

## LIVING BY FAITH

### Message 11

October 2, 2016

INTRO: We have come to our final message on living by faith. Let me now show you how our messages began. Here are the first words of the first message: *Our subject in these messages will be this: What is living by faith? Why is this so very important? This morning we will just introduce our subject. We will look at some overriding things we need to understand as we enter this most important subject. We will begin by looking at our main text, Habakkuk 2:4 which says, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith."*

When God wanted to bring about a sphere in which He could bring personal beings to Himself, He put man in a sphere in which he would have to trust God by faith. For this He created the physical universe. He made a sphere completely different from the one in which He, God and the angels existed. In this physical sphere he locked man into a sphere in which the only way he could learn or know things about God was by faith. Adam learned to live by faith from day one. He never saw God. God spoke to him and he obeyed and this continued until the devil deceived Eve and she led Adam into sin.

After Adam and Eve were saved by faith, as Genesis 3 tells us, they had to learn to live by faith and pass that faith on to their children. Salvation is a very complicated thing, and we do not know of any other way God could have saved man by faith than by putting him into a realm in which he could not see God.

And our question in this final message is, why did God choose that man should live by faith? Why? Why not have man get saved by works? Why not make it so that man has to get baptized and be a church member, read the Bible 15 minutes each day, pray 15 minutes each day and give to the church and then he will be saved, and if he does those things then he will be saved? Why did God choose that man should live by faith?

Why is it impossible to please God without faith? Why does He so strictly require faith? Why would He not be pleased with sacrifices and offerings? Why would He not be pleased if we worked day and night for Him? Why would He not be pleased with so or so many dollars per sin? Well, to answer those questions is the task of this message.

## G. The Reason For Faith

### 1. The proposition

I want to give you a proposition as to why God requires faith and only faith pleases Him. Could somebody name for me the very first sin to ever take place? Could somebody name for me the main sin of all mankind? Pride! Let me reduce this whole message to one statement: **God chose that the just shall live by faith, because only through living by faith could God keep man without pride or reduce a sinner's pride to zero while leaving him in a fully, free, moral state.** The only thing that pleases God, is that which comes with zero pride. Pride is man's key problem, and it must be reduced to zero in salvation. That is why it is impossible to please God without faith.

### 2. The proof

-Habakkuk 2:4

So, let me spend the rest of our time to prove that proposition. Listen now once more to Habakkuk 2:4. Notice what it says, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith." Here we have pride set out as the opposite of faith. That is it. The problem with the proud is that their soul is not right in them because there is pride in their soul. Now it says of the proud that their soul is not upright in them. That means there is sin within. There is not righteousness within.

On the other hand, of those who live by faith it says, "...but the just shall live by his faith." You see, the one who lives by faith is just. What does that mean? Well, it means he is righteous. He lives right. So the soul of the proud is not upright in him. Why? Because he does not live by faith, or, in other words, he lives in sin. But the soul of those who live by faith is upright in him. His soul is right or righteous. It is in order.

-Ephesians 2:8-9

Why did God choose that the just shall live by faith? Only in this way can man be saved without man having any claim to fame. Go with me now to Ephesians. While

we do that, would someone please quote Ephesians 2:8-9 (quote). Now that you are there, look at it (read 8-9). It is the one fatal error of every teaching under the sun, except true Christianity, that salvation in some way is tied to works.

Now you see, Ephesians said, "...not of works, lest anyone should..." do what? Boast! Why is salvation by grace through faith? So that no one should be able to boast. And what is boasting but pride! I will tell you pride thrives in any soil. One can dress yet so humble and be filled with pride. One can act yet so humble and be filled with pride. One can be proud at a funeral, as well as at party.

Now you see, God could not use force to save man. That would violate man's free will. Right this moment God could torment us until we screamed for salvation. But that would violate free will and would bring God no satisfaction whatever. And God could not have man be saved by works, because that would leave man proud. So God had to find a way to reduce man to zero pride! And He chose to put man in an environment where he could not see God and he would have to be saved by faith and learn to live by faith. And so one cannot live by faith and be proud. In whatever area we are proud, we are not living by faith. Faith reduces us to zero pride!

You see, ever since Adam and Eve sinned, sin is man's major problem. Why does God require repentance and confession of sin? True repentance and true confession reduces us to zero pride. Why did John the Baptist and Jesus come preaching repentance? That is the only way to slay pride and leave man's free will intact!

