

LIVING BY FAITH?

Message 1

INTRO: 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." Then we will look at the two very important realms we must understand. We will then look at truth as it relates to both those realms. We will look at the importance of personhood, and then go back in time as far as we can. From there we will see that God had a plan way back before the existence of the creation of anything; and in His plan, man would need to live by faith.

HABAKKUK: So, we begin with Habakkuk 2:4 which says, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith." What do we see here? Pride set over against faith. Living in pride or living by faith. Pride contrasted with faith. The prophets of the OT had a nasty task. We think of prophets as those who foretold the future. That was probably the smaller part of their ministry. The most difficult and dangerous part was warning the people to turn from sin. You see, they *foretold*; and they *forth-told*. In forth-telling, they exhorted the people to turn from sin and if they did not, they told them what God would do.

We are in an age when we are in desperate need for prophets. We have some, and theirs is a nasty task. The prophet's life often resulted in premature death, not at the hand of those who did not know about God; but at the hand of those who professed to know God.

Now the prophet Habakkuk prophesied in about 607 BC. That is shortly before Judah was taken into captivity by Babylon, and shortly before Daniel and his friends were taken captive to Babylon. And God warned Israel over and over again to turn from their sin, but all to no avail. In Habakkuk's day things were like they are in America today. Because of the sins of the nation we see judgment coming but because it has not yet come, man lives as though it will never come, and we, like Habakkuk cry out, "Lord, where is justice?" Today, it is like that in our nation, but worse yet, it is like that in much of the Church.

Habakkuk, writing about 600 years before Christ, writes just a few years before the southern kingdom, Judah, is led captive by Nebuchadnezzar. The northern kingdom had already suffered God's judgment. And now God wants Habakkuk to tell Israel that He will bring Babylon on them and they will go captive to Babylon. Jehoiakim is king and he is not a good king.

Turn to Habakkuk. Habakkuk, in his little book, has two great questions for God. One, "How can such wickedness exist and you do nothing about it?" May I ask you, have you pondered this question in our nation today? Habakkuk says, "Oh Lord God, you are just and holy. How can you sit back and do nothing?" Do you feel like that at times? Look at verse 2 (read).

But God answers in verses 5-11 (read). I think verse 5 could read like this: "Look among the nations and watch - Be utterly astounded!" And here is how I think it should read, "For I am working a work in your days, which you would not believe if it were told you." The idea is, God is already at work. Habakkuk's problem is he can't see that God is at work. I have hope that God is doing a work in our day that we would not believe if it were told us. This hope I have is the hope of a revival, not a carrying away into Babylon, although this is also a possibility, if we continue to progress in sin as we are.

Well, when God says He will take Israel captive by the Chaldeans, Habakkuk has a new problem. It is this: "Oh, Lord God, why would you use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish her?" Look at verses 12-14 (read). His question for God is, "Why would You keep silent when the wicked devours one more righteous than he?" Judah was bad, yes; but not nearly as bad as Babylon. And God would use Babylon to punish Judah? Well, let me just say this, all God's plan was wrapped up in Judah, not Babylon. But Judah was going astray, and His plan would be destroyed if He did not do something about it. And so God will punish Judah. Could this be our only hope?

Habakkuk didn't like all this so look at what he says in 2:1 (Read). I am going to go up on the wall, and just see what God will do. And God answers him in this second chapter, but look at verses 2-4 (read). The Wycliffe Commentary says: "These three verses contain what is perhaps the most difficult section of the prophesy, both from the standpoint of translation and interpretation [i.e., 2:2-4]", end quote. But here is the Lord's answer to Habakkuk's second question, which was, "Why would you use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish her?"

This same commentary then says that the Lord's answer to Habakkuk's second question is, "The purpose is certain, and faith will be rewarded." So, the commentaries' answer that the purpose is certain, and there is no use arguing about it is taken from verse 3 (read). The answer, that faith will be

rewarded, is taken from verse 4 (read). God will use a nation more wicked than Judah to punish her, but he is well aware that Babylon's soul is not upright in her either. And we can rest assured that the unrighteousness we see in the world today will be dealt with, and this is also certain in Scripture.

