

Faith — Believing what God says about a Matter

In my two messages for this year's conference, we are going to take a closer look at a topic of Scripture that all of us should be quite familiar. Hopefully, each of us has grown in this area. We have been at one point in times past, and now (hopefully) we are at a more advanced point. You are at a different point than I am. And you are at a different point than the person sitting next to you. In this area, we are either going forward or backward. We never stand still in this area — at least for any length of time. This “area” in our life is an ever-changing, ever-moving, hopefully ever-growing area. We are all on the path. At least we are all on A path. The trick is, (and this is extremely important) that we would be on the RIGHT path!

This area in our life needs to be *ever increasing*. We should never stop moving in this area; never stop growing! Because we will never exhaust its resources for growth; never get to the point where we can say,

“I have it!”

“There! I am done!”

“I don't need anymore!”

We simply will never get to that point.

The area that I would like for us to consider in my two talks at this conference is the topic is FAITH. Today, the title of my message is

Faith— Believing what God says about a Matter

And tomorrow night the title of my message will be:

Faith—Believing what God says about a Matter

In a generic sense, faith is simply believing something. And in that sense, not all faith is *scriptural faith*! Each of us certainly has faith (in the generic sense) in the non-spiritual, non-scriptural realm. We believe specific things, which are based upon what we have been told, taught, experienced, and understood. Realize it or not, we all live at some level of faith in a variety of things apart from the spiritual realm. Even atheists live at some level of faith, whether they want to admit it or not. And honestly, in this area what a person believes to be true may or may not be true. Then, sometimes people believe what they want to believe regardless of what they know the truth to be!

Isn't that true?

Obviously, the type of *faith* that we will focus on in these two messages is something more specific than *general faith in the generic sense*. We want to focus on the spiritual side of faith. And, we'll have to realize that, just as in the area of “generic faith,” the same thing can be said of faith in the spiritual realm: *what we believe may or may not be*

true. And in this realm as well (the spiritual realm), sometimes people believe what they want to believe regardless of what they know the truth to be!

Isn't that true?

Most likely the reason Christians sometimes believe something that may not be true and still call it "faith" is because they have misunderstood the way faith is used in Scripture. For example, they have misunderstood this verse:

Heb 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (NIV)

A person might think that God is saying something here that He is not saying at all. They might think that all they have to do is BELIEVE something that they HOPE is true, even if they don't see it yet. They feel that if they are CERTAIN of it, even though they do not yet see it, they BELIEVE it...and *that* is what they would call *faith*.

Then that same person, having the type of faith just described, might read what Jesus said in:

Matthew 12:22 "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive"

and think that all they have to do is to believe really, really hard (isn't that what faith is?) and it will come to pass. And even to be more sure of getting what they "hope for" they add this: "In Jesus Name. Amen," because they may have also read this in

John 14

13 "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it..."

Wow!!! I mean that passage is in RED LETTERS in some Bible! It's got to be true! So we have someone who believes with all their heart that all they have to do is — *believe something that they want with all their heart, and believe it hard enough, and pray in Jesus' name* and what they *want* or hope for, God is somewhat obligated to do it! And if it does not come to pass, either God's Word is not true, or they simply did not have enough faith!

What's wrong with this picture? The thing that is wrong with this picture is that there is little to no understanding of what *faith according to the Scriptures* really is. Very specifically, tonight we want to come to understand that there is a difference between something that might look like faith and what true *Scriptural Faith* really is.

One thing we must understand is that when Scripture deals with faith, it is *always* dealing with the type of faith that we'll call in these messages "Scriptural Faith". There never is an exception to that. In the Scriptures, when God deals with faith, He is always referring to believing what HE SAID. Nothing else.

This bears repeating: *Scriptural Faith* is faith based upon the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone. Scriptural Faith is based upon what God has said in His Word. In that respect, we can understand the definition of faith that most likely we have all heard: **Faith is simply believing what God says about a matter.**

So let's consider an obvious question and an obvious answer to that question and perhaps move into areas pertaining to the topic that may not be quite so obvious. The obvious question to consider is: From where does Scriptural Faith come? The obvious answer to that question can be found in Scripture!

Ro 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Of course it does! (Please forgive the repetition here) Scriptural faith, which is the only faith the Bible speaks of, is based solely in the Word! That seems an obvious answer to the question. *But as obvious as the answer to that question may seem, there is a real potential that the correct understanding might be missed, or misconstrued!* So what should be obvious to a Christian today may, in practicality, not be quite so obvious.