Maybe someone is or will listen to this message and you do not know if you are saved or if you are going to heaven or hell. This message may sound complicated to you, but let me assure you, salvation is not complicated. You can be saved by faith today. Jesus died in your place. If you will acknowledge that you are a sinner, confess your sins and repent; and then place your faith in Christ, He will save you the very moment you do that.

-Romans 3

Well, the book of Romans is the best tract ever written on salvation by faith. Turn to chapter 3. In the first chapter the writer shows that every Gentile is a sinner. The Jew has no problem with that. In the second chapter he shows that every Jew is a sinner, and the Jew has a problem with that. In chapter three he sums it all up like this, that this is written to show that the whole world is guilty before God. Look at chapter 3. He says in verse 9, "what then, are we, (that is the Jew) better than they, (that is the Gentile)?" The answer is a resound, "No!" And in verses 9-20 he proves that Jew and Gentile are both sinners Scripture.

Then he says in verse 21, "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law (i.e., the works of the law) is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."

Now before I read on, notice that this righteousness which is by faith is witnessed by the law and the prophets. This righteousness of faith is not a NT doctrine. Salvation by grace through faith is an OT and a NT doctrine. There has ever only been one way of salvation. They did not get saved by works in the OT and by grace through faith in the New. Tell me, the whole list of saints of Hebrews 11, how did they live? By faith! Now tell me, under which Testament did all of them live? The old!

So we read on in verse 24: "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Now you will note how faith is mentioned again and again. Now if God is both just and the justifier of those who exercise faith, I want you to notice verse 27. It says, "Where is boasting then?" If God is just, and He justifies the one who has faith, where is boasting, or we might say, "Where is pride?" And the answer is, "It is excluded."

The verse then goes on like this: "By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith." You see, if it is by works, boasting has its rightful place. But if it is by faith, now boasting has no place. So, Paul says that all this brings us to a conclusion and we have it in verse 28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." No pride must be possible.

Now, it is possible that the book of Job was the first book ever written that became part of what we call the Bible. We do not know when it was written, but it speaks of two creatures that I believe are dinosaurs and this would indicate an early writing. If it is the first book ever written, I believe that would be because it deals with the first sin that ever happened, and that is pride.

It is my view that God had the book of Job placed in the Bible in order to warn all Christians of all time against pride, and that, the most serious pride of all, religious pride. There is no greater sickness of soul than religious, or spiritual pride. I believe that unknown to Job, this tumor of religious pride was growing in him. And God in His great mercy allowed him to lose everything in order to draw Job's attention to this fact.

Satan had had his eye on Job for a long time, and he accused God of putting a hedge of protection around Job. And when God found it necessary to begin surgery on Job, he had a discussion with Satan and he told Satan he could do whatever he wanted with Job, except take his life. Well, Satan lost no time. You can read all this in the first few chapters.

And in short while Job's great herds of animals were gone, his children were dead, and he was sitting on an

ash heap. And gathered around him were his self-proclaimed friends who told him what a sinner he must be in order for all this to happen to him. And Job defended himself, and sometimes he said, "Oh, if God would only allow me a hearing with Him. I would teach Him a thing or two." If all this sounds strange to you of a man you might have thought was near perfect, go through the book and underline all the places where Job speaks and then read just those.

Well, when Job's friends give up on trying to convert him, God finally breaks the silence. And God said something like this: "Who is this guy who wants a meeting with me, a man who darkens counsel with words without knowledge? Who is this that wants a to teach Me a thing or two? Stand up like a man, I want to ask you a thing or two." Well the Lord asks one question; no answer. Second question, no answer. Third question, no answer. Question after question comes, over 50 of them, and Job cannot answer one of them.

And when God was done asking, and Job was still silent, God said, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." May I ask you, do you think the Lord has made mistakes in the things you have experienced in life? Do you think you could teach Him a thing or two?

Well, Job said, "Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes twice, but I will proceed no further." Do you know what he is saying? "God, I thought I knew something. I thought I was somebody. I am nothing. My hand is over my mouth. I am shut up."

But God was not done. This surgery of pride is painful. And the Lord said, "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me." Let me put it in my words, "Job, get yourself all dressed up in your finest array. Get yourself as exalted as you possibly can. Put on everything you've got. Then find yourself a proud person and humble him. Bring that proud person to repentance; and Job, if you can do that, you can sit yourself down on My throne

and be God. If you are able to do that, your own right hand can save you. Then you are really something."