But note now the last part of verse 4. In contrast to the proud, is the person who lives by faith. Here is that most famous line, "But the just shall live by his faith." The just will live his life by faith, no matter what the outward circumstances might be. And he will be given life by his faith, and live forever. The proud will meet their doom and go to hell. The just will live forever!

And here I propose is a very central theme that runs throughout Scripture. The just shall live by his faith. And we might ask: Why has God chosen it to be like this, that the just shall live by faith? And just what does it mean to live by faith? And that is the purpose of our studies.

So let me make one more note that I read or had pointed out to me many years ago. Our verse falls into three parts. And each of these three parts becomes important in three NT books. First is, "The just..." Romans speaks of the just. There is the true believer. Romans 1:17 says, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Then we have the next part, "...shall live..." Galatians talks about living. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." So Galatians 3:11 says, "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." And then we have part three, and that is, "...by faith" and there we have the book of Hebrews. And you know how Hebrews 11 repeats over and over again, "by faith, by faith, by faith." So Hebrews 10:38 says, "So the just shall live by faith.

And our question now is, why did God choose that the just shall live by faith? Why is faith the only way to get saved, the only way to live in life, and the only way to attain to the resurrection of the just? And what does it mean to live by faith? That, then, is our subject.

SIN: And so, in this introductory message, let us consider another important issue. Let us begin with pointing out the major problem of mankind. What is man's major problem? It is the problem of sin! No matter how you slice it, no matter how much of an atheist one is, no matter what religion one is a part of, a basic problem to all of mankind is still sin. It shows up everywhere. You can give it good names or bad names or no names, but still it rears its ugly head and troubles man again and

again. One way or another, mankind must acknowledge this problem of sin, or take his downward spiral into deeper sin.

TWO REALMS: Let me point out another very important matter to our subject. Our subject is living by faith. Another thing we have to acknowledge is that there must be another sphere outside of the one we are in. A sphere we somehow cannot enter physically. We must acknowledge the supernatural sphere. The only way we can explain some things in life is that there is another sphere affecting our sphere.

A while ago my wife and I were driving and we listened, as we quite often do, to D. Martyn Lloyd Jones. And he said something like this, "Here is the first and fundamental question: 'Is there such a thing as a supernatural realm?' The question is, is there a realm that is above and beyond the natural realm?" end quote. Well, let me ask you, just what is the natural realm? Well, it is the physical universe in which we live. It is the realm that is knowable through the five senses.

Now, our question is, is there a realm beyond that? And Lloyd Jones's answer was, "The whole message of the Bible says there is." Listen to the opening words of the Bible, "In the beginning God..." And there we are in the supernatural realm. And then it says He created the heavens and the earth, and there is the natural realm. If one does not believe in the supernatural realm, one might as well throw away the Bible.

So let me say this, that though we live in the 21st century, God is as real today as He ever was. And let me tell you this as well, the devil and demons are as real today as they ever were. Jones then said this, "This visible world of ours is a result of the invisible. We can only understand the visible by understanding the invisible." The message he was giving was from the book of Acts and was called, "The Supernatural Realm." There is a supernatural realm, and without acknowledging that we will never understand what living by faith is. We will be exploring this more.

Now, when we pursue a study of those two realms, we find that the supernatural realm exists in two major parts; God and the good angels and Satan and the demons. These two areas affect all of mankind for good or for evil. And the evidence of these two spheres is everywhere present, though the recognition of them is very small. And this immaterial sphere affects man. For example, when man dies, every person should ask, "What has happened?" Every physical part that was there before death is still there.

But something is gone. What is it? And the answer is that it is immaterial.

Then there is the devil and his demons. Try as one might to explain man's tendency to evil, it all fails unless one comes to the Bible. Though we have long past the 2,000 year mark since Christ walked on earth, a belief in this aspect of reality is vitally important to the Christian's world view. Ignorance of these two areas of the supernatural realm is a large part a problem of the Church. So there are two realms, the natural and the supernatural; the physical and the spiritual.

