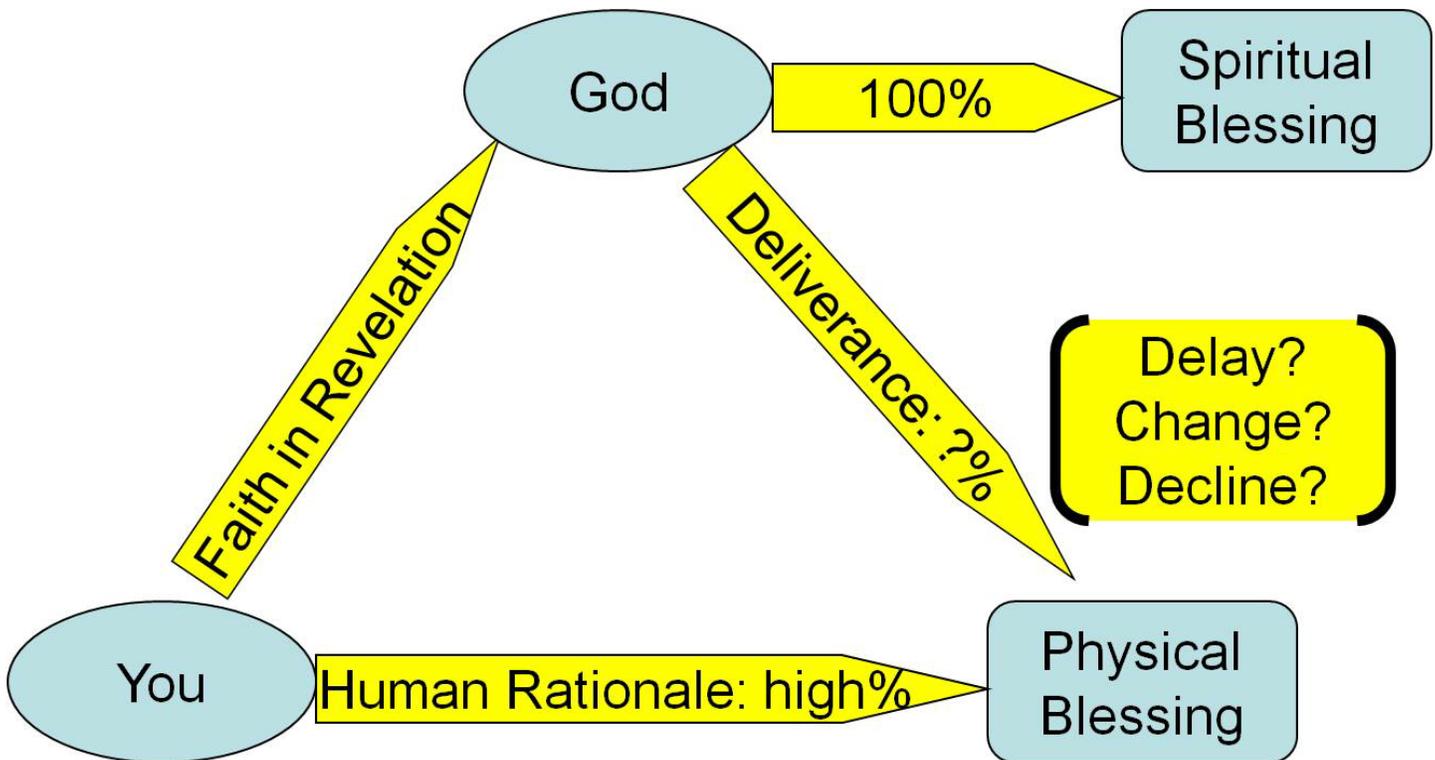


Top Line and Bottom Line



Whether you want to attain a goal or be delivered from a trial, there are two paths you can take. You can choose to continue walking in faith and obedience to God’s revelation and trust God to deliver you to the physical blessing; or you can deviate from God’s way of life and seek to obtain the blessing by human rationale.

If you choose to use human rationale [the “bottom line”], there is a good chance that you will succeed and get at least something like the physical blessing you seek. However, the bottom line involves sin, overtly by doing something wrong or subtly by putting your desires and priorities ahead of God’s. Because it involves sin, there might be negative side effects, like God chastening you to bring you back in line, loss of intimacy with God, weaker faith, a weaker walk with God, and a weaker testimony to others for God.

If you choose to continue walking in faith and obedience to God’s revelation [the “top line”], you will be trusting God to deliver you to the physical blessing. The drawback to this method is that God might not give you what you want, he might change it in some way, or he might delay it. Doing things God’s way makes physical success less certain, so you are in effect saying that you submit to his judgment about what is best for you, and while you would like for deliverance to the physical blessing, you are going to stick to him and his ways whether he grants your request or not.

If you take the top line, you will get the physical blessings that God wants you to have. Even more importantly, you will definitely will experience spiritual blessings, such as the following:

1. You will obtain God's help to endure your trials.
2. You will grow stronger in faith, instead of weaker as you would on the bottom line.
3. You will grow more spiritually mature, preparing you to handle life and to do God's work.
4. You will enjoy uninterrupted intimacy with God.
5. You will experience a greater manifestation of the Fruit of the Spirit.
6. Your example of walking in faith and obedience will be inspiring to others in the church and to non-believers.
7. You will earn treasure in heaven, treasure you can enjoy forever.
8. You will grow more enlightened about God and to be more Christ-like yourself.
9. You will become a better follower of Christ, since he modeled obedience and dependence on God and taught obedience and dependence to his disciples.
10. You will begin to understand how God looks at life and at you, which will help you make sense of what is happening in your life, which in turn will help you to rest in your hope in Christ.

When you are going through a time of trial and you have to decide how to react, you can choose the bottom line and probably solve your problem; or you can choose the top line, asking God to deliver you from the problem, but also trusting that he will see you through it even if he does not remove it. If you walk with God in this way, you will emerge from the trial stronger in faith and character, instead of broken as so often happens when people tread the bottom line and try to cope with, or resolve, the problem in the world's ways.

Similarly, when you are deciding how to achieve something, you can choose the bottom line and probably achieve it; or you can choose the top line, asking God to provide the blessing, but also trusting that he knows what is best for you, and that even if you must wait until you are in Heaven, God will bless you immensely more than you deserve. If you walk with God in this way, you will grow in character and in faith, becoming like Christ [becoming the image of God you were created to be] instead of remaining like an unbeliever.

Even moment by moment, you must choose whether you will dwell on the things of the world [bottom line], or will dwell on the things of God [top line]. Walking the top line means adopting an eternal perspective and the priorities and values of Christ. It means directing your time, money, energy, and other resources to God's eternal purposes, instead of to physical blessings. As you are transformed, you will walk more and more on the top line, and as you choose to do so you are cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the transformation process.