

Sermon preached by Mr. J. Raven at Shaw's Corner
on September, 28th, 1947

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul".
Hebrew 10. 38,39

The Apostle has been writing very solemnly concerning apostasy from the truth, making shipwreck of faith. Mr. Philpot has spoken of such portions as the latter half of chapter 10 in this epistle as designed by the Lord to scrape the consciences of His people. And they do scrape their consciences often-times. Those who fear God do tremble as they think of that dreadful apostacy against which the Apostle here and in other places so solemnly warns them, and of which we get some very solemn instances in the word of God, notably that of Judas. But then the Apostle says here in our text, "Now the just shall live by faith - the just shall live by faith". Now, who is this just man that lives by faith? He is described in those words of the Apostle in writing to the Romans, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God". This man who is called a just man here in the text, is a justified man, justified by the Lord Jesus Christ, by His saving Name, justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. He is not justified by his works, by penances, by tears, by good tempers or good frames and that sort of thing, but he is justified solely on the ground of what the Lord Jesus Christ is and of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. There is no other way of being justified in the sight of God than in Christ Jesus, and they that are in Christ Jesus are delivered from all condemnation, they are just persons, they are just by reason of a just, divine sentence. As I have often said, justification as the very name imports, is an act of justice, and in the gospel God reveals how He can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, just and justifying the ungodly.

"Now the just shall live by faith". We have a wonderful description of faith in the chapter that we have just read. (Chapter 11). We have, too, set out very clearly and blessedly faith's work, and how faith, the faith of these people, the quality of it, is made manifest by the works that they do. "Now the just shall live by faith". I well remember a passage from a German writer (I forget his name at the present moment) as to what faith is, and I thought it an excellent description of what

it is to believe. He said, "Faith is the trust of a poor sinner who has lost all confidence in himself". While you have any confidence in yourself you are not trusting in Christ. If I were attempting to cross a stream by a wooden foot-bridge or a piece of plank, while I put one foot on the plank and kept the other on the bank, I am not trusting to the plank. I must put my whole weight upon the plank to be trusting myself to it, and so it is with faith in Jesus, it means that the trust of a poor sinner who has lost, and is losing, all confidence in himself, is in Christ.

"No help in self I find
And yet have sought it well.
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death and hell".

"To Christ for help I fly"

There it is, "The just shall live by faith". And remember this, the Apostle does not mean that at the first outset a man believes and is saved and then the thing is done once for all. As was said to me by a man, "I went to a meeting and I felt I was a sinner, I went to the penitent form and accepted Christ, and I was saved", and there the matter appeared to have finished. I could not make out that he knew anything at all of a life of faith upon the Son of God, or that the Lord Jesus Christ really meant anything to him. It was just his own act, as he thought, of believing. No, this faith is a faith that is in the soul from the time the Holy Ghost begins His gracious work right to the end of the journey. The last act of a believer is an act of faith.

"True faith's the life of God,
Deep in the heart it lies;
It lives and labours under load,
Though damped, it never dies."

And this faith is a prayerful grace. The man who has faith will be a praying man, and he will have plenty to pray about. A child of God will have plenty of work for faith and prayer before he comes to the end of his pilgrimage here below. Where faith is, there in the very nature of things prayer will flow out to the mercy-seat.

"The just shall live by faith". Faith has its proper object, and that is God in Christ; It is the person of the Son of God. You remember the Apostle said, "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". "I live by the faith of the Son of God". And what does he mean by that? Why, to live a life of continually committing the keeping of his

soul into the hands of the Son of God. He could not keep his own soul, he could not keep his own soul alive, and therefore of necessity, he must be crying out to Him who is the fountain of all life, and of all goodness, for the maintenance of life in his soul, and for safe keeping to the end. "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day". The object of faith is Christ. Where there is a true and living faith Christ is the ultimate object of it, and God in Christ. Faith receives the whole truth of God; faith believes the testimony of God against the sinner, faith believes it. "By faith Noah, being warned of God", you see by faith he believed and by faith he attended to the warning. We read in the epistle to the Romans "The wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men". It is clearly revealed in the Scripture, "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous", and faith believes it, faith very solemnly believes, ah, and consents to it. I believe faith justifies God in all that He has revealed of His anger against sin, and it is by faith in the word of God that a sinner is brought to own his sinnership and his hell-deservedness. But faith does not stop there. The Holy Spirit, who is the great Teacher of the people of God, does not stop there when showing them their ruin, their sickness, their lost condition, their need, but He shows them these things in order that He may lead them to Christ, that He may discover to them Christ, and that when Christ is revealed in their hearts, they may, by an act of living faith through the power of the Holy Ghost, close with Him. There is a such a thing in a proper free-grace sense as closing with Christ, and the soul heartily consents to Christ's gospel terms.