TRUTH: There is another matter we must be sure about. Our study will have to do with living by faith. And before we can even consider whether living by faith is actually important, we will have to acknowledge that there is such a thing as truth, objective truth. Truth is simply that which conforms to reality. When the policeman stops you for going over the speed limit, you cannot argue what 100 kilometers per hour is. There is such a thing as objective truth. You cannot say, "But sir, truth is relative, and what you consider 130 I consider to be 100 and that is the truth." You see, we understand that there is truth in the physical realm. Amazingly, today, not only is spiritual truth under attack; physical, scientific truth is under attack. When a male can claim he is a female, and our government says that is true we have lost out on truth in both realms. There is no use talking about living by faith until we acknowledge that there is objective truth; both physical and spiritual.

But, if we deal with living by faith according to the Bible, we will have to acknowledge truth in both realms exists. And here it is important to understand that there are not only two realms, the natural and the supernatural; or the physical and the spiritual. We must understand that there are also two sources of truth. The one source is from the natural realm. Truth gleaned from the natural realm is what we would call general truth. It is open and available to all. There are many avenues of study; math, history, geology, biology, chemistry, language and many, many more. Truth in this realm is gleaned via the five senses. Man's five senses, at present, all have to do with the physical.

But if we were left to the natural realm, we would never know who God is and what living by faith is about. But, praise God, there is another source of truth, and it comes from the supernatural realm. Man always knew this until we came to the

modern age of science. Somewhere in the 1800's man began to explore what we today call science. Man had discovered all the continents land, and once he had discovered the continents of the world, his attention turned to a study of the physical world itself. And as he studied physics, and sought out all kinds of inventions and how things work in the physical realm he left God and spiritual truth. Such an influence scientific knowledge had on man that he left God, and began to believe that man could ultimately save himself.

This study in the physical realm he called 'science', which really only simply means *knowledge*. And when his studies in science grew, he began to dabble in yet another area, which he claimed was also science. But it was a study that went beyond the five senses. Man's mind is an inquisitive thing, and now he began to question what everything is all about. And when he asked these questions, he had stepped outside the realm of the science known to the five senses. So what did he call this new area of study? He called it metaphysics. That means *after* physics. And where are you when you enter a sphere after physics? In the spiritual world, the supernatural, or the sphere beyond the natural.

Now, in our world, if you call something science and it does not use the Bible and it is exploration beyond physics, you can call it science or metaphysics and get government funding for your studies. And I ask you, when man began to search for truth in the supernatural world, where did man go for his answers? To man. To the powers of the senses and logic! When you talk about metaphysics or psychology or psychiatry and so on, what is the source of truth, so called? Man! But what truth does man have when he studies the immaterial realm? Well, he is beyond that which the senses and logic can discover, and what parades itself as truth in such areas, say as psychology, has no basis for truth. And so man's metaphysical views are ever changing, with new views. If it was truly truth, it would not change.

Metaphysics, is simply man trying to understand the supernatural through the laws of the senses and logic. And what questions does he seek to answer in his metaphysical studies? He seeks to find out where everything came from and why it exists. But man has only his five senses and logic to explore the supernatural realm, and his senses refuse to allow him into that other realm. They cannot go there. So this field of study is an ever changing field. Like modern psychology, and like 2 Timothy 3:7 says,

"Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Science, as we call it, is truly only in the realm of physics. It is in the realm of the material. It is in the realm of observable data. Lloyd Jones, whom I quoted earlier, said this: "This visible world of ours is a result of the invisible. We can only understand the visible by understanding the invisible" end quote. And that is what metaphysics is busy at. But this new branch of study called metaphysics does not acknowledge a supernatural realm. And let me say this, that all modern secular psychology is somewhere in all of that metaphysical teaching of the world. And let me say this as well: They will never, but never come to real truth in that way!

Well, I am very happy to tell you that there is another source of truth which we will explore more later, but it is truth that comes from the supernatural realm, the spiritual realm. It comes by way of a book with 66 books. It comes to us in man's terminology through words, but it communicates divine or supernatural truth. It is the Book of books. Just the topic of this book is a vast study on its own. And this book claims it has a divine origin; which, if true, makes it supernatural, and it has a lot of evidence to support that claim. Go to 2 Samuel 23 (read 1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21). We need not spend more time on this for our present study.

