

LIVING BY FAITH.
BY E. J. Waggoner

"The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1:17. This statement is the summing up of what the apostle has to say about the gospel. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but only "to every one that believeth." In it the righteousness of God is revealed. The righteousness of God is the perfect law of God, which is but the transcript of his own righteous will. All unrighteousness is sin or the transgression of the law. The gospel is God's remedy for sin; its work, therefore, must be to bring men into harmony with the law--to cause the workings of the righteous law to be manifested in their lives. But this is wholly a work of faith--the righteousness of God is revealed from "faith to faith"--faith in the beginning and faith to the end--as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." 03-25-89, Para. 1, [ST].

This is true in all ages since the fall of man and will be true until the saints of God have His name in their foreheads and see Him as He is. It was from the prophet Habbakuk (2:4) that the apostle quoted the statement. If the prophets had not revealed it, the first Christians could not have known of it, for they had only the Old Testament. To say that in the most ancient times men had but an imperfect idea of faith in Christ is to say that there were no just men in those times. But Paul goes right back to the very beginning and cites an instance of saving faith. He says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous." Heb. 11:4. He says of Noah also that it was by faith that he built the ark to the saving of his house, "by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Heb. 11:7. We say that their faith was in Christ, because it was faith unto salvation and besides the name of Jesus "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. 03-25-89, Para. 2, [ST].

There are too many who try to live the Christian life on the strength of the faith which they exercised when they realized their need of pardon for sins of their past life. They know that God alone can pardon sins and that He does this through Christ, but they imagine that having once been started they must run the race in their own strength. We

know that many have this idea, first, because we have heard some say so, and second, because there are such multitudes of professed Christians who show the working of no greater power than their own. If they ever have anything to say in social meeting, besides the ever-recurring formula, "I want to be a Christian, so that I may be saved," they tell only of a past experience, the joy they had when they first believed. Of the joy of living for God and of walking with Him by faith, they know nothing, and he who tells of it speaks of a strange language to them. But the apostle carries this matter of faith clear through to the glorious kingdom in the following most forcible illustration: 03-25-89, Para. 3, [ST].

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. 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." Heb. 11:5, 6. 03-25-89, Para. 4, [ST].

Note the argument to prove that Enoch was translated by faith: Enoch was translated because he walked with God, and had the testimony that he pleased God; but without faith it is impossible to please God. That is enough to prove the point. Without faith not an act can be performed that will meet the approval of God. Without faith the best deeds that a man can do will come infinitely short of the perfect righteousness of God, which is the only standard. Wherever real faith is found it is a good thing, but the best of faith in God to take away the load of the sins of the past will profit a person nothing unless it is carried right through in ever-increasing measure until the close of his probation. 03-25-89, Para. 5, [ST].

We have heard many people tell how hard they found it to do right. Their Christian life was most unsatisfactory to them, being marked only by failure, and they were tempted to give up in discouragement. No wonder they get discouraged. Continual failure is enough to discourage anybody. The bravest soldier in the world would become faint-hearted if he had been defeated in every battle. Sometimes these persons will mournfully tell that they have about lost confidence in themselves. Poor souls. If they would only lose confidence in themselves entirely and would put their whole trust in the One who is mighty to save,

they would have a different story to tell. They would then "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Says the apostle, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." Phil. 4:4. The man who doesn't rejoice in God, even though tempted and afflicted, is not fighting the good fight of faith. He is fighting the poor fight of self-confidence and defeat. 03-25-89, Para. 6, [ST].

All the promises of final happiness are to the overcomer. "To him that overcometh," says Jesus, "will I give to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. 3:21. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things," says the Lord. Rev. 21:7. An overcomer is one who gains victories. The inheriting is not the overcoming; that is only the reward for overcoming. The overcoming is now. The victories to be gained are victories over the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, victories over self and selfish indulgences. The man who fights and sees the foe give way may rejoice; nobody can keep him from rejoicing, for joy comes spontaneously as the result of seeing the enemy give way. Some folks look with dread upon the thought of having to wage a continual warfare with self and worldly lusts. That is because they do not as yet know anything about the joy of victory. They have experienced only defeat. But it isn't so doleful a thing to battle constantly, when there is continual victory. The old veteran of a hundred battles, who has been victorious in every fight longs to be at the scene of conflict. Alexander's soldiers, who under his command never knew defeat, were always impatient to be led into the fray. Each victory increased their strength, which was born only of courage, and correspondingly diminished that of the vanquished foe. Now how may we gain continual victories in our spiritual warfare? 03-25-89, Para. 7, [ST].