Here is one thing to realize as we discuss *Scriptural faith*. The Word of God is entirely about Jesus Christ in some facet or another. This is a fact that can be inherently seen throughout the Scriptures, even as early as Genesis 1:3, we can see that the Word is about Jesus!

Genesis 1:3 Then God said [spoke His Word], "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

At the Word of God, the Light — which has always existed — is simply being allowed to shine forth again in a ruined, darkened creation. This “light” about which God spoke at the very beginning points to Jesus Christ! We can see that relationship in what the Apostle John wrote, at the beginning of his gospel about this light:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. 9 There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Then in the Book of the Revelation this is what is said of Jesus:

Re 19:13b ...and His name is called The Word of God.

If you think about it, you really cannot have Scriptural faith apart from Jesus the Christ! Remember *faith* [Scriptural faith] *comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of Christ.* (Some translations would have “word of God” here in this verse, which might cause some confusion! But it really shouldn’t, as we see THE WORD OF GOD IS JESUS CHRIST!)

And so we see Jesus, at the beginning (Gen. 1), in the middle (John 1), and at the end of God’s Word in Rev. 19, being referred to as *The Word of God.* He IS the Living WORD.

Therefore, we can come to realize that if we are to have Faith — according to the Scriptures — then we must realize that the Word is all about Jesus! That would have huge ramifications for us as we come into more of an understanding of what Scriptural faith is. Can a person have scriptural faith in anything not having to do with some facet of Jesus Christ — His work in the past, in the present or in the future? Can we have **Scriptural faith** if it is not somehow related to Jesus and His work, whether past, present or future?

Let’s relate all of this to us today. The Bible is very also clear as to where Scriptural Faith begins! With the death of Christ historically past, Paul states clearly in the NT where faith must begin, as he describes what message he initially brought to individuals in Corinth. In writing to them about the time when he first came to them, Paul wrote:

I Corinthians 2

1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Initially, Paul did not come to the people at Corinth preaching the deep things of God. He initially came to them with the only message that could have been given to individuals who had not yet believed in God’s provision for salvation. Of course the initial message is Jesus and Him crucified which is the basis for all faith! With Christ’s death historically past, this is the beginning point at which Scriptural faith must begin. Jesus Christ is the foundation upon all else that is to be built.

Assuredly, faith in Jesus’ death is only the beginning point! Saying that is not to diminish the “finished work of Christ” on the cross. Not at all. But there is a Scriptural expectation of more! There is Scriptural admonition/exhortation/expectation that would reveal that there is much more beyond the death of Jesus. There are things beyond

Christ's death that must be brought to a saved person's attention, things beyond His death that must be sought out, believed, and acted upon... OR (now watch this)... faith in His death alone becomes, from Scripture's standpoint "in vain". Later in this same epistle, Paul summarizes his ongoing message to the Church at Corinth, concerning things beyond the death of Jesus. He reminds them as to how he continued preaching the good news to them. Let's look at it:

I Corinthians 15

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are [Lit., *are being*] saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

With Christ's death historically past, and with these individuals making up the Church at Corinth through their having put faith in the death of Jesus, Paul went on to preach to them the second facet of the gospel. This second facet of the gospel is succinctly reiterated by Paul here in chapter fifteen — that Christ was buried, and He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. And this facet,

- which they had *also* received,
- in which they were *also* standing
- by which they were *also* being saved

was necessary for them hold fast, otherwise they would be found to have believed (in Jesus' death) in vain...apart from the purpose.

Beyond his initial message, Paul continued to preach to them that Jesus was buried, and that He was raised on the third day, *according to the Scriptures*. Notice the two uses of the phrase "according to the Scriptures" in this passage. The first use has to do with the death of Christ, *according to the Scriptures*. And the second has to do with the fact that He was buried and He was raised on the third day, *according to the Scriptures*. Herein are the two facets of the good news of God's Word!

If we are to make this distinction between these two facets of the good news (the gospel) in the NT, it must be a distinction that can also be seen in the OT, otherwise, we wouldn't be correct in making the distinction here in the New. And that distinction is easy to see in the OT.

For the Children of Israel, we see the distinction between faith in the death of the paschal lambs on the night of the Passover, and then ongoing faith in things beyond that death — burial into the Red Sea and raised up out of the "grave" to walk in newness of life.

The Children of Israel were saved out of bondage through the death of the paschal lambs. Period. They were delivered out of death via a substitute on the night of Passover. And nothing they did from that point on changed their state of having been delivered out of bondage. God declared: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you!" Nothing else was

added to that facet of the good news for Israel. Nothing beyond faith in the work that God did on their behalf was expected or required.

