

Now Faith Is – A Life Triumphant Over Death
Ben Farmer
Market Street Fellowship
091004

Now Faith Is – A Life Triumphant Over Death

This morning I want to continue talking about faith. The last two times I shared I tried to establish a few things in regards to the present reality of faith and all that faith means in the life of a believer. And well, I guess we could more accurately say that faith *is* the life of a believer.

More and more, as I continue on this journey with the Lord I'm finding that the words faith and reality are starting to blend together. And when I say reality I mean all things that are true in Christ; its God's reality and God's understanding and it's beginning to become true of you and I and true in you and I. Now don't misunderstand me, there's still a reality that exists out side of faith, but that's what is being cut away by the circumcision of Christ (Col 2:11). Do you know what God calls our reality outside of faith? He calls it vain imagination. Apart from faith that is our only option and in fact, that is the place where we all begin.

I also spent some time sharing an analogy in an attempt to portray faith as access into a very real and living Christ. We talked about a guy who found himself stuck in a very undesirable circumstance, a circumstance that wasn't only bound to where he was but it crept over into *who* he was. What was going on around him, simply put, became what was going on *in* him. And just in case you weren't here, or have forgotten, or chose to forget, the guy we're talking about was trapped in a small room filled with ladybugs. We all know ladybugs are, for the most part, harmless, but this particular gentleman had a horrible fear of ladybugs and so it didn't matter how gentle or how violent the ladybugs actually were, his position in the circumstance always had an undesirable effect.

And I won't tell the whole story again but I'll give an abbreviated version... so basically what happened is this man was having a panic attack because of the circumstance. Now by coincidence in this small room in which he was trapped with ladybugs, there also happen to be a ladder and also a small hole in the ceiling of the room, a hole big enough only to fit his head through. So he grabbed the latter, climbed it, and popped his head out into what he would call an opportunity of a

lifetime. For him it was like a little kid getting to go to Disneyland, but for him it was a monster truck rally. And so once he popped his head up through the hole and realized where he had been raised to, all of the undesirable effects that his prior circumstance had caused began to cease. And if I didn't say earlier, every time this man was trapped in a small room with ladybugs he would shake and tremble with fear, he would get hives all over his skin and then began to itch horribly.

So once his head popped out the hole and his eyes and ears became overwhelmed by another reality, his body, still trapped in the same circumstance, became obedient to his new understanding.

Now I tried to tie that story into Colossians chapter 3: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Now thankfully our salvation is not just a step ladder that provides access into our dream vacation, it's Jesus Christ who in His death, burial and resurrection brings the experience of our soul, not our natural body, but brings the experience of our soul into Himself and into the Father. Jesus says in John's Gospel: "in that day you will know that I am in my father, and you in me, and I in you." Salvation becomes effectual when this reality begins to work in us. Salvation becomes an experience of life when our soul is exposed to the revealed Christ.

It is one thing to know THAT Christ is your life, and to know THAT you have been raised with Him, but it is an altogether different thing to possess by faith the reality of His life. If salvation, Christ in you, the hope of glory, is just merely something you learned, then we have fallen far short of God's expectation.

Let me say it this way, true faith, the Faith of the Son of God, the faith that is spoken of through out our New Testament, is a faith that will utterly change your life. This faith will show you an incredible contrast; and that is the contrast between light and darkness, spiritual and natural, life and death, Christ and you.

And if you live by that faith, as Paul says in Galatians 2:20: "...and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God", that contrast will lead your soul into an amazing transformation. The appearing of the Lord is the only thing that will change your soul.

And on the same thought, I want to spend the rest of our time today looking at the story of King Josiah. His story is in 1 Kings 22 & 23 and also repeated in 1 Chronicles 34 & 35, but today we'll stick to 1 Kings, and if you want to turn there we're going to look at this in some detail.

First let's just paint the back drop of this story so we can hopefully have a greater contrast in our own hearts as to the picture the Lord has painted. Basically from Solomon on, Israel was spiraling downhill very quickly. The kingdom was ripped from Solomon's hand and became divided into Israel and Judah, each having several subsequent kings ruling over them for various lengths of time. I think by the time we get to the story of King Josiah there have been some 30 kings reigning over Judah and Israel. Now some of these kings reigned for just a few months and some reigned for several years, but in almost every case throughout the history the kings, each Kings story began with the phrase: "And he did evil in the sight of the Lord." The testimony of "Israel My Son" had been abandoned and lost.

Now stay with me here because this story finds its true meaning and fulfillment in the heart of you and I, in the heart of every believer. Israel had rejected God and over the course of many years they began to worship other gods, the gods of the imagination of men. We hear about the disobedience of Israel time and time again and I'm just going to read you an excerpt from 2 Kings that very clearly describes the condition of the heart of Israel during this time. It's not a pretty picture but yet we must keep in mind that this picture is the image of a faithless church, it is the image of a body without life or a body that is without a head. It's the place we're all called to come out from unto the appearing of the Lord, unto faith.

"For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. Also the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. There they burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law

which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets." Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them. So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger."

I know that is a lot to hear but that IS our condition apart from faith. We can't help but worship and serve and follow something, anything other than the Lord. There is no grey area here.

So anyway, in the midst of the lost testimony, a king is anointed in Judah who's story begins in a way unlike the other before him: "And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left." Now remember for years and years, nearly every king who reigned in Israel and in Judah "did evil in the sight of the Lord". But here we see a man with a heart to know the Lord! Lets look at his story in some detail as it is recorded for us.