And then God showed him, I believe, the largest land dinosaur called behemoth. And He said, tame him down, would you? Put a ring in his nose and lead him about. Or take Leviathan. I believe here is the largest sea creature. When he swims he leaves a wake like a huge ship. Take a fishing pole, and draw him in on a fishing line. Do you know what your chances are? Zero. Well, let Me tell you something Job, I made those creatures. And if you can't tame Behemoth or catch Leviathan with a fishing line, you have no chance at all to make a proud man humble.

"And you see Job, it has been a very big job to make you humble. So go to Job 42 (read 1-6). You see, when I come to abhor myself in dust and ashes, now, now I am ready to trust God by faith. I must be reduced to the dust at the foot of the cross before true faith comes. It is there that faith is born.

-Romans 9-11

So in light of spiritual pride, may I ask you, why did the Lord reject Israel 2,000 years ago and begin to build a church of those despicable people, the Gentiles, which is us? I propose to you it was because of the religious pride of Israel. Do you know what happened to Israel over and over again? They fell into pride, as is evidenced by their failure to live by faith.

In the book of Romans, we have three major sections. There is the doctrinal section, dealing with salvation. Romans 1-3 shows both Jew and Gentile under sin. Chapters 4-5 then deal with justification by faith. Chapters 6-8 deal with sanctification by faith. Throughout all of this is the principle of faith. And then a topic enters, as if out of place, and that is chapters 9-11. Then chapter 12 and on continues Paul's normal style of letter, with the Christian's duties spelled out.

So if chapters 9-11 were left out, we would have the usual form of Paul's letters with doctrine first and duties last. But inserted in between we have chapters

9-12. And what do they deal with? Israel! The Jew, and the setting aside of the Jew for a time. Let me show you that it deals with the Jew. Look at 9:1-5; 10:1-4; 11:1-2a (read).

And I believe that this chapter does not teach Calvinism's view that God elected a few and rejected most based on His sovereign election apart from anything in man. He did not simply pull names out of a hat, so to speak. In this chapter, I believe the teaching is that God chose some to salvation, based on faith; and rejected all who would not live by faith.

I want to race us through this chapter. We begin by reading 1-5. Paul says, *I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*

Here Paul shows his great burden, that Israel, as a nation with all its privileges is lost.

Now in verses 6-7 Paul will set out first God's principle of selection. He gives the principle by which God choose some and not others, and then he will show the why of Israel's rejection. Then he will show them these prophecies in light of Israel's ultimate election. We look then at this divine principle of selection. Let us never think God's Word has failed just because Israel has nationally rejected Christ, the Messiah. "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel..."

Why did God choose Israel in the first place? Verses 6-7 say, *But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.' That is, those who are the children of the*

*flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.'* The children of promise were the children of faith. Isaac was born of faith, Ishmael, as we saw in the last message was born of the flesh, proud flesh.

Paul further demonstrates the principle of faith in verses 10-13: *And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."*

We have the principle of faith shown in God's selection of Jacob over Esau, Rebecca's twins. For God, knowing what manner of sons they would be, chose the younger over the older before they were born. In the natural realm God should have chosen the firstborn. But God chose the younger one before birth so that it must be evident to mankind that His choices are not on the basis of works but on the basis of election or choice. And what did God choose, works or faith? Now why is election set in opposition to works? Because election is based on God's foreknowledge of faith (Romans 11:5-6). So it is written, "The elder shall serve the younger," and again, "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." By the way, that is a verse for those to consider who hold to the teaching of unconditional love.

Was God wrong in setting aside Esau for Jacob even before birth? Verse 14 says, *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!* Let me ask you, does God have a right to choose whom he wills and reject whom He wills? And it is clear that before creation, before anyone had done good or evil, God chose those for Himself who would live by faith and rejected those who would seek Him by works.

So Paul will now prove God's right to choose whom He wills in verse 15, "For He says to Moses, 'I will have

mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.'" Now we must ask a question: is God's choosing arbitrary, or is it based on His righteous character? No doubt it is based on his righteous character. And on whom did God will to have mercy and compassion? Well, on those who would live by faith. Exodus 20:6 tells us that God shows mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. Mary, the mother of Jesus recognized what triggered God's mercy (Lk. 1:50).

God's mercy and compassion is not something that comes and goes without reason. It is established on the firm character of God. Mary says, "His mercy is on those who fear Him." And in the same breath she tells us what turns God to brass for, "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." Ah yes, God will have mercy on whom He wills to have mercy and He wills to have mercy on those who fear Him and are humble. Obviously then, God's mercy is not triggered by self will or human efforts.