But that wasn't the end of the story, was it? They came to the Red Sea and had no place to go but *through it*. And this was in order for them to come up alive on the other side so that they could make their trek to the promised land. Herein is the distinction between the two facets of the good news preached to them.

- 1) They were saved out of bondage through death. (This took faith alone on their part, apart from any work. God did it all for them.) Then
- 2) They were saved out of death so that they could walk in newness of life, making their way to their inherited promises, which were to be fulfilled in the promised land. (This also took faith, but in this trek, their faith would be tested to see if they would act according to their faith.)

If we would but compare I Corinthians 10 to Romans 6 we would realized that the Red Sea pictures their burial; and their coming up on the opposite bank of the sea pictures their resurrection. That first generation of the Children of Israel were saved out of bondage through faith in the death of the paschal lambs. Period.

But sadly their case, their actions beyond this point proved that their faith was in vain. (In vain with respect to their realizing the purpose of their being saved out of bondage.)

They had been saved out of bondage in Egypt, SO THAT they could be taken through the Red Sea, brought up on the opposite bank, be taught by God (through Moses) the reason for their salvation, and then they were to realize specifically laid out promises concerning their inheritance as the sons of God in the Promised Land.

But this purpose was not realized, *because they failed to put faith in things beyond the death of the lamb*. They failed to believe the things that God revealed to them beyond the Passover — things concerning their inheritance to be realized in another land.

The same good news has been preached to us, hasn't it?

- 1) Jesus died "according to the Scriptures." Our Passover has been sacrificed. It is here that Scriptural faith *must begin*.
- 2) Then, Jesus was buried and resurrected "according to the Scriptures." It is here, that Scriptural faith *must continue!* And it is here that our faith will be tested.

So yes, faith comes by hearing...hearing the Word about Christ. Of course, Paul would preach that Christ died according to the Scriptures, AND of course, he wouldn't stop there! He went on to preach that there was a reason, a purpose for that! Christ was buried and raised from the dead *according to the Scriptures!*

It would be for these reasons that Paul goes on at this point in his letter to explain the importance of believing things beyond Christ's death:

I Corinthians 15

12 Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15 Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we witnessed against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

- Why would all of this be true?
- Why do we have to understand (and *believe*) things beyond the death of Christ?
- Why (back in v. 2), if we do not **hold fast** to what we have *also believed* (things beyond the initial message), in that wherein we have **also stood**, and by which we are also **being saved**, why would that be tantamount to having initially believed in vain, making our faith worthless?
- Why would we still be in our sins?

Jesus' *past work* on the cross is finished! And that according to the Scriptures!! After His death, He was buried! But He did not remain in the grave, because if He did, our faith would be in vain. There would be no way for us to be able to fulfill the purpose of our having believed in His death!

No! Jesus had need to do another work on our behalf. *By the power of God, HE WAS RAISED! By the power of God, HE WAS RAISED!* He is ALIVE, and in His LIFE, HE is performing a *present work* on our behalf — the work as our High Priest. He is offering us an ongoing cleansing of sin, so that we can continue to walk in His resurrection power (the power that raised Christ from the dead), so that we can — through faith (faith based solely upon the WORD OF GOD) and actions according to our faith — fulfill the purpose for our initial salvation— that to join Christ in His *future work* of ruling and reigning over the earth!

Do you see why our faith must be according to the Scriptures? Our faith cannot be willy-nilly. Our faith cannot be based upon what someone else says is true. Our faith cannot be based upon something we have always been taught, which may not be in line with the TRUTH! It must be based upon what GOD SAYS — that which according to the Scriptures.

If we are to have Scriptural Faith, we must see that our faith encompasses the past work of Jesus as our Passover, the present work of Jesus as our High Priest, and/or the future work of Jesus as our coming King. And this takes going from faith to faith, all according to the Scriptures, for God will do nothing except that which He has not already said He will do; and He will do all that He has said He will do! This is where our faith must lie!

And so, beyond what God has accomplished in the past, through the death of Jesus, the Scriptural approach to ongoing faith is *diligently applying oneself to understanding what God's Word says beyond the death of Jesus, and then choosing to believe what He says!* It really is that simple; and, in a respect that difficult!

The Spirit of God has seen fit to call attention to the fact that we (saved people) must go from faith to faith, because, as the Scriptures say: The righteous man shall live by faith!

Galatians 3

10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." 11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

(Capital letters in the NASB indicate an OT quote is inserted into the passage.)

