

## LIVING BY FAITH

### Message 10

September 25

INTRO: Let me briefly review where we have been. In message 1 we looked at Habakkuk 2:4 which says, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith." We said that the primary problem in all of creation has always been sin. It is not man's needs or his emotions, it is sin. We were introduced to two realms, the material and the immaterial. These are fundamental to understanding everything.

We looked at the importance of truth. 1 Corinthians says of love that it rejoices in the truth. Love cannot tolerate everything if it rejoices in the truth. Then we stressed the importance of personhood. The only difference between man and all other animate beings is personhood, and it is that which man has in common with God. We also said that doctrine is of utmost importance.

We looked at the importance of creation and how it began with angels in the immaterial world, and how angels sinned. And so God created the material world, a place in which He would place man. And in this material world, and in this material world, since man cannot see God, man would be able to learn to live by faith. Man cannot see God because if he could he could not live by faith and be saved.

Then we defined faith, and we saw when living by faith began, and that it began in the garden of Eden. Then when sin entered, living by faith came to an end. Then God provided a means of salvation and Adam and Eve got saved, and living by faith has been going on ever since, though but among a small number of mankind.

We looked at the various views of the source of faith; is it God, or is it God and man, or is it man. It is my view that God provided all the evidence, but man alone is responsible to believe the evidence. The evidence is overwhelmingly strong, but the devil is overwhelmingly deceptive. Think of it, he can make people believe in evolution. You cannot get much farther off track than that. He can make a man believe he is a woman, and vice versa.

We looked at the kinds of faith. There is saving faith. It is the unbeliever that exercises it to get saved. There is the

personal faith of every believer. We could have added the faith of the unbeliever, because they all believe something as well, even the Atheist does. But every believer has faith to a varying degree with others. It is the believer that exercises this faith. Then there is the sum total of the Christian faith. Every believer has some of this. And last we mentioned the gift of faith. Only some believers are chosen by the Holy Spirit to have this gift.

Then we looked at faith as related to feelings and we discussed the biblical makeup of man. His main parts are body, soul and spirit. Each of those large parts have many smaller parts. And as president over the entire being is the self, the real person, that which was made in the image of God. And the self is responsible for the entire being, and chooses either to go to hell or to heaven. He cannot blame others for his or her choices. He or she makes the choices. And if he or she succumbs to feelings and lets the devil use those to bring about unbelief, he or she must bear the consequences of that.

We said that every believer has the responsibility to know the Word of God and continue to learn it in order to sharpen the senses to discern both good and evil.

And this morning we want to look at a few examples of those who lived by faith in Scripture. Hebrews chapter 11 has been called the Christian hall of faith. Can anyone tell me the first person or persons were to learn to live by faith in the Bible? Well, they were Adam and Eve. But they are not the first ones listed in the Christian hall of faith of Hebrews 11. Can anyone tell me with whom it begins?

#### E. Examples of faith

##### 1. Abel

I am both amazed and encouraged that Abel is the first one listed in Hebrews 11. Without looking, can anyone tell me what his great act of faith was? Look at this chapter (read 1-4). Well, go now to the account of this in Genesis 4. You see, faith began in the Garden of Eden. But when we come to Genesis 4, we have left the Garden of Eden (see 3:20-24). Now look at 4:1-5 (read).

Now I ask you, what is Abel's claim to fame? He is the very first man in the great hall of faith, and what is

outstanding about his life? I find this so very encouraging. It is not some great, heroic deed like slaying Goliath. His claim to fame is this. He was told how to sacrifice and why, and he did it. He simply obeyed God! This is his great act that put him in Hebrews 11! Mind you, he will have lived like this too.

But consider now, that Adam and Eve are his parents and he has no grandparents. And all he has to go on is his parents word, which they claim they have from God. No doubt Able, was not simply a lackluster kid who didn't think for himself and just did what his parents told him. Somewhere he came to faith. He believed. He thought it through and said, "This makes sense. No doubt there is a God. What my parents have said must be true." And he learned to fear God.

Over and over I see that the greatest evidence of faith is obedience to the Word of God. Not thoughtless, mindless obedience. No, thoughtful, careful evaluation of life and the conclusion what God has instructed is most important.

Now you see, this puts the life of faith on a level that all can reach.

## 2. Enoch

In Hebrews 11, the second one listed is Enoch. Now Abel was the second child born to Adam and Eve as far as we know. Enoch was the seventh from Adam. He was born 622 years after creation. So go to Genesis 5 (read 18-24). What happened? Enoch was raptured! God took him up!

