



# Faith: The Only Way to Survive!

By RICK LIGGIN

**T**he just shall live by faith!" This divine declaration is familiar enough to most of us who are Bible students. We've read it before! We've probably even heard sermons preached on it. In fact, it is so often referenced, we might think that it must be repeated multiple times throughout the Scriptures. Well, that's not exactly the case: in reality it only occurs four times in the Bible (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; and Heb. 10:38); but it is, indeed, a popular observation that is frequently made by preachers and teachers.

When you hear this statement made—"the just shall live by faith"—what do you think it means? I would venture to say that most often we think it means that the just or righteous man is one who lives by faith... that he lives, putting his trust in God and believing in God...looking at the things that are not seen, as opposed to looking at the things that are seen. And it is certainly true that we "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7; cf. 4:16-18). As disciples of Christ, our daily walk is by putting our trust in God instead of putting our trust in what can be seen with the physical eye. But the original context in which this statement is made implies just a little different emphasis than we might think.

When God originally said to Habakkuk that "the just shall *live* by faith," the emphasis was first on the word *live*: the point being that the just will only live (i.e., survive) by faith...by putting his trust in God and doing as God instructs. In Habakkuk's day, God was preparing to send an extremely corrupt and ruthless nation to be the instrument of His wrath in punishing His own people, the immoral southern kingdom of Judah. The Chaldeans (Babylonians) were, indeed, a ruthless and merciless people: they were "fierce and impetuous" (Hab. 1:6); they did "seize dwelling places...not theirs" (1:6); they were "dreaded and feared" (1:7); and "all

of them" did, indeed, "come for violence" (1:9); and they did bring up their captives "with a hook" and "drag them away with their nets" (1:15). And that is why the Lord warned that when they come to exercise His wrath against Judah in the "appointed time" which "will certainly come" and "will not delay," the "righteous will live (survive) by his faith" (2:4). Indeed, the only way to survive the awful coming Babylonian invasion was to trust in God enough to do exactly what He said to do, regardless of how irrational it might sound. This is the context in which the famous statement was originally made.

And in each of the three New Testament cases where this statement is repeated, the emphasis is again on *live*: the only way to live (survive) is by faith! The only real difference in these New Testament texts is that the point is enlarged to refer to eternal survival!

Consider how it is used in the book of Romans (1:17). Paul proclaims that the "gospel" is the "power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (1:16), because in it (i.e., the gospel) God's plan for making men righteous is revealed, and "the righteous man shall live (find his salvation and survive) by faith" (1:17). What man needs salvation from is the "wrath of God" that "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18). Man is in need of salvation from the wrath of God against sin; and the only way a man will survive that wrath and find that salvation is by faith...by believing the gospel of God, which is His power to save!

In a similar way, consider the Galatian letter (3:10-11). Here, man finds himself under a curse: to be righteous, based on works of the Law, one must "abide by all things written in the book of the Law to perform them" (3:10). The problem is no one actually does "perform them"—at least, not perfectly; no one keeps the Law without ever messing up. And so, the point

is that man will not live (i.e., survive), if he must do so on the basis of law-keeping (3:12). The only way man can survive is on the basis of faith (3:11).

Even in the Hebrew letter, the point is the same (10:38): the Jewish Christians to whom this letter was written were considering the possibility of giving up on the gospel (cf. 10:32-39). They had already endured "a great conflict of sufferings," and it now seemed that even greater afflictions loomed ominously ahead of them; and so, in that frightening climate, their faith was failing them. But the Hebrew writer makes it clear to them that the only way they could survive whatever was ahead of them in life was if they continued to "have faith to the preserving of the soul" (10:39); the "righteous one shall live by faith" (10:38).

So, what's the application for us today? Please know this for sure: we cannot survive life, and we certainly cannot enter eternal life without faith! The point God made originally to Habakkuk, and the point He consistently made when He repeated this statement in the New Testament is the same for us: the only way we will be able to survive this life on into eternity is to exercise our faith...to trust God enough to do exactly what He says regardless of whether we agree with Him or not! The only way for even the righteous to survive is to put their full faith and confidence in God.

Does that describe you and me...really? So many people who say they have faith in God trust Him only in so far as they *agree* with Him; sometimes, only in so far as they *want* to do what He tells them to do. That's not really faith! Faith believes and trusts even when it's really hard to believe and trust...even when we do not *want* to do what God asks us to do! But please understand: the only way to survive this life on into eternity is by faith! And so, do you truly believe?

