

TBC – 4/6/03 p.m.

LIVING BY FAITH

Hebrews 11:6

Intro: It was through Habakkuk that we are first given the statement, “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4). Then the Apostle Paul used it three times in his writings: once in Romans (1:17), once in Galatians (3:11), and once in Hebrews (19:38). In reading those books, it seems clear that in Romans, the emphasis is upon “the just” – “the just shall live by faith.” In Galatians the emphasis is upon “by faith,” as opposed to works, or faith plus works – “the just shall live by faith.” And in Hebrews the emphasis is upon the words, “shall live.” And that is certainly emphasized in Hebrews 11, but all through the epistle. So in Hebrews we would read it, “the just shall live by faith.” So we see that faith is not something that is to be exercised every once in a while, when we pray, or when we are facing some trial in our lives, but it is to be the outstanding characteristic of our lives – day after day, and actually moment by moment.

To emphasize this, Paul (or whoever the writer might have been) used the expression “by faith” to tell us what various OT characters did. “By faith Abel offered . . .” “By faith Enoch . . . pleased God.” “By faith Noah . . . prepared an ark . . .,” and so on through the chapter.

Now in speaking about faith we need to recognize that every person, whether in the OT or in the NT, who has had a saving relationship with God, had that relationship begin “by faith.” This is what we are told in the verses we quoted together this morning at the close of our service. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, . . .” All of salvation is a gift, and a very important part of that gift is the gift of faith. When we go on to Heb. 12:1 and 2 we learn that we are always to be “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Paul tells us that faith is not something that we “drum up” within ourselves, but it comes by hearing the Word of God. See Rom. 10:17. If we want our faith to be strengthened, we must read the Word. If we want to see people saved by faith, we need to give them the Word.

The record of life of Enoch is given to us in Genesis 5. Enoch’s life was about a third as long as the others who are mentioned in Genesis 5. Adam lived to be 930 years old. Seth, his son, lived to be 912 years old. All of them lived to be over 900 or over 800, but when we come to Enoch he just lived 365 years! And twice in Genesis 5 in connection with Enoch

we are told that he “walked with God. See verses 22 and 24. But the unusual thing about Enoch in addition to the fact that it is particularly said that he “walked with God,” is the fact that he did not die. “God took him.” We don’t know how that happened, but suddenly one day he was gone. His family probably tried to find him, but they couldn’t. God had taken him. We can say that he must have been raptured, transported into the presence of God in heaven. Hebrews 6:5 calls it a “translation.”

Now when we come to the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 and verse 5, we are told why he was translated. It was because his life was characterized by one thing: “he pleased God.” I know that this does not mean that none of the others pleased God, because we are told what each one did “by faith.” But we have to conclude that more than anyone else mentioned in Hebrews 11 Enoch’s life was characterized by pleasing God. And then when we go on into Heb. 11:6 we see that he pleased God by faith, by the special way in which he trusted God throughout his short life.

The life of Enoch tells us that the important thing for all of us, is not how long we live, but how we live! Enoch’s life was not cut short when we compare it with the others, because he displeased God, but it was because he pleased God. God was using the shortened life of Enoch to attract our attention to that which was, and is, most important in the eyes of the Lord. Jude mentioned Enoch in his short, one-chapter epistle, and we learn from Jude that Enoch was a preacher. This is what Jude wrote in Jude 14-15:

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,
15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

This is all we know about his preaching. But this is not mentioned in Gen. 5. All we are told there is that he walked with God, and that by his walk he pleased God, and the reason his walk, or his life, was pleasing to God, was because he walked by faith. I am sure that his preaching pleased God, but even that was by faith. He believed that the Lord was coming with His saints, and that he was coming, among other reasons, to judge ungodly people. But his preaching pleased the Lord because it was a part of all that Enoch did by faith.