So look at Hebrews 11 (read vs. 5). Now let me ask you a question. It says Enoch was translated by faith. What do you suppose happened? Do you think Enoch said, "You know, people get quite old. My great, great, great, great, great grandfather Adam, just died 57 years ago. My great, great, great, great grandfather Seth, looks like he'll live a long time yet, but I can tell he is aging just like his Dad Adam did. I don't think I want to die. Lord God, I trust you to take me home before I get old." And so at the age of 365, God, to honor his faith, suddenly took him home. He never

died. When it says he was translated by faith, do you suppose that is what is meant? So if I believe enough, could I escape death too? Or what do you think happened?

I recommend this. The name Enoch, I understand means something like instructed, trained up, (Gill) or dedicated (numerous others). Hebrews 11:5 says that in his life-time he had this testimony, that he pleased God. Verse 6 then says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Enoch was a man who sought after God and believed Him and lived faithfully for Him. It appears that he wrote a book. Turn to the book of Jude, who quotes from his book. Jude, speaking of the ungodly alive in his day says this in verses 8-15 (read). God has allowed Enoch to look into the future, and Enoch saw the Lord come with ten thousand of His saints. How much was revealed to Enoch we do not know? But in the future, at the end of the tribulation, the Lord comes down from heaven with thousands upon thousands of His saints, who also have been translated to heaven before this time, that is in the rapture.

And here is what I think happened. God was pleased with Enoch because he walked by faith, and God translated him home. Like Abel, he was not expecting any special treatment, he just lived by faith and God chose to translate him.

### 3. Noah

Well, the third character mentioned is Noah. What was Noah's claim to fame? Did Noah say, "Lord God, it is time to flood the earth. I am going to build a big boat, and then I trust You to flood the earth and wipe everybody except me and my family out"? No, it wasn't like that. God said, "Noah, I am going to flood the earth. I want you to build a big boat and I am going to save you and your family." It was not Noah's idea. Noah simply obeyed what God told him to do.

Hebrews 11:7 says, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared

an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." What was Noah's claim to fame? Did he trust God for big things and God did them? No! God told Noah big things and Noah believed them! That is the life of faith.

But consider how great this man's faith was. It is viewed by some that it never rained up until this time. But whether it did or not, obeying God to build a boat on dry land takes a lot of faith. It was a boat of such size it would never move unless it rained, and rained a whole lot. And he built year after year in spite of the ridicule he experienced. But he believed God. It is amazing how quickly our faith wants to subside when the majority decides one is wrong. Take, for example the matter of divorce and remarriage. In the days ahead we will see many give in to the LGBTQ2 pressure.

2 Peter 2:5 says, that the Lord, "spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." Noah was the eighth person saved from the flood. The others were his wife, his three sons and their wives. And it is interesting to note that he was a preacher of righteousness.

Now think of Noah for a moment. Noah was 480 years old when God spoke to him. We find it in Genesis 6:13-21. We do not know that God spoke to him afterward. And for 120 years Noah built. Do you suppose he ever questioned, ever wondered if he had heard right? Do you suppose the devil tempted him with all kinds of misgivings? Do you suppose the people around him had great respect for a man who built a huge boat on dry land? Do you suppose they ridiculed him?

And Genesis 6:22 says, "Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did." That's it. That is the life of faith. Could it be said of me or of you, or of this church, "Thus they did; according to all that God commanded them, so they did"?

4. Abraham

The fourth person mentioned is Abraham. Hebrews 11:8-10 says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

We have now come 2,000 years from creation. So look at Genesis 11 (read 11:27-12:4). Here is the beginning of the Jewish race. Listen to what Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, said just a short while ago according to a recent Israel Today article. It says, *Much to the delight of parents, the new school year has begun in Israel, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had two related messages for students: study the Bible and seek peaceful coexistence. Earlier this week, Netanyahu told his cabinet that he wants to "carry out an education revolution based on two things: excellence and Zionism." Central to achieve that is the study of the Bible, the prime minister insisted. "First of all, the study of the Bible," Netanyahu told his ministers. "This is the basis for why we are here, why we have returned here, why we stay here."*

If you have not listened to his speech to the UN this past week, I would encourage you to do so. He is the greatest, most honest statesman this world has seen in a long time. The article then went on like this:

*While that message may have been primarily geared toward Jewish students, Netanyahu on Thursday helped kick off the new school year by visiting a school in the northern Arab city of Tamra. Addressing the school's 200 Arab youngsters, Netanyahu called for increases in coexistence and integration of Israel's Arab minority. "I want you all to learn about the history of the Jewish people as well as of the Arab communities and learn the truth. We are meant to live together," he told the students.*

Well, the points that the writer to the Hebrews wants to bring out, while others could be chosen as well, is found in verses 8-10 (read). First, God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees, to go to a land God would

show him. He did not know what land that was. And here is the secret to Abraham's great faith. He did what God told him to do. He left without knowing where he was going. What was the secret to his faith? He simply obeyed the Lord.