Listen to the beloved disciple: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:10. 03-25-89, Para. 8, [ST].

Here is the secret of strength. It is Christ, the Son of God, the One to whom all power in heaven and earth is given, Who does the work. If He lives in the heart to do the work, is it boasting to say that continual victories may be gained? Yes, it is boast; but it is boasting in the

Lord, and that is allowable. Says the psalmist, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord" and Paul says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Gal. 6:14. 03-25-89, Para. 9, [ST].

The soldiers of Alexander were reckoned invincible. Why? Was it because they were naturally stronger and more courageous than all their enemies? No, but because they were led by Alexander. Their strength was in his leadership. Under another leader they would often have been defeated. When the Union army was fleeing panic-stricken before the enemy at Winchester, the presence of Sheridan turned their defeat into victory. Without him the men were a quaking mob. With him at their head they were an invincible army. If you had listened to the remarks after the battle of the soldiers who served under those and similar leaders, you would have heard the praises of their general mingled with all their rejoicing. They were strong because he was; they were inspired by the same spirit that he had. 03-25-89, Para. 10, [ST].

Well, our Captain is the Lord of hosts. He has met the chiefest foe of all and has vanquished him single-handed. Those who follow Him invariably go forth conquering and to conquer. Oh, that those who profess to be His followers would put their trust in Him and then, by the repeated victories that they would gain, they would show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. 03-25-89, Para. 11, [ST].

John says that he that is born of God overcomes the world, through faith. Faith lays hold of the arm of God and His mighty power does the work. How the power of God can work in a man, accomplishing that which he could not possibly do for himself, no one can tell. It would be as easy to tell how God can give life to the dead. Says Jesus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. How the Spirit works in a man to subdue his passions and to make him victorious over pride, envy, and selfishness is known only to the Spirit. It is sufficient for us to know that it is done and will be done in everyone who wants that work wrought in him, above all things else, and who trusts God for the performance of it. 03-25-89, Para. 12, [ST].

We cannot tell how Peter was enabled to walk on the water when the waves were rolling about him, but we know that at the command of the Lord he did it. So long as he kept his eye fixed on the Master, divine power enabled him to walk as easily as though it were solid rock underneath, but when he looked at the waves, possibly with a feeling of pride in what he was doing, as though he himself was doing it, fear very naturally took possession of him, and he began to sink. Faith enabled him to walk on the waves; fear made him sink beneath them. 03-25-89, Para. 13, [ST].

Says the apostle, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days." Heb. 11:30. Why was that written? For our learning, "that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4. Why, is there any prospect that we shall ever be called upon to fight armed hosts and to take fortified cities? No, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Eph. 6:12. But the victories which have been gained by faith in God over visible foes in the flesh are placed on record to show us what faith will accomplish in our conflict with the rulers of the darkness of this world. The grace of God, in answer to faith, is as powerful in these battles as in those, for says the apostle: 03-25-89, Para. 14, [ST].

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10:3-5 03-25-89, Para. 15, [ST].

It was not physical foes alone that faith enabled the ancient worthies to conquer. We read of them that they not only "subdued kingdoms," but "wrought righteousness, obtained promises," and, most wonderful and most encouraging of all, "out of weakness were made strong." Heb. 11:33, 34. Their very weakness became strength to them through faith, because the strength of Christ is made perfect in weakness. Who, then, shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? since it is God that justifieth, and we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Rom. 8:35, 37. 03-25-89, Para. 16, [ST].

FOR OUR SAKE ALSO. -- BY E. J. Waggoner. 10-13-90, Para. 1, [ST].

