

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA**

**Living By Faith**

By  
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*1 Samuel 24:1-7*

*Preached at Villa Rica 9/28/03*

Theme Verses: (Heb 11:6 NASB) **And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Heb 10:38 but my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.**

Faith is an essential element of life, but the faith must be in God. Sir Donald Malcolm Campbell, the British car and boat holder of several world speed records, lost his life while racing a fast boat on one of the lakes of Scotland. The boat exploded and rapidly sank. The only thing that ever surfaced was a toy stuffed animal, Campbell's Agood luck charm.@ It was powerless to help him in the final and fatal crisis of his life. Faith is only as good as its object is able.

The comic Steve Martin once said, Alt's so hard to believe in anything anymore...I guess I wouldn't believe in anything if it weren't for my lucky Astrology Mood Watch.@

No one believes in nothing. Everyone has faith. The only differences are in the object of one's faith and its intensity.

Our theme verses tell us that without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."(Heb 11:6 Heb 10:38 NIV).

The faith we must have to be saved from our sins is saving faith. Question 85 of the Shorter Catechism asks what God requires of us that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for our sin? (See *Trinity Hymnal Page 875*) *Ans. To escape the wrath and curse of God, due us for our sin, God requireth of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption.*

This faith embarks a person on a life of believing whatsoever is revealed in God's Word, and as our Confession of Faith says in Chapter XIV Of Saving Faith (Trinity Hymnal Page 856) In Par 2b it says, ***But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.***

Saving faith is a living faith. It is a daily, hourly trust in the Person of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

## **I. The Bible Cites Examples of Men Who Lived by Faith**

We learn from the faith of men in the Bible that faith is not a simple thing. My understanding of faith is that it is a complete dependence upon God in all circumstances. Faith in practice might be termed a pilgrimage, a walk with God. It is a walk with God as one's Shepherd and Guide. In this pilgrimage God is constantly in our thoughts as the One we want to obey and please.

In this pilgrimage of faith there are ups and downs, pleasant days and not-so-pleasant days; steep hills and low valleys. There are narrow places and wide places, safe places and dangerous places. We may have to traverse swampy ground and desert sands. Yet in all of these oftentimes bewildering and even frightening circumstances we may find ourselves in, even when it might seem that God has turned His back on us and is nowhere to be found, faith knows that God will never leave us or forsake us. We trust in His Word which assures us that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and who are the called according to His purpose.

And faith is more than merely a dependence on God through thick and thin, though it is most certainly that. Faith also determines how we react, how we respond to adversity, rejection and persecution. And believe me friend, if you are a Christian sooner or later you will face these things. And for the Christian, who above all else has an all-consuming passion to both know God and please Him, these adverse situations become opportunities to give a measured faith response.

Perhaps I should not use the adjective "measured" because we may not have time to do that. Suddenly, things happen without any time to think through how we will respond. Faith must therefore respond instinctively and swiftly. That's why we need a faith mind-set.

The life of faith might be likened to a musician striving to follow the conductor, or a ballet dancer doing the same. God writes the score and the Holy Spirit leads us in a proper faith response. There may be more than one participant in this orchestration of Providence. The difference would be that we don't always have a score to follow. We simply know the Conductor well enough by reading His book about Himself and by knowing His commands that we learn how to live by faith. Faith, to be true faith, must be constantly submitting, constantly yielding and obeying God.

The unbeliever does not understand this at all. He is oblivious to what is going on. He is not aware of the intricate orchestration God arranges. He doesn't view life as a faith pilgrimage. So keep in mind that not all of the principals we are talking about in these providential situations are people of faith. And their lack of a faith-response may cause us to want to react as they do, in a fleshly, non-faith way.

By looking at David's experiences recorded for us in the scriptures we are able to see how his faith operated in actual, true life situations. We have one such an example in the episode we have read today from 1 Samuel 24.