## 5. Sarah

The next person listed is Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Now before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees we are told that Sarah could not bear children. Turn to Genesis 11 (read 27-30). Now look at Genesis 12 (read 1-2a). How will God make a great nation of a man with a barren wife?

Well, Abraham and Sarah left Ur of the Chaldees about 1921 years before Christ. Abraham is 75 years old now. They got to Israel but shortly thereafter a famine came to the land and they went down to Egypt. In 1917, they returned to the land.

Well, when Abram was about 86, Sarah thought, "God will never be able to keep His promise. I think I will need to help Him out a bit. And so she decided she would have children through the Egyptian handmaid, that they had had for some ten years. Ryrie says, "This suggestion was in accord with the practice of the day, as attested in legal codes and marriage contracts of the time."

Now it is never a good idea to help God out, or to think we know better than He. And born to Hagar, the handmaid was the Arab race that after the time of Christ became known as Islam. The present president of the United States is of Islamic persuasion. Real Islam, the Islam that follows the Koran, is the biggest threat to the entire world right now. It all stems back to Abraham and Sarah's disobedience here.

But God is not through with Sarah. The birth of Ishmael is recorded in Genesis 16. Do you know what usually happens when we help God out? When we get what we helped God get for us, we despise it when we get it. And as soon as Ishmael was born, Hagar became proud, and Sarah despised her.

Do you know what is encouraging about all this? Sarai became Sarah. God was not done with her. Go to Genesis

17 (read 1-9). The Way of Life Encyclopedia says the name Abram means 'exalted father'. But the exalted father has no children! And now God says, "You will have children." And now you will no longer be called Exalted Father. You shall be called Abraham." And what does that mean? It means 'Father of a multitude.'.

I remember listening to Dr. Harold Willmington many years ago, and he said, "Can you imagine Abram, Exalted Father, going to his servants and saying, 'From now on, please don't call me Exalted Father any more. No, from now on call me, 'Father of a multitude'!"

But look now at verses 15-16 (read). There is not complete agreement as to what the name Sarai means. David Cloud says it means, 'Dominating'. Most think it means, 'My Princess'. But there is agreement that Sarah means 'Princess'. She became, I think, not Abraham's princess, but the Lord's. She became 'the' princess of princesses. How so? By finally and fully believing God.

Well, the angel of the Lord visited Abraham again, and it is recorded in Genesis 18. Three men came, or they came in the appearance of men. Abraham recognized that these were special visitors and he prepared a special meal for them. Now look at verses 10-15.

Well, according to Hebrews 11, something happened to Sarah. Hebrews 11:11 says, "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." From the original word that is translated 'judged' in judged Him faithful who had promised, she had reasoned out the facts. I think all her feelings may have said it is not possible, but when she reasoned out all the facts she led these thoughts before her mind, "God will do what He has promised, how I feel is immaterial." Faith was born, and so was Jitsak, Isaac, whose name means 'laughter'.

Now you see, Sarah's story is encouraging. She was a failure, time and again, but finally faith sprang up. And her son's name would always remind her, that she was not always a woman of faith.



So look at verse 12 (read). Now a great, great, great grandson of the faith of Ishmael sits in the Whitehouse, ruling that great American nation; and a great, great, great grandson of Isaac sits as prime-minister of Israel. And they are at odds with each other.

And what is the major problem between Ishmael and Isaac, or Israel and Arab? We find it, I think, in Genesis 16. When Sarah got tough on Hagar, Hagar ran away. And the Angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water. And he said, "Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from my mistress, Sarai." And the angel said, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand."

Now let me tell you what the name 'Islam' means. It means 'Submission'. The problem is they have submitted themselves to Allah, who is the devil; but they need to submit to Israel. True peace will only come when Islam comes out from under Satan and comes under the dominion of the Jewish Messiah. And many Muslims are learning that truth today. And why is this? Because Sarah learned to trust Jehovah God! She became a princess with God to the world.

