babel
With Self	Adam ashamed	Cain is mastered by sin	Human thoughts fashion wickedness	
With God	Adam hides from YHWH	Cain leaves the presence of YHWH	YHWH regrets making humans	Humans powerless to reach YHWH
With Others	Adam blames Eve	Cain murders Abel	Humans make violence	Humans can't even speak to each other
With Environment	Adam & Eve expelled and must work	Cain wanders as a stranger and builds first city	The earth is corrupt	

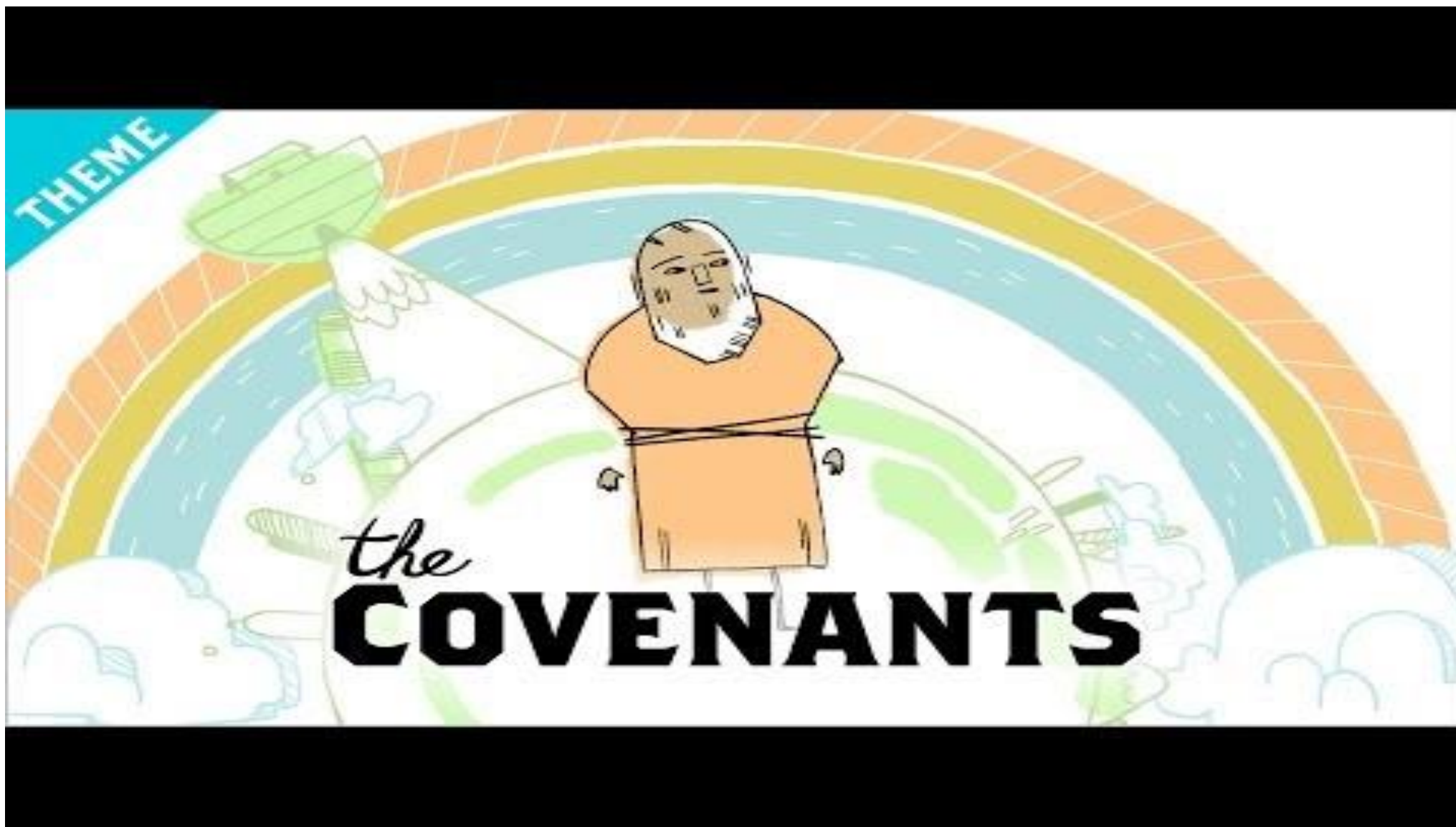


# Covenant



## God's answer – Covenantal Relationship

1. World is beset by evil – human (sin) and natural
2. God seeks relationship (partnership/covenant) with humanity in the midst of evil
  - Redemption from evil, decay and death
3. Bible tells the story of this relationship with all its ups and downs
4. Pattern: God calls – humans answer – humans fail – God remains faithful – God calls....
  - Thus, Paul would say, that it is in God's faithfulness (fidelity) that we hope
  - Our faith is in one who is faithful no matter what we do...which is not to say there aren't any consequences