David was ill-treated by the evil jealousy of his father in law King Saul. But he did not yield to the temptation to kill the king when he had the opportunity. His faith response is a splendid example for us of living by faith through adversity.

Every event in your life and my life is due to providential direction. Before I was a Christian I didn't think of life that way at all. But once I came to know God in Christ I learned that God the great Creator upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence.

David understood this. David knew God was in everything that happened and that his part was to do the right thing before God, because when all is said and done that is the only thing that matters. We are told that without faith it is impossible to please God and that he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

David was a man whose mind was set on wanting to please God. His faith response can clearly be seen in the situation that brought King Saul and David together in a cave at Engedi.

In the 24th chapter of 1st Samuel we learn that Saul has just returned from pursuing the Philistines. Intelligence came to him that David was in the wilderness of Engedi. So he commissioned a posse out of his army, 3,000 choice men of war.

Saul is obsessed with tracking down David and exterminating him. He has no just reason for doing this. David has been a loyal and valiant soldier and officer in Saul's kingdom, but Saul is jealous of David. He sees David as a rival. So off he goes again to search out and destroy David, whom he has declared an outlaw and a criminal.

The hunt is on in earnest. Saul comes to the Engedi where David is reported to be and he stops off in a cave to rest a bit. He doesn't know that David is in that very cave with his men.

I think at this point we ought to say two things. **First**, we can see the providence of God in directing the steps of all parties to this very spot. **Second**, think for a moment of how David must have felt about being so unjustly persecuted and hunted down like a dog by king Saul, the king he had served faithfully ever since Saul had become king.

David had risked his life to fight Goliath and then repeatedly risked his life waging war against the Philistines. He had been so loyal to the king that Saul gave him one of his daughters to marry, making him his son in law, Yet here he is being treated as an outlaw and a criminal for no crime whatsoever.

How would you feel? Don't you suppose David might have felt hurt and angry and resentful, that he had been treated so unjustly?

And now Saul happens into the very cave where David and his men are hiding. Saul is alone in the cave. He has no bodyguard. He may have laid down to rest in the cool of the cave. David had the perfect opportunity to rid himself of his enemy.

David's men urge him to seize the opportunity. They said to him: {4} **"This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'"**

What a temptation for David! It was not only a temptation to be rid of a man who was persecuting him unjustly but it was also an opportunity to fulfill the prophecy of Samuel to become the next king of Israel, for had not God anointed him to be king?

David creeps up on Saul without being detected. And what does he do? He cuts off a piece of Saul's robe and returns to his men telling them that he would not touch Saul to harm him. His words are recorded for us: **"The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD."** {7} **With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.**

David's explanation of why he did not harm Saul was that Saul was the Lord's anointed. For him to harm the king

would be to take it upon himself to execute the man God had set over Israel. It would be one thing if God struck down Saul but it would be quite a different thing for him to do so.

You see the faith mentality of David. He would not allow himself or his men to lift their hand against the king. David even felt conscience stricken for having cut off a piece of Saul's robe. Perhaps he felt this was disrespectful, an affront to Saul's person. He did, however, use it with Saul as evidence that he had spared Saul's life when it was in his power to kill him there in the cave. David demonstrates in this instance that he wanted to do the right thing before God.

It is good when our conscience is tender and sensitive in even small matters, for that shows we have not hardened our heart. We should want to please God in small things as well as great things. Being careful in little matters will be the means of preventing even greater sins. Mark Twain once said, **An uneasy conscience is a hair in the mouth.**@

It turns out that David was actually Saul's protection in that cave. Had he not been there his men would no doubt have killed Saul. As it was David had to restrain them from doing so. Had David been the sort of wicked, scheming, conniving person Saul said he was, David surely would have acted as Saul alleged.