## 6. David

Look at verse 32 (read). We have a list of six individuals. We want to look very briefly at David. Now we do not know what in the life of David is in view here, but what do you suppose the writer had in mind? Yes, David and Goliath. Now in all these other examples, these men and women of faith simply obeyed what God had told them. But we are not told that God told David to go and fight with Goliath, and we do not read that he promised to deliver him into David's hand.

What gave him such confidence that he faced Goliath with a slingshot? Well, 1 Samuel 17 gives us the whole account. The Philistines and Goliath are on one side of the valley and Saul and Israel on the other, and Saul is trembling in his boots. Well, David's dad, Jesse had sent him to check out on the war and bring them some cheese and come back and report.

The account is worth studying as one grows in the faith. David's faith in God here was based on his past

experience with the Lord. Before he went to meet Goliath, he had already met some very huge challenges. As a shepherd boy he had learned to live by faith, protecting his flock. Saul's life was not a life of faith, and being taller than all other Israelis he should have been the one to face Goliath. But he had not learned to trust God.

And when David drew near, Goliath said, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

And David said in verses 45-47, "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD'S, and He will give you into our hands.'"

Now in this example of faith, God did not promise He would deliver Israel. David, in life's experience had learned to trust God. And he cannot imagine how even a giant could get away with such blasphemy. No doubt, because of his faithful life up to this point, he is able to trust God for deliverance.

Goliath died that day in the Valley of Elah. And what we learn from this account is that not all examples of faith are the same.

#### 7. Shadrach Meshach and Abednego

Let us take one other brief example. Let me take one out of verse 34. It speaks of those who through faith quenched the violence of fire. You may remember I closed message 5 with the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Well, they were accused of not falling down and worshipping the gold image Nebuchadnezzar had made. And you will remember that Nebuchadnezzar gave them a second chance with this warning, "*Now if you*

*are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"*

Well, the account in the Scriptures continues like this: *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."*

Now let me ask you, when they said, "God will deliver us, but if He does not, understand one thing, O king, we will not serve your gods, nor worship the gold image you have set up" is that faith? Notice they did not say, "God will deliver us" end of sentence. They said, "But if He does not..." And I am asking, is that faith? Were they sure God would deliver them? No. They were sure of one thing. No matter if God would or would not deliver them, they would obey God, and that is living by faith.

And verse 34, with the elliptical words added says, "who through faith quenched the violence of fire." You see, when we live by faith, God may or may not deliver us, but if we obey, that is living by faith. David trusted that God would deliver Goliath into his hands. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo were sure God could deliver them, but said if he did or not was immaterial, they were not going to disobey God.

#### F. The Fruit of Faith

But let me take one more point, and that is the main fruit of faith. What does faith produce? We go back to Hebrews 11:1. It says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." I have mentioned that this is often given as a definition of faith, but it is not. The word 'substance', if I understand it right,

and I believe I do, means that faith is that which stands underneath hope. The fruit of the Christian faith is the true hope.

So faith forms the foundation of things hoped for. What kept all these men and women of Hebrews 11 going when life got tough, and no doubt it got tough? It was hope. The Christian faith is built on the rock of the Word of God. The Word of God forms the foundation. And it gives rise to hope. And hope gives the capacity to overcome all obstacles.

And I want us to see that now in Hebrews 11. We begin with verses 8-10: *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. What kept him going? His hope.*

Now verses 13-16, *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

Now verses 24-26, *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.*

May I ask you, what kept Jesus going? He was rejected by His own people, and that by those who claimed to be the most godly of all. What kept Him going? Look at chapter 12:1-2, *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run*

with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

And what is the word in Hebrews for us on this note? Look at verse 3, For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Some of you have had enough hostility directed to you to make one discouraged. Here is a word for you. Consider Christ. And He, for the joy that was set before Him endured something so hard, we will never endure something so hard. Consider Him.

CONCL: Well, we have looked at examples of faith. I ask you, are you living by faith? Let me give you one test to apply to your own life to check if you are living by faith. This one test I believe covers every example of living by faith. It is very simply this: Am I obeying the Lord?

And what is the one product of true faith that will keep one going through any kind of difficulties in life? What will give us the victory over anything this world, the flesh and the devil can produce against us? Hope. Faith is the victory, and faith gives rise to hope. Of Abraham it says, "He looked for a city". And these folk are going to sing of the city where the roses never fade.