

A Life of Faith

I have on my heart quite distinctly, I believe from the Lord, a word which so far as actual terms are concerned may be most familiar to you but which I feel very strongly indeed needs to be brought to us in fresh quickening and illumination by the Holy Spirit.

I am growingly conscious that there is one message, one central, pivotal, basic message for the Lord's people at the time of the end, and that is the message of Christ crucified. Everything is gathered into that and everything comes forth from that, and the message of the cross is that which I am convinced the Lord, by His Spirit will stress more and more in our hearts as we come to the end, and it is in that connection that I feel led to say just a few direct, maybe simple things, trusting to the Holy Spirit to make them live. And the passage in which the seed thought for these few moments is Galatians 2:20. *"I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and that which I now live in the flesh I live in faith which is in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."* The particular clause for the moment is this: *"That which I now live I live in faith which is in the Son of God"*. *"That which I now live .."*. The "that" refers to a definite object or a definite subject. It refers to the life, that life which I now live, I live in faith. So that this phrase speaks of the cross and the life of faith.

Now I want to stay for a moment to just analyse and discriminate. We are not here speaking about, or the Scripture in view is not speaking about what is very generally called "the life of faith", which is generally referred to to describe a mode of living. People say that when they cease to take a stated salary they are going to live on a faith basis and that is developed into a system which really is a mode of living. Now that may be alright, it may be trusting God, but it has made room for a good many inconsistencies and contradictions and a great many difficulties. It is supposed to exclude all appeals to men for help and so on, and you find a measure of confusion before very long on that principle of things, that mode of life. That is not what is meant here. I am not dealing with that at all. What is here is not a mode of living but a kind of life. It is not the conduct of our life, that we live in a certain way, it is the thing which is basic to our very being, the life that we have. Seeing we have been crucified and the cross has just been planted right in the middle of our old natural soul life, the animal life, that life which we have by nature. That life as a nature by the children of God has been put away by the cross as a means or a basis of our life and of our action. And another life has come in and that life is the life by which we now live, and that life is received and manifested by instant, momentary faith in the Lord Jesus. Let me make another point clear here, because there has come about a certain amount of confusion by a failure to recognise what the apostle says — *"... faith which is in the Son of God"*.

Now one interpretation of that is: (and I am afraid all of us have been caught by that in time past) the faith of the Son of God, or Christ's faith. Now it does not mean that at all. Here the case is the objective genitive which means our link with Him, and it is by our faith union with Him that we live on this basis of life which is not natural life but divine life, which is not our life but His life. Our life has been taken to the cross as the energy, the power, the resource, the ability to live or to work in relation to the things of God. That has gone and now for living and for serving, for continuing, for enduring, for getting through there is His life at our disposal. We must mightily lay hold of Him for life otherwise we will never get through. This is a moment by moment exercise of faith, which is shown to be a necessity in this verse.

That is all by the way of preparing the ground, clearing the ground of perhaps misconceptions and defining the actual meaning of the word here. That life which I live is not my life, which has been set aside when I was crucified with Christ, but it is His life

which I now live; I live by His life in the exercise of faith continually. Now I want to get away from what is technical down to a simple application of that.

I am quite sure beloved that with all the teaching that we have received about the cross of the Lord Jesus, we do not understand it yet. And will you be patient with me if I say I specially want the younger folk to be helped in this connection because they have to come into a settled position concerning this. I suppose we all have to, but they in a special way are up against the world and the operations, the activities of natural life. They are up against it in a peculiarly acute form because this whole world is run upon a basis of natural life, and even religion and Christianity as a system here on earth is run very largely upon a basis of natural life and the Christianity into which we come when we come into this world is constituted very largely upon a basis of natural life. That is natural life, the soul life, the energy of man is back of it running it, organizing it, with the best of intentions, for the Lord's sake very often, and yet that is the basis of it. It is not this life of faith. And I do want to help you in this matter so that you will be able to come through to an understanding which will settle you, and when you are settled and your questions are set aside in a matter like this, you will be able to cooperate. You will not be standing asking questions, disputing all the time, you will be able to cooperate, and we must find our own level for cooperation in the testimony of our Risen Lord.

Now what we are saying is that we are living a life of faith. A *life of faith*, a kind of life, and that makes a whole lot of difference when we really come into it. It will make such differences that if you are not in it you will be on the rim all the time interrogating the safety and the soundness and the common sense-ness of the whole thing. You will be full of questions as to whether it is a practical kind of life, whether it is a common sense kind of life. If you come into it you will find yourself in such a position of apartness from everything else, that you are up against everything in a very direct way, and everything is up against you, but you know in your hearts that this is the way, and there is no other way for you. And you are settled although the cost is very great.