2 Kings 22

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. **2 And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.**

3 Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD, saying: 4 "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. 5 And let them deliver it into the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the LORD; let them give it to those who are in the house of the LORD doing the work, to repair the damages of the house— 6 to carpenters and builders and

masons—and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7 However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully.”

8 Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD.” And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 9 So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the king word, saying, “Your servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who oversee the house of the LORD.” **10 Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, “Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king. 11 Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes.** 12 Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, **13 “Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book,** to do according to all that is written concerning us.” 14 So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her. 15 Then she said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Tell the man who sent you to Me, 16 “Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read— 17 because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.’” **18 But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Concerning the words which you have heard— 19 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,”** says the LORD. 20 “Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.’” So they brought back word to the king.

1 Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. 2 The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD.

3 Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant. 4 And the king **commanded** Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, **to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the articles that were made for Baal**, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; **and he burned them outside Jerusalem** in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. 5 Then **he removed the idolatrous priests** whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. **6 And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the LORD**, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, **burned it** at the Brook Kidron and ground it to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. 7 **Then he tore down the ritual booths of the perverted persons that were in the house of the LORD**, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. 8 And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and **defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense**, from Geba to Beersheba; **also he broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua** the governor of the city, which were to the left of the city gate. 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren.

10 **And he defiled Topheth**, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, **that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech.** 11 Then **he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun**, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who was in the court; and **he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.** 12 **The altars** that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh

had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, **the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron.** 13 **Then the king defiled the high places** that were east of Jerusalem, which were on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon. 14 **And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the wooden images,** and filled their places with the bones of men.

15 Moreover **the altar that was at Bethel,** and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place **he broke down; and he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and burned the wooden image.** 16 As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. 17 Then he said, "What gravestone is this that I see?" So the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel." 18 And he said, "Let him alone; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

19 Now Josiah **also took away all the shrines of the high places** that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. **20 He executed all the priests of the high places** who were there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

21 Then the king commanded all the people, saying, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." 22 Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. 23 But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem. 24 **Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.** 25 **Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might,**

according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him."

This is the story of a man who had seen the Lord! This is the tale of the transforming power of one who sees the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Even though he was born into an already corrupt nature and a corrupt nation of people with corrupted practices and religion, he had a heart that just wanted to serve the God of Israel according to the truth, even if that meant the utter destruction of familiar comforts and systems and rituals. That heart led him to the Lord.

So what did he see? King Josiah saw the Lord and had an encounter with the "otherness" of the Christ. He had an encounter with the expectation of God and he immediately realized how far short that he and all of Israel had fallen... and not simply that they had fallen short, but that they had become an abomination to God. They had become the very thing that they were called to become a testimony of the victory over! They became an expression of death and evil and division; and that whole time they were God's chosen people, God's people called to be an expression of God's triumphant Life and His victory over death, CHRIST!

But King Josiah had a rare heart; he saw that incredible contrast; that contrast between light and darkness, spiritual and natural, life and death, God's righteous Law and himself. He saw it and he tore his cloths as one naked before the Lord. That's true, he recognized his nakedness before the Lord and tore his cloths as an expression of agony and distress and grief over the condition of the Lord people.

This is EXACTLY what happens in you and I when, by faith, the Lord appears in our soul. The very first thing we experience is that "otherness" of Christ and the deplorable condition of what we have for so long called an acceptable life. We see that in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that only One Man, only One Life is acceptable in the presence of God.

I said when I started today that the word faith and the word reality are beginning to blend together in my heart, and I think something similar was happening in the heart of King Josiah. He became uncomfortably aware of the truth as proclaimed in the Book of the Law, he became aware of the Truth as it is in Christ, and it was then, and it still is today, a very powerful reality.

Please don't confuse "facts" with reality. Facts are descriptions of reality and in and of themselves are powerless. Reality is only powerful when you become aware of it, and King Josiah had a very real encounter with the transforming power of God's reality... God's Christ.

The power of what Josiah had seen transformed the landscape of Israel. We just read about the remarkable devastation of all that had been built up in an attempt to exalt man against God's testimony of His victory in Christ. Again, this encounter we read about is the same experience of our souls at the revelation of Christ. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:3-7 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

With the recovery of the testimony found in the Book of the Law, mixed with faith in one whose heart was tender and humble, God brought in a fresh view of Christ in the story of Josiah. In that type and shadow we can see a great and powerful demonstration of pulling down strongholds, casting down every high place and the punishment of all disobedience at the turning of a heart by faith to the Lord.

This resulted in only a temporary recovery of that testimony and what I have been calling the testimony of Life triumphant over death. It's God's reality and it's a VERY BIG DEAL! I just want to touch on this point and then I'll be through.

Faith is two fold. When we turn to the Lord and step into faith we become participants in the very Life of Jesus Christ. We become heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, as it says in Romans 8, and in Him we have also an inheritance, and forgiveness of sin and everything wonderful that Salvation offers us. But the other side of that coin is that God gets something he has always wanted too. He gets a body for His Son, the church which is His Body, and His body is the testimony of a Life eternally victorious over death, and I'll say it again, that is a VERY BIG DEAL. It's a big deal to the Father, to our Father, and in the same way it should be a burden to our hearts that He is free to have His testimony of Who He is in us, in His own body.

Everything great that we have received as our Salvation is not anything other than who He is Himself. We have not received

something, we have received Someone, and that Person is Life triumphant. We should ask that the Lord would reveal that victorious Son in us.

Amen.