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# THE LORD HAS PROVIDED

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

**W**e all know the horrid story. God instructed Abraham to sacrifice his son. Unimaginable! Yet, Abraham trusted that the One Who had given him Isaac would be faithful to His promise. Therefore, he could confidently assure his traveling companions, “the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you. So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together” (Gen. 22:5,6).

We are made to wonder what that walk was like. While Isaac is called a lad, he is of sufficient age and stature to have undertaken a three-day journey (v.4), haul the wood for a burnt offering, and have the astuteness to ask, “My father!...Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (v.7).

What might seem to be a cryptic answer intended to distract Isaac and to stall the revelation of Abraham’s plans is actually a very accurate statement of faith. “God will provide for Himself the lamb” (v. 8), is precisely what God does. This does not mean that Abraham knew all along what would happen. On the contrary, it is clear that he fully intended to carry through with sacrificing the son whom he assumed God had provided him as a lamb for sacrifice. What is amazing is that it would appear

that Isaac willingly cooperated with his father as “he bound [him]...and laid him on the altar” (v.9).

Too often we are so disturbed by God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac that we are distracted from appreciating just how much Abraham trusted God to provide whatever he, Abraham, could not in order to bring about what He had promised. Maybe we are inclined to think that God was unfair to put Abraham through such a test because we do not trust God as much as we should.

After Abraham was stopped from carrying through with the sacrifice, twice it was observed that “you have not withheld your son, your only son” (vv. 12,16). As far as God was concerned, it was as good as done. Abraham had sacrificed his son and “in a figurative sense” God had raised him from the dead (Heb. 11:19) by providing another to die in his stead. When Abraham looked up and then behind him, he saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. “So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up...instead of his son” (Gen. 22:13). Abraham named that mount “The-LORD-Will-Provide” (YHWH-Yireh) (v.14), and there God reiterated His promises including, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice” (v.18). Ultimately God would provide for all people through the sacrifice of His only Son.

God’s call for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac

was much more than just a test of his faith and trust in Him. While many are disturbed by such a test, God was not asking of Abraham any more than He was willing and planning to do. What God commanded Abraham to do served as at type of what God would have to do to fulfill His promise to Abraham that “in your seed all nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 22:18) “that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:14). When Abraham told his “only son” (Gen. 22:12,16) that “God will provide for Himself the lamb” (v.8), he could not have known how that prediction would ultimately be fulfilled through God’s one and only Son (cf. Jn. 1:14,18), the One who was introduced as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (v.29).

The overall unifying message of Scripture is that God is great and God is good. The gospel reveals that, despite our sin, God is gracious. From creation to the cross, our great and good God has graciously provided what we could not.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (3:16,17). God sacrificed His Son so that we might live. In giving His Son, He was true to His promise to bless all people, “whoever believes in Him.”

Even as Isaac complied with his father’s will, Jesus complied with His Father’s will (cf. 5:30; 6:38). Jesus willingly laid down His life (cf. 10:15-18). However, unlike Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac wherein God intervened, there was no voice to cry out to stop the sacrifice of the Son of God. It had to happen if we were to be saved. Thus, once again, God graciously provided what only He could provide so that we might be blessed.

“Christ died for the ungodly...Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6,8) that we might be “justified by His blood...saved from wrath through Him” (v.9), and be “reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (v.10). We who are deserving of death can be spared because God “did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (8:32).

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:9,10). The Lord has provided amply!

## 49, GOING ON 50

**THINK**  
ON THESE THINGS

By **AL DIESTELKAMP**

**W**ith this issue, we complete the 49th year of publication of Think. Lord willing, about this time next year, we hope to be able to reach the 50-year mark. My father Leslie Diestelkamp, whose brainchild this was, edited the first twenty years of this labor of love. Though at the time there were numerous gospel papers available, he wanted one that provided—free of charge—brief and timely articles in the interest of purity of doctrine and practice.

Dad was a prolific writer. (He wrote more than all his sons put together.) If an article was needed, he would sit down at his typewriter and “pound out” what was needed. Therefore, for 20 or more years, the vast majority of articles were written by him.