The Bible Project URL: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/covenants/>

## Key Dates

1250 BCE Approximate date of the Exodus – Mosaic Covenant

1000 BCE King David (Jerusalem, Monarchy and the First Temple) – Davidic Covenant

922 BCE Divided Kingdom (Israel and Judah)

Prophets of Israel (Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, Joel)

721 BCE Israel (Nth) falls to Assyrians

Prophets of Judah - Isaiah, **Micah**, Zephaniah, Jeremiah

587 BCE Judah (Sth) falls to Babylonians

**Babylonian Exile (587-539 BCE)**

**Torah, History books, Prophetic books - Amos, Hosea...Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah...Ezekiel, [2nd] Isaiah, Obadiah, Nahum...**

336 BCE Alexander the Great

Wisdom literature - Sirach, Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon...

167 BCE Maccabean Revolt – 1 & 2 Maccabees

63 BCE Romans conquest

6 BCE to 27 CE Life of Jesus

33-62 CE Gentile Missions of Paul – Pauline letters – New Covenant

66-73 CE **Jewish Revolt**

Gospels, Acts, Catholic Epistles, Apocalypse

## Old Covenant (Testament)

Formative of  
Israelite identity

## New Covenant (Testament)

Formative of Jewish and  
Christian identity

# The Christ Event!

Did not the Prophets foresee a new world order when God would come to reign on earth?



What difference does Jesus make?

Does the Mosaic Law (old Covenant) still hold?

What about the Gentiles?



## Paul sees the universal character of the Christ event...

Ever since the creation of the world, [God's] invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, [Gentiles have no] excuse; for although they knew God they did not accord him glory as God or give him thanks. Instead, they became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless minds were darkened...[But neither should the Jew judge] since you the judge do the very same thing...Yes, affliction and distress will come upon every human being who does evil, Jew first and then Gentile. But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, Jew first and then Gentile. There is no partiality with God. (Rom 1:20-21: 2:1,9-11)



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# In Paul, Jesus is seen as the (New) Adam

...though he was in the form of God,  
he did not regard equality with God  
something to be grasped.  
Rather, he emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
coming in human likeness;  
and found human in appearance,  
he humbled himself,  
becoming obedient to death,  
even death on a cross.

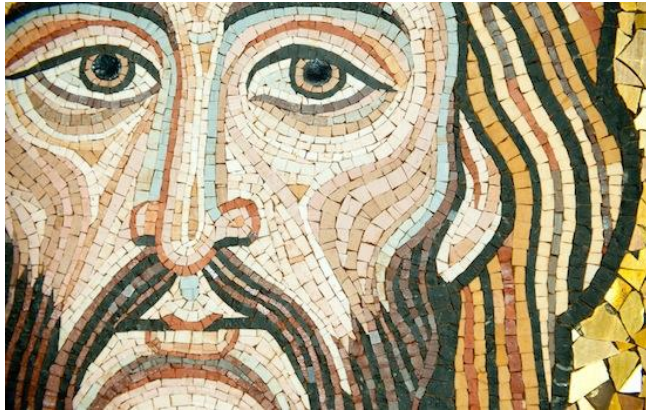
Because of this, God greatly exalted him  
and bestowed on him the name  
that is above every name,  
that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
of those in heaven and on earth and under  
the earth,  
and every tongue confess that  
Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:6-11 (cf. Rom 5:12-21)

**Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of the prophetic promises to rectify the fundamental relationships destroyed by sin (cf Gen 1-11)**

**Eats with the marginalized: sinners, prostitutes, tax collectors – shares table fellowship – *restores the relationship with others***

**Safely navigates the wilderness, walks on water, calms a storm – is unmolested by the dark forces in nature – *restores the relationship with the environment***



Source: Wikimedia

**Heals the sick and casts out demons – frees the captive – *restores the relationship with self***

**Suffers death (saying yes to the Father), is restored to life by God – providing the means to resurrection of the faithful – *restores the relationship with God***