## **II. David's Faith Is Further Demonstrated in His Words to King Saul.**

We read on in (1 Sam 24:8-9 NASB) **Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself. {9} And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, 'Behold, David seeks to harm you'?"**

There was probably some distance between him and Saul but not enough that they could not hear each other. David's Words are recorded for us but first notice the respectful manner in which David speaks to Saul. He bowed his face to the ground and prostrated himself.

This is the action of a humble and mannerly man. He observes the niceties of protocol and respect for a man in Saul's position. He does not speak harshly or scornfully to Saul but instead entreats him as a father and superior.

His words are well chosen and gracious in every respect. It is a warm and pathetic speech in which he endeavors to convince Saul that he did a great deal of wrong in persecuting him as he has been doing, and he seeks to be reconciled.

He does not fault the king for his actions but lays the blame on evil counselors. It is a piece of respect to crowned heads, if they do wrong, to charge it upon those who advised them to such a course of action. David had reason enough to think that Saul persecuted him solely out of envy and malice, yet he courteously suggests that others had put him up to it and made him think that David was his enemy seeking his hurt.

David says to him: (1 Sam 24:10-15 NASB) **"Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD'S anointed.' {11} "Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it. {12} "May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. {13} "As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you. {14} "After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog, a single flea? {15} "The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand."**

You can see David's faith expressed throughout this speech. He proves his innocence by having spared Saul's life in the cave. He does not take things into his own hands but lets the Lord be the Avenger.

If men wrong us, God will avenge us, if not soon, later, and certainly no later than the Day of Judgment. David leaves his cause with the Lord. At Engedi David gives all men an example of humility and confident trust in God's perfect justice. His conscience is clear because he has acted in faith in this situation.

And that is what you and I are to try to do in every trying circumstance as well as when the way is pleasant and trouble-free.

David's faith-handling of this situation melted the heart of king Saul, at least temporarily, and brought forth an acknowledgment that David was more righteous than he, and that David was more deserving of being king than he was. ((1 Sam 24:16-22 NASB) **Now it came about when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. {17} And he said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. {18} "And you have declared today that you have done good to me, that the LORD delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me. {19} "For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day. {20} "And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. {21} "So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's household." {22} And David swore to Saul. And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.**

Saul now knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that David spared his life when he might easily have taken it. Saul knows in his heart that he would not have dealt so mercifully with David if he had been given the same opportunity.

No wonder Saul wept. David's righteous action served to convict Saul of his own unrighteous actions. Sooner or later God will require the ungodly and false professors to acknowledge those of true faith.

He says to the Philadelphia church: (Rev 3:8-9 NASB) **'I know your deeds. Behold,**

I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. {9}'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie-- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

Think how differently things would have turned out if David had not acted in faith and had taken matters into his own hands as his own soldiers urged him to do.

But even in admitting that David was right and that he was wrong, Saul was not converted. He was ashamed at that moment of his jealousy of David and desisted from persecution of David for a time, yet apparently he retained in his heart the root of bitterness and later he resumed his persecution. It vexed him that, when at last he had found David, he could not find it in his heart to destroy him, as he had intended. God has a way of tying the hands of persecutors even when he does not convert their hearts from their evil intentions.

David continued to stay clear of Saul. He knew him too well. He knew of his jealous disposition and the vile temper that could so easily be aroused. He felt it was dangerous to put trust in the continued good will and mercy of a man like Saul. David showed himself innocent as a dove and as wise as a serpent by not turning himself in to Saul and going back home.

The practical application of this example of faith is to treat every situation that arises as though God were watching to see how we will trust him, how we will live by faith. How will we wait upon him to right wrongs.

We are told to love our enemies, to do good to those that hate us and despitefully use us; to bless those who curse us and to pray for those who mistreat us. This is easier said than done. But then who said faith was easy? The faith way may seem hard at times, but it is the only right way for those who belong to Him and desire to please him.

Are you in the faith of Jesus Christ today? Will you come to him for the salvation he offers and promise to live for him and walk in faith before him? I invite you to come to Him today!

Hymn 705: I Know Whom I Have Believed

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