Now Hebrews 11:6, my text for tonight says, first of all, that with “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Let us think about this for

a moment. Who has faith? Nobody has faith except those people who are trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation. A “without-faith” person can do nothing that is pleasing to God. In fact, all that a person may try to do to please God, while ignoring Jesus Christ and His death for sinners, is just gathering a lot of filthy rags. This is what Isaiah tells us in Isa 64:6:

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

If you and I are to have any hope at all of pleasing God, we must according to our text, *come to God*. And the only way we can come to God is through Jesus Christ. And why do we need to come to God. We need to come to get the righteousness which we may have been trying to work out for ourselves. But it can't be produced by our works. We learn in 2 Cor. 5:21 where true righteousness comes from:

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

So we need to tell people who are not Christians that they can never do anything to please God because He can only be pleased by our faith. And faith means that we are trusting Him, not trusting ourselves.

So this life of faith which Enoch lived begins with salvation. Enoch was saved by the same Savior, and the only Savior, that people are saved by today. He had not come when Enoch was alive, but Enoch looked ahead to that day when the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

But now let's think about us as believers. This verse is really for us. We have come to God for salvation. We have been born into His family through faith in Christ. We have lives to live every day, but we need to ask ourselves how we are living our lives. How much of a part does God have in our lives? Our text tells us that he who comes “to God must (δεῖ) believe that He is.” It is an absolute necessity that we must believe that God is a living God, and that we treat Him that way. He is the God Who made us, and made this universe in which we live. So this means that He has to be very powerful because only a powerful being could do what He has done. And He has to be very wise because we and this universe in which we live are filled with so many amazing things that, in spite of all that we have learned about it, honest scientists tell us that there is much, much more to be learned than we have yet learned about this world and everything in it.

Do we in our daily lives treat God *as a living God*. Let me read to you what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about God. Here are his words:

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge . . . (1 Cor. 8: 5-7a).

Do we live like we are trusting in the living God, as Paul told Timothy that we do in 1 Tim. 4:10?

And do we believe that He really is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him?

Now we are not talking about just special crises which we come to in our lives, but we are talking about the way Enoch lived. God was a great reality in his life. He walked with the Lord. He talked with the Lord. The Lord to Enoch was His most intimate Friend. I would love to have known this man. As far as space is concerned, we don't know a great deal about Enoch, but from what is said about him, he had to be head and shoulder above most of the Lord's people in his generation.

Now if we are going to trust the Lord, what does it mean?

Well, first it means that we are aware every day how much we need the Lord. We need Him. We need His blessing, but we need Him! We need His care. We need His guidance. We need His protection. When we come to the Lord we need to learn how to live all over again because we have been in the habit of trusting ourselves, or other people, but not the Lord.

If we are going to live by faith it means that we believe God's Word. We have no argument with it. We believe even what we may not be able to understand fully because it is His Word. We know that God's promises are true. We believe that He cannot lie. It is impossible for Him to sin in any way.

But let me take you a step or two farther.

We believe in the ways of the Lord. Have you and I really digested the truth of Isa. 55:8-11? When we are baffled by events in our lives, do we believe that the Lord is still in charge? Do we really believe that He works all things together for our good?

And along with this, what about the timing of events in our lives? Does God know the difference between standard time and daylight time? Or does time mean nothing to Him? I can assure you that He is more aware of our time than we are. He originated time.

There is a very interesting verse in the Gospel of John where our Lord was speaking to His brothers, and they were pressing Him to come down to Judea and show Himself. But He responded to them in words which we find in John 7:6:

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

What did He mean? He meant that His brothers wanted things to be done right then. They did not understand the Lord when He said, "My time is not yet come." God has a specific time and way that He intends to do what He does, and a part of the life of faith is learning to wait for His time and way. We always live to regret those times when we try to move ahead of the Lord instead of waiting upon Him.

He is a reward of *lit.* those who seek Him out. The verb is ἐκζητέω. It means to go to Him, to seek His favor. It even carries with it the idea of worshiping Him. It all means that we cannot seek the Lord in vain. And He always makes it a rewarding experience when we seek Him, and wait upon Him, and by His grace do what He wants us to do.