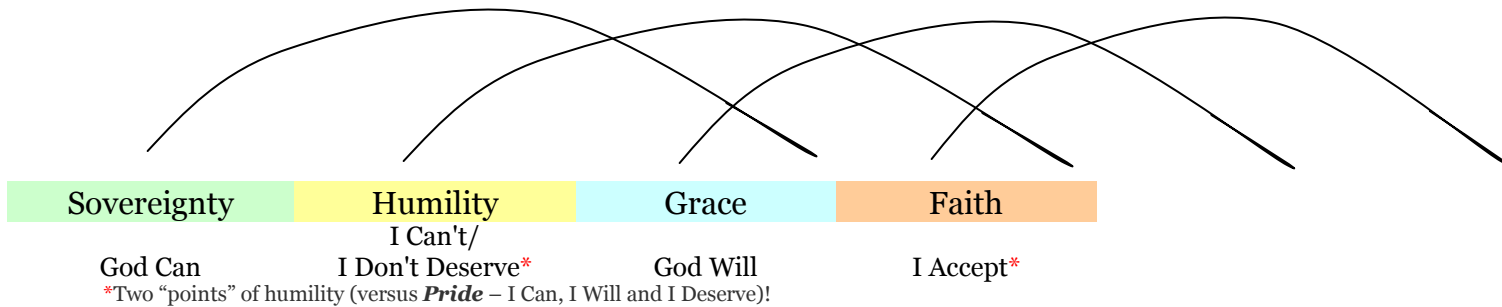


The Perfect Match

A Match Made in Heaven!



It is natural (and wise) to look for Cause - Effect, Chicken - Egg, A, B, C . . . when we are trying to figure out how something works. Sometimes we find a good match while, occasionally, we are fortunate enough to find the perfect match. In Christianity there is a perfect match (and order) to four key "pieces" of the spiritual "pie."

Most **really** important things simply cannot be obtained directly – they are the result of a catalyst; the only way to achieve X is often doing T, U, V and W. This is true of *faith*, the BIG Christian attribute that opens the door to life, death and eternity.

. . . faith . . . it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. Eph 2:8 – 9

Yet while faith is a gift, this doesn't mean there are not conditions for achieving it – the Cs, Ds and Es that precede it! There are conditions – and they are necessary and key to controlling the level of faith, up and down, throughout life! Want to build faith? Look at, and "work" on, the foundational components for it. See faith waning? Focus on the foundational causes for its increase or decline. A trial making you feel like any small faith you may have had has disappeared? Go back to the foundation and base! Prime the pump of faith – the source of God's promise of living water.

Faith is vital as the *Bible* makes TOTALLY clear:

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Heb 11:6

The word "impossible" appears only 13 times in the *Bible* (the above being the 13th and last time) - it appears so seldom because with God nothing is impossible (except to lie Hebrews 6:18).

So faith is important - without which NO ONE will please God, NO ONE (if you believe the *Bible*) will be in heaven – NO ONE will be able, successfully, to get through life TO heaven. Yes, faith is important. And we can sit and wait for it to "strike" us OR we can look for and sow its seed – plant an acorn, care for it and an oak tree will be the outcome.

As the above diagram shows, faith is built on three foundations – it perfectly parallels them – it is "naturally" as wide as them, it rises and falls at the same rate (lagging a little but, nonetheless, perfectly "shadows" them). Look closely and you will see this is true in yourself, others and even in churches. While it is a little harder to clearly discern in churches (because each church is made up of individuals with different levels of faith), it is clear churches have an "average" level of faith that results first from their view of God's sovereignty, then their humility and the resulting grace.

A real-life, contemporary, example is the current controversy in the Episcopal Church reflecting their low state of faith **resulting from** their view of God's frailty, their pride and lack of grace – their level of faith is a perfect match to their view of God's non-sovereignty, their resulting low level of humility (pride) and their loss of His conditional gift, to them, Grace:

- I. They do not believe God is sovereign meaning He can do anything, and He **will**, for those He loves.
- II. The resulting consequence is that what God cannot do they must, to the best of their abilities, do – they **cannot** be humble because everything depends on them! "God is powerless to change me so I guess I had better believe and tell others that "all of us were born `that way.' I am like this (and am destined to stay this way) since God, the weakling, can't do anything about it." They do not believe God can do much, therefore He **must** accept us as we are (If He made us this way and He can't change us then what alternative does He have? He must accept and love us as we are!) and, therefore, I don't have any real needs or expectations from Him and grace really has little or no meaning – unless it is His approval to do what I want!
- III. It is inevitable that they, under this scenario, forfeit the grace that could be theirs Jonah 2:8.
The "worm" that eats the foundation of sovereignty will end in an eventual destruction of humility, grace and faith – it is inevitable – faith rests on believing God Can, I Can't (and if I deserve anything it is destruction) and God Will!



It is no accident the *Bible* begins and ends with great "Wow!" verses:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. *Ge* 1:1

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. *Rev* 21:2

If we can believe this we **can** believe anything while if we can't (or won't) little between the covers of the *Bible* will have much impact! Yes, believing this is impossible. Yes, I am an ignorant, helpless (if not for life, certainly the coming darkness of eternity ought to make this clear and fearful!) boob. There is hope or no hope, but, in any case, hope does not lie with me or is it within my grasp.

- I. I will believe God is sovereign, meaning not only that He can do anything, but He **will** (for those He loves) have His way **or** I will eat and drink knowing tomorrow I will die without hope and help for the loooooooooooooooooong eternity ahead. Believing that God is sovereign is priming the pump that will inevitably lead to a cascading and overwhelming flow of living water so that it is fairly easy . . .
- II. To be humble – humility without a belief that God is sovereign and good will lead to despair while a humility combined with a belief that God is sovereign will result in . . .
- III. Grace, amazing Grace . . . how sweet the sound – the first and foremost of graces being . . .
- IV. Faith – God's faith, not mine! The faith that comes by grace, not by my will or ability!

So, when we look at our faith and find it waning we should look back at our weakening view of God's sovereignty, typically caused by our distorted notion of our abilities (called pride – believing we "can" in the light of everything obviously showing us we can't!) and as the *Bible* commands:

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. *James* 4:7 - 10



Sovereignty – Humility: Priming the Pump for Grace and Faith!
Our level of faith is, and will be, ***exactly*** that of our view of God's sovereignty the humility that will mirror this.