Now what we have said in a word is this, that there are two kinds of life. There is natural and there is divine life. There is the vitality and energy of nature, both as to the intellectual and the rational, the emotional and affectional, and the volitional along the line of decision and choice and action. And there is divine life, the energy and vitality of the Spirit of God, which is an entirely different thing. Now this life from above, this divine life, which is lived by faith, carries with it certain things that we must immediately recognise. It means this, that it is not our life; it is His life and that we cannot presume upon it, we cannot take it for granted, and we cannot take hold of it and make it serve our ends, or use it as though it were ours, and we cannot bring our reason to bear upon it and make it answer to what we think ought to be and ought not to be. It is a nature which is in Christ. We only have it as we recognise the absolute necessity for it and exercise faith in Him to receive it as we go along.

That means that this life of faith, this kind of life will not allow programmes. You see you are coming up against things immediately. You cannot 'programmise' divine life. That is, you cannot throw your mind down the future and organize your future spiritual life and activity, and lay your course out in a scheme, in a plan, in a programme and say "Now tomorrow so-and-so, next week this, next month that and so on." This life forbids any such action of procedure. You are absolutely dependent upon whether the Lord gives you life for every bit of your course as to whether you can take a certain step. The Lord holds us so closely to Himself that more often than not He does not give us anything very far ahead but keeps us dependent upon His life from one day to another, and so we cannot make any arrangements for the future only upon very tentative natural ground. If the Lord enables for that, alright, but we have to hold ourselves absolutely free for the Lord. And it may be that the Lord will not give life for a thing we have planned, agreed to and accepted, and that we cannot carry it out. We are dependent upon the Lord's life for everything that is of the Lord, and therefore, we cannot programmise divine life, we

cannot systematise it, we cannot take it for granted. It forbids that. Look into the Old Testament and New Testament and you will see that law applied rigidly, even in one who has had the closest revelation of things and knows the Lord most intimately. Take the Lord Jesus Himself. If ever there was one whom we should think had a right to foresee His movements, and to say what He would do tomorrow or a week hence, surely He with His knowledge of the Father and His devotion to the Father's will, such a one. But all the way through His life here on earth, if you like to put it this way (it is the wrong way to put it) to the natural man He was always uncertain. *"You go up to this feast". "I go not up, My hour is not yet"* and then when they went up He went up also. He has not been deceiving them. He has been true. He was waiting upon His Father for that inward witness of life that the Father's moment had come and that came unexpectedly, and perhaps half an hour or so after they had gone. Yes, He had the witness of life in Him that He should go. Had He reasoned He might have said, "What will they think of Me?" "They will think I did not want their company" and involved Himself in an awful stew of mental thoughts and considerations. But He was not living on that level at all and He would take all that was involved of misunderstanding by just being obedient to the Spirit of life which liberated Him; and you find that thing manifested many times in His life, that He lived by that law.

And when you look into the life of the apostle Paul you have a great many things which perplex the natural man, contradictions, it seems the human element comes in. *"We assayed to go into Bithynia"*. The Lord leads so far and guides you, keeps you on such close terms with Himself that you do not know whether the Lord will allow you to go in a certain way or time or not, until you get to the point where it is necessary for the Lord to decide in you and then you will have life or no life, and you will know. *"The Spirit suffered us not."* *"When I came to Troas I had no rest in my spirit because I found not Titus ... and I took my leave."* A strange human element coming up surely! Contradictions. An open door! Go through his life and you will find many instances of what look like an awful contradiction. You could say "Paul, you ought to have known the Lord better than that." "Such a man as you ought not to have had contrary courses and apparent contradictions in your life." The truth is, God never makes His most trusted, enlightened, consecrated servants infallible, or a law in themselves. He keeps them hanging on to Himself moment by moment and the link is the link of faith which works in life, it is so all the way through. You see this is very impracticable from the natural standpoint. Why don't you plan things and work to a common sense practical basis and do things as business men would do them? Give that to a man of business acumen and he would plan it out and go through with it, and here you are hanging about, humming and hawing about the thing; you are always saying, "I don't know." Asked where we shall find you tomorrow, "I don't know, I may be at Bethel or Ai." "May we make an appointment with you to have a talk next week?" "I don't know where I will be next week"! You are illusive. Are you a man called of God and you do not know anything? The man called of God is very often the man who to the natural mind is the most changeable man, the most unpractical man, the most illusive, and by the natural mind charged with being changeable because he has only light up to a certain point and he does not see anything beyond that, and says, "I am going so far" and then he changes his whole course and people looking on say, "What an extraordinary fellow, you cannot account for him at all."

Now I am not talking of that realm where you have moral obligations that you before God are compelled to acknowledge and fulfil. You cannot say, "I have no liberty to do so and so" when that certain thing is a moral obligation, when it is a question of righteousness before man; you have perfect liberty to do what is right before man in a moral obligation. I am not speaking in that realm, it is another realm altogether. You see this takes us up in the matter of a constant walk with God. It makes people of faith to be an enigma to the natural man and which perhaps brings such to the position where the one expression more characteristic of them than another is, "I don't know." "I do know I will be where the Lord wants me but I do not know what the Lord is going to do." But

surely there is such a thing as knowing the will of God? Yes, when the Lord's time comes I will know the will of God.