At the start, with us doing the printing and the price of first-class postage being

only six cents per copy, the cost of publication ran about \$60 per issue. Soon, even though we had not even hinted at receiving donations, Christians voluntarily began to share in the costs. Needless to say, as the mailing list grew and costs increased, we could not have continued long without our volunteer partners.

Most of the first decade we mailed six issues per year, after which we cut back to four per year. In the 49 years we have produced a total of 212 issues. In 1989, my father turned the editing over to me but continued to submit articles. Not being as well-known as my father, I anticipated a gradual decline in donations and thought we would be forced to cease publication. However, this has not been the case.

If the Lord permits, I intend to continue editing the paper through next year. The future of Think beyond then is yet to be determined.

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# Every Man's Work

By **ROBERT E. SPEER**

Someone unknown to me has written: "He that gives good advice builds with one hand; he that give good counsel and example builds with both hands; but he that gives good admonition and bad example builds with one hand, and pulls down with the other!"

Such a statement lends itself to many illustrations, but none are so vital as those which pertain to the spiritual sphere of life. A man who boasts how much he loves the Lord but then does not obey His Word has surely pulled down with one hand as much as he has built with the other. He who admonishes others to live after the manner of Christ but refuses to do so himself has surely pulled down more than he has built, for he blunts the influence of others as well.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, Paul has written of the Lord's people who were building with one hand and pulling down with the other. Truly, they were the Lord's people (1 Cor. 1:2). As such, they espoused and expressed the truth, but by allowing sin among them their bad example erased their good admonition. Hebrews 4:11 states: "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

Jesus said, "Keep My commandments" (Jn. 14:15) and, "I have give you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn. 13:15). Timothy was told, "Preach the word..." (2 Tim. 4:2) and "be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation..." (1 Tim. 4:12). These are illustrations of giving good example along with good counsel.

As a boy-preacher in the foothills of the Ozarks, I often asked an "old timer" if he had been working hard. Invariably, he would cock his head to one side, and with a twinkle in his eye and a conspiratorial tone in his voice, would reply, "with both hands!" The faithful of the Maker will give good counsel and good example. They will work; they will build—with both hands!

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13).

What about your work? What sort is it? Think about it!

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# The Taming of Jesus

By **DAVID DIESTELKAMP**

"Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" was the question Jesus' disciples asked Him (Matt. 15:11). He knew—and He didn't apologize. Do you believe in an offensive Jesus? Do you believe in a Jesus who frustrated people by not feeding them? And then, when He sensed that they were being offended by His teaching, He taught what sounded to them like cannibalism? (Jn 6:60-66).

Jesus healed on the Sabbath even though He knew people were watching in order to accuse Him, even though He knew it would offend their sensibilities (ex: Mk. 3:1-6). Why? And why did He do some miracles in strange ways—spit, mud, fingers in ears, slow restoration (Mk. 7:33; 8:23; Jn. 9:6; Mk. 8:22-25)? At times, Jesus spoke so much in parables that His own disciples asked Him what was going on (Matt. 13:10). And there's that parable of the unjust steward (Lk. 16:1-13). Why did He even tell that one? Oh, and there's labeling and name calling: hypocrites, blind guides, and snakes (Matt. 23:13-36). Does it make you uncomfortable to talk about the times Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple? (Jn. 2:13-16; Matt. 21:12).

The controversial, offensive, paradoxical Jesus has been tamed in most modern thought and teaching. We've figured Him out. We have explanations which make Him politically correct or less provocative. And like any other puzzle, we can Google His enigmatic statements and find entertaining three minute YouTube videos that satisfy our curiosity. To many, Jesus has been tamed—what can be said and known about Him has been said and is known.

The parables Jesus taught and the miracles Jesus did are intended to make a point that is beyond the obvious. Jesus wasn't just giving gardening tips with His parables and making people feel better with His healings (Matt. 13:11; Jn. 20:30-31). Jesus told His disciples that "...it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (Matt. 13:11). We're supposed to think and figure it out. And our thinking is going to have to be different from the worldly thinking that won't understand it (see also 1 Cor. 2:14).

How is Jesus both human and divine, the Son of Man and the Son of God? How is it even possible for the first to be last, to give to receive, to find rest under a yoke, or die to live? I know there are answers, good answers, out there for these things. But Jesus Himself usually didn't explain His words and actions. He wanted people to personally wrestle with them, to really chew on

them, and to lay awake at night reasoning and meditating and praying to find the wisdom He brought.