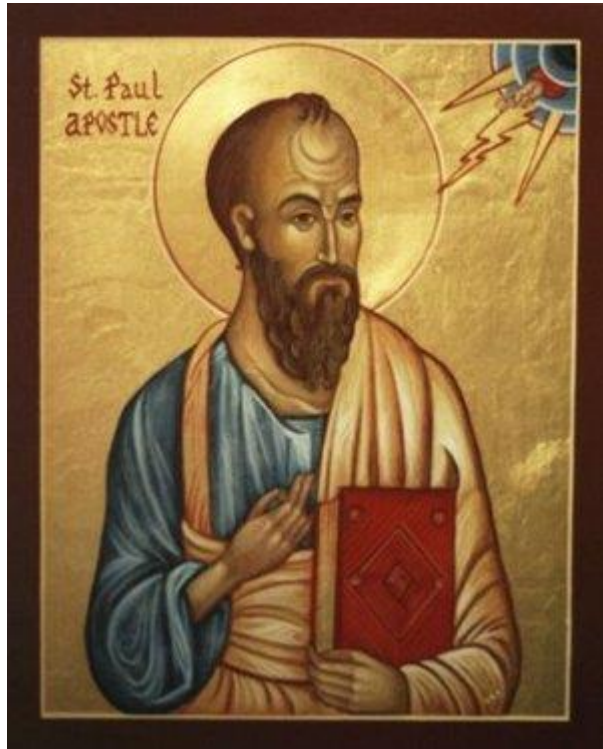
# Faith, Hope and Love

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law, though testified to by the Law and the Prophets, **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe**. For there is no distinction; **all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus**...because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed, through the **forbearance of God**—to prove his righteousness in the present time, that he might be righteous and justify the one who has **faith in Jesus**...Therefore, since we have been **justified by [the] faith [in or of Christ]...**we boast in the **hope of the glory of God**...we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, **hope**; and hope does not disappoint, because the **love of God has been poured out into our hearts** through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.  
(Rom 3:21-26; 5:1-5)

## Questions

1. Who is “saved” (justified)?
2. How are they “saved” (justified)?
3. From what are we “saved”?
4. What difference does being “saved” (justified) make?
5. But, the key questions (for a Pauline scholar) are...





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## *Pistis Christou (Rom 3:22)*

- So are we justified by:
  - *our faith in Christ* (objective genitive), or by
  - *the faith of Christ* (subjective genitive)?
- And what difference does either translation make to our understanding of (Paul's notions of) hope and love (charity)?

# Faith, Hope and Love

Salvation (the Christ event) is pure gift in the midst of a world of indeterminacy, sin and evil!

- **Pistis:** *To believe (have faith)* in the *faithfulness (fidelity) of God (to his covenant)* and in the faithfulness of Christ
- **Elpizo:** To endure affliction (in the midst of evil, decay and death), building character by holding on to the expectation of *(to hope in) our ultimate liberation* (and the transformation of the world)
- **Agape:** Life lived in *love (charity) towards all (in partnership with God)* as a portent of the future world order (union of heaven and earth)

*At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.* (1 Cor 13:12-13)



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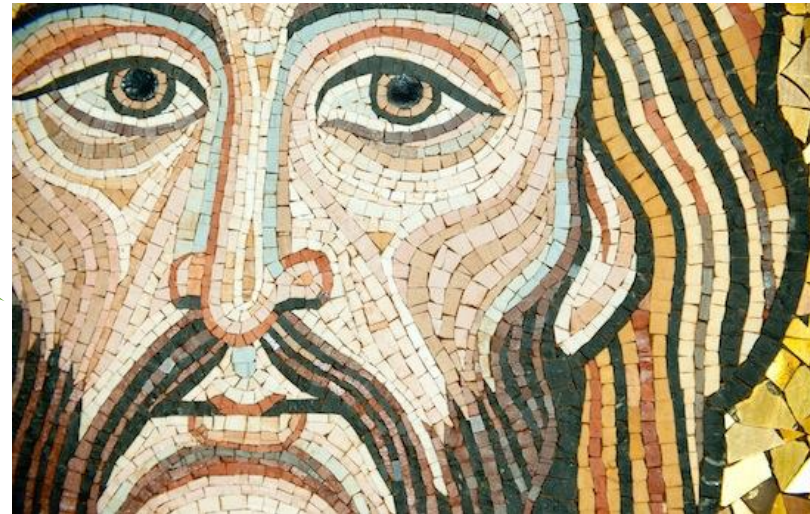
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

(Luke 4:18-19/Isaiah 6:1-2)

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...and mind. And you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

(Matt 22:37, 39)

***The response to the problem of evil is...love God, love your neighbor...because you believe and have hope***



**Jesus' (and Biblical) vision of the "Kingdom"**

# To summarise: The story of the Bible...



<https://thebiblproject.com/videos/the-story-of-the-bible/>