Now those are the claims of the book. But is there evidence that that those claims are the truth? For those who might struggle whether the Bible is truly the one and only source of truth from the spiritual world, you might wish to listen to our message on sermonaudio.com/mecl, "Ten Proofs That The Bible Is The Word Of God." Let me just give you the greatest of those 10: prophecy. Man cannot even with certainty prophecy the weather from observable data, never mind tell people what will happen next year. But the Bible made prophecies 100's of years before they happened, and they happened. It has never yet failed. Study the prophecies related to the death of Christ alone, and you will have ample proof of what I have proposed. There is only one way that is possible. There is a mind behind those prophecies that is not human. It is supernatural. It comes from another realm. And so, as we progress, I think it will become abundantly clear that there is a supernatural realm.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONHOOD: And so, as we introduce these introductory things to our study of faith, let me ask you

another question. Let me ask it from the Psalmist words in Psalm 8. Turn there (read 3-4). Let me ask you, when you see a person, what do you see? Sometimes when my wife is busy shopping in the mall, I sit in a bench and I watch people. There are all kinds of people. All kinds of shapes. All manner of dress. All manner of hair styles. All manner of make-up. All kinds of styles of walking. And I ask you, when you see a person, what do you see?

Let me tell you what I see. Housed in that physical body, and as I see it, in a highly protected area, an area between the two ears, is an very complex entity we call the self. Housed here in the skull, is an incredibly complex entity, an entity extremely valuable to God, and highly coveted by Satan. As I see it, it is here that the real you, the real person resides. The body is not the person. And I see in that body that houses that person, no matter what shape, size or manner of view he or she presents, the potential of the greatest of all things possible in all the material universe. If I understand the Bible right, you can take the whole physical universe, and it is phenomenally large, and it does not have the potential that is wrapped up in one human being.

Then let me tell you what else I see. I see this from a biblical point of view and in real life. I see that almost every one of those people is lost and going to hell. And sometimes it overwhelms me and I don't want to look any more. Sometimes I wish I could live without seeing these things. A statement one of our men made some time ago has come to me again and again. He said, "Sometimes I wish I could be a mediocre Christian." I know what he means. And yet, deep down I want reality. I want truth above everything else there is. And so I keep going.

And then I see another thing. And this thing has grown on me. What God gets out of one person who trusts Him by faith and lives by faith and whose faith is alive and causes him to live right is of such value to Him as cannot be expressed in human terms. So to give us a picture, He says this in 1 Peter 1:6-7, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the *genuineness of your faith*, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ..."

We cannot understand what pure faith is worth to God. So He uses that which we treasure above all else to compare it to, gold. And then He says if you take that gold and put it in the fire

and you turn up the heat and do everything possible to make it as pure as possible, purified faith to Him is as precious as that; no it is more precious than that; no, it is much more precious than that. Well, you and I don't know how precious that is. But now we have a little idea.

And in the book of Habakkuk, God would use a nation more ungodly than Judah was at that time, and that was very ungodly, to bring faith out of those who trusted in Him. You see, the just shall live by faith.

LIFE & TIME: Now in light of all this, consider life for a moment in light of time. You and I are alive. If you look at your watch it will measure the time that is ticking by. Turn to Psalm 90. Note the time words as we read. ***Verse 1 says that this is a prayer of Moses the man of God. And what does he pray? He says, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." Generations pass in time. They take time. Now note in verse 2 that there was a time when there were no mountains, no earth and no world, "Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." Then we note there is time from "everlasting", that is time without beginning, and it is "to everlasting" and that is time without end.

In time, man goes astray and verse 3 says, "You turn man to destruction, And say, 'Return, O children of men.'" Then look at time from God's perspective in verse 4, "For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night." But look at verses 5-9, how different man is, "You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers. For we have been consumed by Your anger, And by Your wrath we are terrified. You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; We finish our years like a sigh."

So, with God, a thousand years is like nothing, but look at how it is with man in verse 10, "The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Well, out of all this we should learn to live for God by faith for the writer says in verse 11, "Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath." And so, in light of all that he says in verse 12, "So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Now out of all that, the Psalmist says, this in verses 13-17, "Return, O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, The years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, And Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands."

Well, time is ticking by. We know our days, if we do well, are possibly 70 years and if extra then 80 years. Then we are done here. We well know that many do not get nearly that far. So it is of utmost importance that I learn what life is all about and make the most of the time I have.

