

“I LIVE IN FAITH”

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THE SPHERE AND ELEMENT OF FAITH

Jim Batten • John-Paul Petrash

In his Epistle to the Galatians, in a verse that is well known among Christians today, the apostle Paul opens a window to us concerning his own living as a believer. In Galatians 2:20 he testifies, “I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” In reading this verse it is easy, perhaps, to gloss over the expression *I live in faith* without much consideration. Indeed, some of us may be tempted to stop reading midway through the verse, content to know that we, like Paul, have been crucified with Christ and that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. But Paul’s train of thought does not stop there. He continues by telling us how he lived as a terminated and resurrected person: he lived in faith. Paul’s utterance here—“I live in faith”—helps us to realize that faith is crucial not only for the initiation of our Christian life but also for its continuation. Indeed, the apostle’s words suggest that faith is the very realm in which we live the Christian life. Like the apostle Paul, we can live the Christian life by the ongoing exercise of faith. What is more, we can live such a life even though we are still living in the flesh, which so often troubles and discourages us in our Christian life and church life.

Understandably, the mere mention of living in faith might produce anxiety in at least some of us, for our faith, it seems, is often weak and tepid. How can we possibly live the Christian life by such a (seemingly) weak faith? Thankfully, Paul’s thought in Galatians 2:20 does not end with his statement that “I live in faith.” He continues by testifying that the faith in which he lives is in fact “the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” This is as wonderful as it is mysterious. The faith in which Paul lived was not his own faith, generated from his own efforts to trust in God, but rather the very faith of the Son of God. The apostle’s reference to the faith of the Son of God, rather

than to faith *in* the Son of God, suggests that he experienced Christ the Son as the source of his faith, his believing ability, not simply as the object of his faith. And his reference to living in the Son’s faith suggests that his dependence upon the Son as his faith was an ongoing reality, not a completed act in the past. Through Paul’s exercise of faith—the very faith of the Son of God—he received the divine, spiritual supply needed to live the Christian life. And through our exercise of faith today, we can receive the same supply for our own living of the Christian life.

Of course, Paul’s word in Galatians 2:20 is not the only direct mention in the New Testament of living by faith. Habakkuk 2:4, which says that “the righteous one will live by his faith,” is quoted three times in the Epistles (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38), and these quotations are meaningful not only because of what they reveal about justification by faith but also because of what they reveal about how we as believers can live the Christian life. Indeed, Paul’s quotation of Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17—translated as “the righteous shall have life and live by faith” in the Recovery Version—encapsulates the basic structure of his entire Epistle, which covers not only our being justified by faith (Rom. 1–5) but also our having the life of Christ (Rom. 5–8) and, further still, our living by this life (Rom. 12–16). Faith is needed not only for our justification and for our receiving of the divine life but also for our living of the Christian life in all its facets and intricacies, including our functioning as members of the Body of Christ in the church life on the highest plane (Rom. 12:4-8) and even our being subject to authorities on the most mundane plane (Rom. 13:1-7). Romans thus reveals that the full compass of our Christian life—portrayed in such rich detail in chapters 12 through 16—is by faith.

A similar emphasis on living by faith can be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which quotes Habakkuk 2:4 toward the end of chapter 10. The author of