So look at verse 16, *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, (that is, it is not of works) but of God who shows mercy.* And we have seen on whom He shows mercy. So if God's mercy is extended on the basis of man's response to Him in fear and faith, then, "...it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." In other words God's choice of individuals is not on the basis of works. So, it is not *how much* one pursues God. It is *on what basis* one pursues Him. When one comes by faith God's mercy opens like a flower to the sun. As long as I seek Him by works He clams up and nothing can move him. All the willing and running will not open Him to us.

So Paul goes on in verses 17-18 by giving the reason, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.' Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens."

Now, that God's mercy is withheld from those who are proud and those who will not acknowledge God, this is

clearly shown in Pharoah. Read about him and you will find an extremely proud man. God allowed him to come to his position of power to demonstrate this very fact that His choice is not on the basis of any human merit. It is simply on the basis of faith. To show this He raised up Pharoah. And God hardened Pharoah. Ah yes, as someone has rightly said, 'the same sun that softens the ice hardens the clay.' The plagues that hardened Pharoah might have softened many a man. Yes, whom He wills He hardens and He hardened Pharoah. How and why? God placed circumstances before Pharoah that should have softened any man. But instead of softening he called for his own magicians. And then, because of his stubborn unbelief, God allowed his magicians to perform the same miracles Moses had performed. That is how God hardened him. If Pharoah had fallen to His knees in humility God would not have hardened him in this way. Pharoah's hardening by God was Pharoah's choice, not God's. When man stands in proud unbelief God must remain true to His character. So verse 18 says, *Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.* On whom does He have mercy? Those who come to Him with zero pride, those who come by faith. Whom does He will to harden? Those who come in pride!

You see, in Pharoah, the contest was between Jehovah God and the gods of Egypt. The plagues were leveled against those very gods, and Pharoah trusted in those gods. This is what caused his hardening. If he had once bent his proud, stiff neck, God would have reversed everything. Pharoah was a man without faith. It is the faith principle again. Someone has well said, "Unbelief precedes hardening."

I am going to leave out verses 19-29 because they take more time to explain than what I have this morning. But what we have now is an explanation regarding God's rejection of Israel and His selection of the Gentiles. The Jews greatest dilemma is, how could God choose the Gentiles, that despicable sinful people? God would reject the Jew and select the Gentiles? Unthinkable! But Paul says He did and He will show why. But God's principle of selection, or election if you like, which is faith, assures us of two things, and both can be

proved by OT prophecy. First, it foretells of the call of the Gentiles as we have in verses 25-26. And second, it assures of a remnant of saved Jews at all times in verses 27-29.

So I ask you, has God's Word failed? No! The Gentiles are experiencing salvation and Israel, though by and large a lost nation, has a remnant. And now comes Paul's grand conclusion in verses 30-33. Let us read it, *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness* and I ask you, why did the Gentiles attain true righteousness? *Paul tells us in these words, even the righteousness of faith...* And now he will tell us about Israel's rejection, *but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness (that is by works), has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."* Well, we know, they failed to believe on Him. And what held them? Their own pride, religious pride, the very worst of all the kinds of pride!

Now in chapter 11, Paul shows that blindness has happened to Israel for a time, but that time will come to an end, so the Gentile, he says, must be careful not to become high minded. That is proud. And then Paul shows that the Gentile is like a wild olive branch grafted into a tame olive tree. So look at 17-21. You see, the issue is one of faith. And a failure in faith indicates a fall into pride. So look at 11:25-26 (read).

CONCL: And so, we conclude. Earlier I reduced this message to this reason why God chose faith: **God chose that the just shall live by faith, because only through living by faith could God keep man without pride or reduce man's pride to zero while leaving him in a fully, free, moral state.** If Adam and Eve had remained humble, they would not have fallen into sin.

So God created the physical universe, as I see it, to create a climate in which faith must be exercised if one is to live in unity with the Lord. That great chapter on love, 1 Corinthians

13 says, "And now abide faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love." And we ask, why?

I will show you why. Exodus 33:20 says no man can see God and live, and nobody but Jesus Christ has ever seen Him. But go now to Revelation 22. Here we are in the New Jerusalem. God has come down from heaven to earth to dwell with man forever, and He will dwell in the New Jerusalem. And 22:1-4 says, "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face..." When the true believer sees God's face, faith will be over. Hope will be over. Only love will continue, and it will continue forever.

And so, as we conclude this series, let me conclude by reading two Scriptures. First Habakkuk 2:4, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith."

The second Scripture is Romans 11:33-36, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."