Explain: "shall live by faith"

- Live by faith, day in and day out...
- Shall live (life in the age to come) by faith"

Paul said the same thing at the beginning of his letter to the Church at Rome. After quoting the OT passage about the righteous man living by faith, Paul explains that it is from faith to faith. He wrote:

Romans 1

14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. 15 Thus, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

Paul clearly states here that he is eager to preach the gospel to the "saints in Rome" who are "beloved of God"! Because he has already made it clear that he is preaching to the saints in Rom. So the "gospel" that he is preaching would be the *second facet* of the good news to be preached — the things beyond the death of Christ. With that in mind, note what he says: he is "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is *the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*" Did you see that? This facet of the gospel *is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*

II Corinthians 13

4 For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God toward you.

You see, it is the power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. It is that same resurrection power that allows us to walk in the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death so that we can attain to the out-resurrection from the dead. We can see this in Paul's letter to the Philippians:

Philippians 3

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from [the] Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which [comes] from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

From these passages, we can see that within the second facet of the gospel message *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*. And that those who have initially been justified by faith, must continue to walk in faith, for *the righteous man shall live by faith*.

It was not only Paul quoting this OT passage in the NT, but also the writer of the Book of Hebrews:

Hebrews 10

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. 38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

You can see from this passage that DOING the will of God is part and parcel with *living by faith* (Scriptural faith), the end of which is receiving that which has been promised. According to this passage in Hebrews (according to the Scriptures), that which has been promised has to do with future things concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus. We also see from this passage that we are to have (and keep) our confidence of these future things, which has a future reward.

This is the same as Paul said in I Corinthians in that we need to “hold fast to that which we have also believed and in which we also stand and which we are being saved! The author of Hebrews writes that we simply need to endure (patiently endure) through the

present trials of life, so that *after we have done the will of God*, we will receive all that we have believed God for, i.e., the promises *according to the Scriptures*. It is concerning these future promises that we need to *live by faith*. — according to these future events which God has stated throughout His Word. (This need for patient endurance in our faith — Scriptural faith — is the subject matter of Part II in this message.)

Tying Scripture together with Scripture, seeing these promises laid out in God's Word of things yet future, we need to make sure that our faith does NOT rest on the wisdom of man, but rather on *the power of God!* We know that it was God's power that raised Jesus from the dead. And because of this demonstration of power in delivering Jesus out of death, we can know that it is the same power of God that will bring to pass the things we grow to understand and believe from the Word of God.

All three of these NT passages that we just looked at concerning the righteous man living by faith are quoted from the same OT passage, which comes from the Book of Habakkuk. It is beneficial for our understanding to see what the Prophet Habakkuk was talking about when God's Holy Spirit inspired the things he wrote. Habakkuk is a very short book, only three chapters long. Habakkuk chapter one is very descriptive of the future time for Israel, the 70th week of Daniel, the Time of Jacob's Trouble. It is implicitly evident in this chapter that God will use Gentile nations to chastise Israel for their centuries-long lack of faith and resulting disobedience and harlotry. At the end of chapter one, Habakkuk asks God why all of this will happen, and will it continue on?

God answers Habakkuk's question in chapter two. Let's read the beginning of His very specific answer:

Habakkuk 2

2 Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. 3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. 4 Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith..."

It is here that God tells Habakkuk that the righteous will live by faith. And He interposes a contrast to the one who will live by faith. The remainder of chapter two spells out the fact that God will judge the very nations that He used to chastise Israel. Then the first part of chapter three reveals the intense judgment that God will mete out to the Gentile nations, implicitly making reference to the Battle of Armageddon — when Jesus will come with His holy ones to bring to an end Gentile World power. And as a result of all that the Lord revealed to him, Habakkuk trembled in fear at the wrath of God, saying that he knew he must wait patiently and quietly for this time of distress to come upon his people.

Habakkuk 3:16 I heard and my inward parts trembled, [Do you think Habakkuk *believed* what God had just revealed to him? Yes...and he trembled as a result! This is the fear of the Lord.] **17 At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And**

in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us.

Habakkuk didn't form an army to come against the nations who would bring about chastisement to Israel. He didn't try to change the course of the future! God had told him that these things will take place...what kind of faith would it be if Habakkuk thought he knew better than God, and took measures to try to change the course of future events? Instead, he trembled and waited quietly for God to bring about that which God said He was going to do! Now that is Scriptural faith, isn't it??? Scriptural faith and the fear of the Lord, wrapped altogether.