Now it must simply not escape us that if there is a God, and the affirmative answer to that is inescapable to all normal people, there must be a purpose to this whole universe of ours and to everything that has come into existence. And surely everybody must ask themselves this question, why am I here? I trust that a study of living by faith will help us to answer that question.

DOCTRINE: There is another important matter we need to consider, and that is doctrine. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." It is not possible to please God without faith. So, he that comes to God must believe that He is. And so there must be some kind of a teaching, some doctrine which one believes. He must first believe that God exists. That requires some kind of doctrine. Then he must believe that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him. That also involves some doctrine. And this doctrine he must believe to be true, otherwise it is not believing. Furthermore, one must have some knowledge of God in order to believe in Him. That also requires some doctrine, some teaching.

One may base his belief in a god or gods because of some experience one had in life, but the problem is the only

verification that one's belief is true is that experience. Many different people have many different experiences and come to believe in all kinds of different gods, and contrary to popular opinion, they cannot all be true.

GOING BACK IN TIME: And so, taking the Bible as our guide, we are going to go back in history now. We want to do this in order to find out what living by faith is. The Psalm we just read began like this in verse 2, ""Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." You see, no matter how far back we go, there was God. And no matter how far ahead we go, there is God.

And we are now going to go back a long way in time and begin at the beginning, because I think to understand faith, we need to understand the beginning. So, let us go back in time. If we go back 2,000 years we come to the time of Christ. If we go back 3,000 years we come to the time of David. If we go back 4,000 years we come to the time of Abraham. If we go back 5,000 years, we are within 70 years of when Adam died. If we go back 6,000 years we arrive at creation. That is the beginning of the universe. Our Psalm said before the mountains were brought forth, God was there. So we go back further. If we go back 7,000 years, where are we? We don't know. So we ask, what, besides God existed 7,000 years ago? Again, we do not know.

But somewhere before the creation of the universe, God began to create. Somebody tell us, what did He create before He created the universe? He created angels first. For evidence for that, go to Job 38 (read 1-7). So it would seem that the angels had been created before the universe was created. And so let us now go back one more step, and that is back to before God created angels, and we ask, what was there then? And as far as we know, only God was there.

Now think of this: God was all alone. There were three divine Personalities in the godhead, and this God alone existed. Now think of this. Here we are before the mountains were brought forth, and even before angels existed. And here is the Triune God. He is a Personal being who is absolutely perfect in every possible way. He is good, He is all-powerful, all knowing, generous, kind, loving and on and on. Everything possible that could be good in a free moral being, is what He is like. But He is all alone.

But there is nobody to love, nor anybody to love Him. There is nobody to be kind to. There is nobody to appreciate all His goodness. There is only the Triune God. Each Person in this Triune God is equally good etc... But they are all alone. There is no other being around, never mind one that has the capacity to appreciate all that goodness. Somewhere in eternity past, that, it would seem, is what it must have been like.

THE PLAN: Then, somewhere in eternity past, God made a plan. Oh yes God planned. That is an inescapable fact. Look at Romans 1:20. You see, by looking at the created universe there are a lot of things we can learn about what kind of God He is. Look at just the sun, the moon and the earth. You can learn that God had a plan, simply by observing them. If the sun got any closer or farther away we would either burn or freeze. Look at our own atmosphere. If the gases were not mixed exactly right, we could not live. Well, there is all kinds of evidence that God had a plan.

Listen to Matthew 13:35, "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." There were things that would be revealed that had been kept secret for 4,000 years. That reveals a plan. Listen to Matthew 25:34, "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...' That a plan was in place is so evident in so many places it is inescapable to anyone who considers it, if but for a moment.

And so, without any doubt whatsoever, somewhere in eternity past God planned everything. Have you ever thought of this: it took Him only six days to make everything, but He had a lot of time to plan it all.

And so we want to begin with creation, and why God created everything. Our first point is the purpose of creation. I think to understand what faith is and why we must learn to live by faith is clarified a long way by understanding the purpose of creation.

CONCL: Those then, are some important considerations one needs to make in order to understand what living by faith is. Living by faith is a very important matter, since the whole of Christian salvation is by faith. He is elected by faith. He is predestined by faith. The Christian gets saved by faith, He is sanctified by faith, that is he delivered from sin by faith and

attains to the resurrection of the just by faith. All of the Christian's life is by faith.