"Lo, glad I come, and Thou, blest Lamb
Shalt take me to Thee as I am;
Nothing but sin I Thee can give,
Nothing but love shall I receive"

Faith believes the report of the gospel concerning Christ; faith gives a welcome to it. Is there a welcome in your heart for the gospel, this gospel of the free and sovereign grace of God, the gospel of liberty and forgiveness, the gospel in which is revealed the divinely appointed way of salvation? O does your heart welcome it? Has such a word as this ever found a welcome in your heart? "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses"? Do you humbly, yea, gladly welcome such a word in your heart at any time? One said,

"The gospel I love it,
'Tis perfectly free".

I believe I have told you of that merchant in London who went to hear George Whitfield preach, and as he listened to the preacher he said, "This is what I want, this is what I want". Have you ever said that as you have listened to the gospel, and as you have read the words of grace in this divinely inspired book has your heart cried, "This is what I want, this is what I would be after"? O, faith is after it. Faith is a hungry grace, and faith cannot be satisfied short of Christ. One mark of your possessing a true and living faith is that you can find no rest until you find rest in Jesus Christ. You must have Christ. "O" you will say, "if I could but be possessed of Christ". The Apostle was willing to part with all things that he might win Christ and be found in Him, and this is faith, the acting of faith. Here is faith in operation in the heart by the power of the Spirit of God. "Now the just shall live by faith". And this faith, as I said, goes out to Jesus Christ as Peter says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious", and he says further, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious". Ah, to faith He is precious, that is to say, he is the one thing needful to a believing heart. Have you ever felt that whatever you might possess in this world, it could not make you truly rich, or bring you real contentment, if you have not Christ? "The just shall live by faith", and that faith lives upon Christ. And faith lives upon this, first of all, Christ as the incarnate Word; the Word made flesh is divine food. "He that eateth Me", said the incarnate Word, "even He shall live by me", and to see the Son of God "wrapped in humanity to die for crimes that I had done", to see Him, the Son of God, drawing near to my soul, wearing my very nature in order to my redemption, is rich food indeed. And then again, it is not merely upon the "Word made flesh", but it is upon a crucified Lord Jesus that faith lives.

"To live upon His precious death
Is faith's divine repast.
The language of His dying breath,
See how she holds it fast".

And faith views the cross of Christ, glories in the cross of Christ. "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". And faith is convinced that there is no hope of pardon, no hope of acceptance with God but through the atonement. Faith then lives upon the atonement, and not only so, but faith views the risen Jesus, and views Him as seated at the right hand of the majesty on high. Faith pierces through the clouds and sings,

"There is a man, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran
In hands, and feet and side"

There is a Man in the heavens, the very Man who once lived and laboured and suffered here upon earth, whose head they crowned with thorns, whose hands and feet they pierced with the nails, and into whose side the Roman soldier plunged his spear, He who on the cross cried, "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me", and then, "It is finished".

"That same dear Man in heaven now reigns
Who suffered for our sake"

Faith looks into heaven and fixes upon the incarnate Son of God, the Lamb "as it had been slain". Yes, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by Me". "The just shall live by faith".

This faith is an abiding principle where it is bestowed, an abiding principle, If you once receive this faith, this operation of the Holy Ghost into your heart, 'it can never be lost'; it may be much obscured, there may be much opposition to it, it may seem sometimes as Philpot says, "like a spark of fire in an ocean of water", but it will survive because it is a divine spark and therefore is indestructible, and it is sure to get the victory over all that opposes it. "The just shall live by faith", he shall live by faith. Faith goes out to Christ in all the soul's necessities and conflicts and distresses, in all its weakness and in temptations; faith goes out to Christ and fetches help from Christ, receives strength from Christ. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness". A blessed way of living, this, to be living upon Christ by faith, to be daily living upon Him. "Every moment be receiving strength and yet be always weak""". I say, a blessed way of living, but "If any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him". Oh then, there are those who draw back, who have professed to have this faith. They have professed to have it, they have seemed to be religious, they have seemed to have somewhat, but they give evidence of the unreality and the falseness of all their profession by their drawing back. Judas revealed the hypocrisy of his heart, the insincerity of his deceitful heart, by his dreadful act in betraying the Lord. "If any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him". It was often a grief to the Apostle Paul's heart to find some of whom he had hoped well, some who seemed to stand well in a profession, going back. He writes of some, "Of whom I tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ". Once they professed friendship for Christ and His cross, but they have gone back. We read of Demas that he "loved this present world", and we read of others that they loved the