The fourth chapter of Romans is one of the richest in the Bible in the hope and courage which it contains for the Christian. In Abraham we have an example of righteousness by faith and we have set before us the wonderful inheritance promised to those who have the faith of Abraham. And this promise is not limited. The blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles as well as on the Jews; there is none so poor that he may not share it, for "it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." 10-13-90, Para. 2, [ST].

The last clause of the seventeenth verse is worthy of special attention. It contains the secret of the possibility of our success in the Christian life. It says that Abraham believed "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." This marks God's power; it involves creative power. God can call a thing which is not as though it existed. If a man should do that, what would you call it? A lie. If a man should say that a thing is, when it is not, it would be a lie. But God cannot lie. Therefore when God calls those things that be not, as though they were, it is evident that that makes them be. That is, they spring into existence at His word. We have all heard, as an illustration of confidence, the little girl's statement that "if ma says so, it's so if it isn't so." That is exactly the case with God. Before that time spoken of as "in the beginning," there was a dreary waste of absolute nothingness; God spoke, and instantly worlds sprang into being. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . . for he spake, and it was; he commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33:6-9. This is the power which is brought to view in Rom. 4:17. Now let us read on, that we may see the force of this language in this connection. Still speaking of Abraham, the apostle says: 10-13-90, Para. 3, [ST].

"Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was

spoken, So shall thy seed be. and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Rom. 4:18-22. 10-13-90, Para. 4, [ST].

Here we learn that Abraham's faith in God, as one who could bring things into existence by His word, was exercised with respect to His being able to create righteousness in a person destitute of it. Those who look at the trial of Abraham's faith as relating simply to the birth of Isaac and ending there, lose all the point and beauty of the sacred record. Isaac was only the one in whom his seed was to be called, and that seed was Christ. See Gal. 3:16. When God told Abraham that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, He was preaching the gospel to him (Gal. 3:8); therefore Abraham's faith in the promise of God was direct faith in Christ as the Saviour of sinners. This was the faith which was counted to him for righteousness. 10-13-90, Para. 5, [ST].

Now note the strength of that faith. His own body was already virtually dead from age and Sarah was in a like condition. The birth of Isaac from such a pair was nothing less than the bringing of life from the dead. It was a symbol of God's power to quicken to spiritual life those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Abraham hoped against hope. There was no human possibility of the fulfillment of the promise; everything was against it, but his faith grasped and rested upon the unchanging word of God, and His power to create and to make alive. "And therefore it was imputed unto him for righteousness." Now for the point of it all: 10-13-90, Para. 6, [ST].

"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:23-25. 10-13-90, Para. 7, [ST].

So Abraham's faith was the same that ours must be, and in the same object. The fact that it is by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ that we have the same

righteousness imputed to us that was imputed to Abraham, shows that Abraham's faith was likewise in the death and resurrection of Christ. All the promises of God to Abraham were for us as well as for him. Indeed, we are told in one place that they were specially for our benefit. "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself." "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Heb. 6:13, 17, 18. Our hope, therefore, rests upon God's promise and oath to Abraham, for that promise to Abraham, confirmed by that oath, contains all the blessings which God can possibly give to man. 10-13-90, Para. 8, [ST].

But let us make this matter a little more personal before leaving it. Trembling soul, say not that your sins are so many and that you are so weak that there is no hope for you. Christ came to save the lost, and He is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by Him. You are weak, but He says, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9. And the inspired record tells us of those who "out of weakness were made strong." Heb. 11:34. That means that God took their very weakness and turned it into strength. In so doing He demonstrates His power. It is His way of working. For "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. 1:27-29. 10-13-90, Para. 9, [ST].

Have the simple faith of Abraham. How did he attain to righteousness? By not considering the deadness and powerlessness of his own body, but by being willing to grant all the glory to God, strong in faith that He could bring all things out of that which was not. You, therefore, in like manner, consider not the weakness of your own body, but the power and grace of our Lord, being assured that the same word which can create a universe and raise the dead can also create in you a clean heart and make you alive unto God. And so you shall be a child of Abraham, even a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 10-13-90, Para. 11, [ST].