Why doesn't the Lord show you ahead? Well, I would begin to put my own natural life into it at once and work that thing out, and I have to draw everything of life from God for what is of God, and so He keeps me holding on like that. And that is the position of the individual who lives by faith in Christ on the basis of that life, and not only of the individual but of any corporate thing which is of God truly and essentially. It is the same thing, if you have no programme, no plans far ahead you will never know what is going to happen. You will always be saying "What are you going to do about that?" and the answer almost invariably is "We do not know." "We are looking to the Lord, holding on to the Lord, living moment by moment with the Lord as we believe." Are you prepared to accept a basis like that? That is where the cross like a sledgehammer comes down and there is the smashing of the whole of your business training and natural practical temperament of wanting to see things nicely laid out and arranged; all that has to be set aside and you have to come to live by faith. That is not only an attitude towards God, that is in you in the nature of a life, that you have not got life for anything else, you get your life only for that. So then this is the faith when "all things are of God". *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation."* Surely we can see that now. Some of us are very practical and have everything thoroughly organized, planned, arranged, and do everything "decently and in order". We are made like that and the cross has just meant for us the breaking of that creation, and the breaking in of a new creation in which "all things are of God". I know the peril of what at I am saying; do not think that I am speaking in terms of slovenly carelessness. There is no life beloved, where you have to be more vigilant, more alive unto God, where your fellowship with God has to be maintained more carefully, more diligently, where you have to be more watchful than in this life. Faith is not a blind thing living on God, is not "if it is to be it will be and we need not worry". You know the Lord keeps you up to the point where you dare not let things go, for if you do you let your life go. No carelessness, or slovenliness, but it is a kind of life which creates a state of conditions which demand that everything comes from God, nothing from man. And the very energy, life, vitality for living or serving according to the will of God has to be drawn from Him in the exercise of persistent faith. "All things out from God." Do you want a hundred per cent out from God where it can be said, "This is of God, it is absolutely of God, there is no mixture of man in it, that one is of God"? "They are extraordinary, unpractical people from our point of view, but God is in that life and there is an element which you cannot account for only that they live very near to God and God lives very near to them." That is the life which Paul lived. *"That which I now live, having been crucified with Christ, I live by faith which is in the Son of God."*

Now the last word. This is not only the pathway of the life in which all things are out from God, but it is the pathway of a life of special revelation. Faith like this is always bringing you into difficulties. The life of faith is going to get you into trouble, into such difficulties as will make special revelation necessary, and unless you get special revelation you will not be able to go on. But your very basis of life has immediately brought you into difficulties which immediately raise the issue of getting special light, revelation from God for the situation, and that is why the Lord did it. Sit down with Abraham, sit down with Paul, or anyone who has gone this way and you will find the very basis and nature of their life in God brought them into such positions as demanded fresh revelations from God. And when they got there God came in with it every time, and the need was met and they came into a fuller knowledge of God, a fuller revelation of God. Faith's difficulties make necessary special revelation and seeing that it is in the order of God, God always comes along the line of His own order and meets the need, and that is how we get to know God. Do you want to know the Lord? Do you want real light which is revelation of the Lord? This is the way, to be put into one of the dilemmas of faith from which you can only be delivered if God gives you a revelation. Man cannot help you, God must show you something which you have never seen before. That is how God does it with the individual and with the company. Because they have accepted the meaning of the cross which they

have embraced, they have been brought again and again into such a position that no one can help them, the Lord must give them light, revelation, knowledge. And it has been just that crisis that has done it, and that is how they have grown and how they have been able to fulfil their higher ministry to the good of the body of Christ.

I have spoken very largely to the younger folk and as I said you might be always asking questions and feeling you have a right to charge spiritual people with being, well, not rational, not practical, and hardly to have common sense at times. Will you see that this is the nature of the life, it is the holding on to God. Will you stand in to cooperate and not pull away or pull back, but get right in and say, That is where Paul stood, that is where the Lord Jesus stood, and you cannot do anything unless the Lord vitalises you to do it. No matter what responsibility rests upon you, whatever obligations you may have, you cannot move unless the Lord gives you liberty to do it.

Go through the Word of God — "*They that wait for Me shall not be ashamed*", says the Lord. "Why should we wait Lord, what is the object? You know what You will do; You know the end from the beginning, the whole thing is perfectly clear to You." "Why should we have to wait?" "What is this waiting business for?" "It is so unpractical." All this time of inaction, waiting for the Lord and the Lord knows quite well what He wants to do. Why wait? Is it in the Word? Does the Lord demand it? Why 40 years' in the wilderness for Moses? The Lord knew what He would do. The Lord is not studiously getting down on things and keeping Himself waiting while He finds His own mind on things. He would teach you that it is not on natural life but divine life that this is to be done. You must be brought to the place where you will not raise your hand or your finger to do My work, but it is all out from Me, and in the end you will prove that I was right and "*they that wait for Me shall not be ashamed*". Wait then. It is not an unpractical thing to be in the divine school of inaction. The Lord give you eyes to see.