praise of men rather than God. "If any man draw back". You remember how a number of professed disciples of the Lord, who were offended at His doctrine, went back and walked no more with Him, and the Lord said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go; thou hast the words of eternal life", and Jesus said these solemn words to them, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil". Ah, even one of those twelve had yet to be made manifest as a devil, as the most awful traitor that ever lived upon this earth. "My soul shall have no pleasure in him", says the Apostle, and it is a very ill thing for any person for a minister of Jesus Christ to have to weep over them, and for a minister of Jesus Christ to live to see one whom he has baptized, fall away, go back into the world, never again to be seen on pilgrimage is a bitter experience indeed. "My soul shall have no pleasure in him", but only grief, bitter, poignant grief. A true minister of Jesus Christ has a very tender heart, although he must needs have a brow of brass, and his face like a flint, yet as he is in any way like his master, he has a very tender heart and feels things, and as he sees one and another go back, cast off their profession, make ship-wreck of their faith, he is filled with grief beyond expression.

Then the Apostle goes on, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul". O what a mercy it is if we are found within the compass of these words! "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition". Do you ever tremble at the thought of going back? You remember Bunyan's pilgrim was shown in the Interpreter's House some significant rooms, and there were some very, very solemn things that he saw, and he says of these very solemn things, "I am glad I have seen them, I am glad I have seen them". You know, honest-hearted believers, when they hear from the lips of their minister some very solemn and soul-shaking truths, some very heart searching sentences, and as the minister, as he is led by the Spirit, deals very faithfully with them, they will say, the Lord making them honest, "I am glad to have had such a minister, I am glad he has said these things to me". They are things profitable, things that tend to make me stable, as Bunyan said of these things in the Interpreter's House. And thus it is a mark of godly fear if a person is exercised in this matter of going back. To refer again to Bunyan, you remember Mr.Fearing, that so troublesome pilgrim of Mr.Greatheart, who was such a poor, fearing trembling man, afraid of everything, the least hint of danger or difficulty in the way filled him with fear, but we are told of Mr.Fearing that the thing that he was most afraid of, was of going back, and this fear of

going back was so strong in him that he was compelled to go forward in the face of all other dangers and difficulties. He must go forward because going back was to him the most dreadful thing of all. Can you say it is so with you? that of all the things that you fear, going back causes you the sharpest pang? "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul". They "who believe to the saving of the soul" are those people who endure to the end, their faith endures, it stands every shock and every storm, it lives through all opposition, and however much it may be beaten down by fear, it will rise up again because it is of the operation of the Holy Ghost, and the Lord says, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not". Thus a poor believer, weak in himself as a worm, endures to the end, while many a fair but merely nominal professor comes to grief, proves an apostate. But this poor weak believer who in his weakness is compelled to depend solely upon the Almighty Saviour, wins through, comes safely through to the end of his pilgrimage; "he believes to the saving of the soul". Now there is just one thing to be said of this believing to the saving of the soul; this faith, this true and living faith, is always joined with love. There are many people who may profess their belief in certain principles, principles of gospel truth, but they do not love them. The gospel has no real place in their affections; they profess to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but they do not love Him. Where there is true, living faith, there is love. What faith believes, love embraces. A searching point this, and yet it is a point which the honest soul will willingly face. It will cause him a good many tremblings, a good many fears as to how he stands such a searching test, but he will be willing to face it, and as he faces it, his desire will be to be made right, to have that faith which works by love, to have that faith which endures to the end, that faith which is of the Holy Ghost, and which He keeps in more or less lively exercise from day to day, so that there is a more or less daily venturing upon Christ, the employing of the Lord Jesus Christ. O if you have this faith you will find plenty of employment for Christ, you will indeed. I like that phrase in one of our hymns, "And Him in everything employ". But I must cease, the time has gone. May the Lord add His blessing.