Then Habakkuk makes this personal statement of faith in the midst of his anticipation of the difficulty that he knows will come based upon God's Word to him. He makes this statement in faith, knowing that there will come an end to the times of distress (because God SAID there would be an end to it), which will be followed by God's blessing upon Israel. (You see, Habakkuk *believed* the answer the Lord gave Him to the question he asked of God at the end of chapter one.)

Habakkuk 3

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, 18 Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

Herein is the setting in the Book Habakkuk from which Paul took the quote used in two of his epistles, and the writer of Hebrews used between the fourth and fifth warning in the Book of Hebrews. Now why am I showing this to you? Why do we go back to the original text from where these OT quotes were taken? It is because the original setting reveals how the righteous should live! Let's read the exact statement again in Habakkuk chapter two:

Habakkuk 2

2 Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. 3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal, and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. 4 Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith..."

God told Habakkuk to record — make a record of — the vision that He was revealing to him. Then God gave the purpose for having him record the vision: That the one who reads it will RUN. Perhaps this is where Paul got the idea of using the metaphor of our running the race of faith??? Yes, we are to RUN...not away in fear of what God has said! But rather to RUN *toward* what God has said, in fear (to be sure) but also in anticipation. Great anticipation! We are to RUN! We are to run with endurance!

Even though the vision is yet for the appointed time (it is yet future), it (the vision, the prophecy) hastens toward its fulfillment, toward its goal. And the vision, the prophecy will not fail. Though it seems that it tarries, WAIT FOR IT. For it certainly will come, it will not delay. And it will come at the appointed time!

What Habakkuk writes here sounds so similar to what the writer of Hebrews wrote to the Church in the NT in quoting Habakkuk.

Hebrews 10

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. 38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving [saving] of the soul.

In both instances, Habakkuk in the OT, and the writer of Hebrews in the NT, God's people are being charged with a command to persevere, to endure. And the reason for the perseverance/endurance is the same in both passages...because there is coming a time when the ancient prophecies will be fulfilled! You see — perseverance/endurance takes FAITH (believing *what God said about the present and future based upon the past*). Scriptural faith all fits together!

And when the future events spoken-of in Scripture come to pass, we will want to have been found RIGHTEOUS with respect to what God had spoken so long ago! We will want to have been found persevering and enduring *because* we have correctly understood, accepted, and believed what God has said — **through His Word**. We will want to have been found believing what Scripture clearly laid out, and not be found lacking in true Scriptural faith! Right? Both Habakkuk and the writer of Hebrews reveals succinctly the contrast between two groups of people:

Habakkuk said: **4 Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith...**"

And the writer of Hebrews quoting Habakkuk (who was simply quoting God) said: **38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving (saving) of the soul.**

At this point, Hebrews chapter 10 comes to an end. The proud one, whose soul is not right within him, in the context of Habakkuk would be one who is not running (dare we say "running the race of faith") after reading and understanding the record of the vision.

It is at this point that the writer of Hebrews makes the statement of what FAITH IS, and then goes onto to list a good number of OT saints who “lived by their faith”, their believing what God had revealed about the future. Immediately following chapter 10, he writes:

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval.

In the context of teaching how the righteous must live, we see exactly what faith is. Faith is the assurance of (the sure foundation; the substructure upon which) the things we confidently, expectantly hope for can rest! But it is not just willy-nilly faith! It is faith based upon what is written in this Book! That is why our faith should not rest on the wisdom of man (how foolish it would be to allow our faith to rest on the wisdom of man when our faith can rest on the power of God)! We can we have unshakeable surety that:

- 1) we are believing according to God’s Word, and that
- 2) according to His Word, God will accomplish that which He said He will accomplish through His power, which He displayed when He raised Jesus from the dead!

It is by this type of faith, *the men of old* (some of the OT saints) *gained approval*. The text goes on to delineate *how their faith shaped what they did!* They lived by faith! The actions noted of the individuals mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven were *actions* based upon what they *believed*, and they believed what God had said. How they acted was in exact accord with what God had revealed to them.

It should be noted that **we do not see one person** mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven who was commended for acting upon something they wholeheartedly believed, but was not in line with what God had revealed! Do you understand that statement?

Frankly then, this approval (this commendation) at the JSOC becomes the goal of our Scriptural faith, which translates to the salvation of the soul at the JSOC. And the only way that we can gain this approval at the JSOC is to act in accord with what God has said! There is no other way to gain this commendation! The importance of knowing what God says, and what God does not say is tantamount to our being found successful at the JSOC.

(In my next message we will look at how we can KNOW that we are believing according to the WORD of God. There are signs of being deceived with regards to these things!)

Let’s pray!