All of our helps and explanations may be robbing people of the opportunity to think and reason through the amazing, and sometimes confusing, gospel message of God coming in the flesh and dying. Instead of allowing them to ask, we show them there is no question. Instead of allowing them to seek, we find it for them. Instead of allowing them to knock, we open the door for them. In all of this they find us and our explanations rather than finding the Lord. And the Lord we show them is tamed—fully defined, fully understood, fully explained, and fully comfortable. In other words, not the Lord of the universe. Not the One about whose life it was written: "if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (Jn. 21:25). Go find Him in Scripture. He is anything but tame.

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Articles From the Days Gone By

## STRAIGHT PATHS

By **LESLIE DIESTELKAMP** 1911-1995

If straight highways seem dangerous, it is only because the speed they encourage is hazardous. All of us know that it is the crooked road that is actually the one dangerous to all. And in spiritual matters we are directed to "make straight paths for your feet lest that which is lame be turned out of the way" (Heb. 12:13).

If it is difficult for a strong person to walk safely in a crooked, hazardous way, think how much more dangerous it must be for the weak and the lame—and, of course, I now write of spiritual matters, not physical ones. So, as we build character, as we grow to maturity, as we labor in righteous service to mankind, and as we develop personality, let us make the pathway straight for ourselves and others. That is, let us speak true words (Tit. 2:8); let us live holy lives (Heb. 12:14); let us do good works that will illuminate the path for others (Matt. 5:16); and let us demonstrate joyful attitudes (1 Pet. 4:13).

There is no substitute for a "straight path" as a means of safety from Satan's pitfalls and as a means of security for the child of God.

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The past issue cost more than I had projected because I forgot that the website renewal fees would be due. This issue will be our most expensive issue because the annual Bulk Mailing Permit fee will also be due. As a result, this issue is expected to cost about \$950, cutting into our current balance, which will leave a surplus of slightly more than \$636 for future use.

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# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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# Praying Before Sex KILLING THE MOOD OR ENHANCING THE INTIMACY?

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

I know the title may be shocking to some, but praying before sex is really quite practical. I am not proposing an unwritten rule like there is about praying before meals. (However, I doubt anybody thinks that praying with thanksgiving before enjoying the blessing of food is a bad tradition.) The sexual union of husband and wife is holy (Heb. 13:4) and a God-designed, very good thing (Gen. 1:31; 2:24). It is right that we would thank God for the blessing of sex before partaking of it. The solemnity of and surrendering intimacy of coming together as one flesh for the first time might naturally bring with it some anxieties. Consider how the admonition to “be anxious in nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6) could be helpful on the wedding night.

I can certainly understand how turning our minds to God in prayer in a moment of passion would itself not be physically arousing; but if both husband and wife are saints, praying together could ultimately enhance the intimacy of being one flesh and



the emotional bonding that results. Prayer would remind the couple that their passion in this context is holy, not common; pure, not dirty; and beautiful, not disgusting.

Now, consider praying before sex with a harlot or with your boyfriend or with anybody other than your spouse. Would this enhance the moment or totally kill the mood? Indeed, so incongruent are the actions of prayer and sexual immorality that prayer should be seen and used as a very effective means of reigning in the flesh.

Saints are instructed to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in everything (1 Thess. 5:17,18). Prayer will not quench the spirit (vs.19), but it can quench the flesh and enable us to hold fast to what is good and to abstain from every form of evil (vs.

21,22). Indeed, it is the will of God that we abstain from fornication and that each should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like those who do not know God (4:3-5).

If whatever we do would not be enhanced by prayer, then this is a pretty good indicator that we ought to cease doing it. So, pray before you “go too far.” Pray before putting on (or taking off) your clothing. Try putting on your clothes with prayer and see how they go together. Does what you do and what you wear and what you think clash with Christ and the godliness you profess? (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9,10). Pray the next time you are tempted to go—in body or mind—to places you ought not to go. Pray while you are on your devices because we are not ignorant of Satan’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11). God’s armor won’t do us any good if we don’t put it on; and the way we put it on is with prayer (Eph. 6:18).

Prayer has the power to both kill the fleshly mood and all that is evil while enhancing our intimacy with God and all that is good. Use it!

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