

A Living Faith – *Habakkuk 2:1-4*

Introduction – “*The just shall live by faith*” (Rom 1:17). This is the thesis statement for Paul’s magnum opus on the gospel. And it is the central idea in Habakkuk’s oracle. It was the glorious theme of the Reformation and it is at the heart of the message we are to preach and live by. What we should see is that both Habakkuk and Paul mean far more than what we often reduce this statement to (that faith is the only instrument for our salvation). This is a faith that knows how to look at afflictions, judgments, torments, and trials, and walk with God through them with confidence in His sovereign goodness and plan.

Review – Habakkuk tells God that the nation (Judah, the southern kingdom) is a mess and cries out to God to do something about it (1:1-4). God tells Habakkuk not to worry, He is sending in the Chaldeans (1:5-11). Shocked that God could use such a dirty tool as Babylon, Habakkuk challenges God’s integrity (1:12-17). In 2:1 it appears that he now braces himself for a straightforward rebuke from the LORD. The rebuke does not come. What comes is the awesome and terrible and gracious and glorious wisdom of God (Rom 11:33).

That He May Run (vv2-4) – The LORD does answer, telling Habakkuk to *write the vision*. To make it “*plain on tablets*” is to raise it to the significance of the Ten Words God wrote for Moses. Making it plain so that “*he may run who reads it*” could refer to the ability for such a message to empower anyone to run, to live, to succeed, to fulfill – as the writer to Hebrews states (v2, Heb 12:1-2).

The reason to do so (write the vision and run with it) is that God intends to accomplish this vision (now referring to the whole book and not just the central point). Though it tarries, it will not tarry (v3). From God’s perspective, He is not tarrying at all in bringing this vision to fruition. We already saw how Jesus and Paul spoke similarly of the coming and final downfall of Jerusalem and the temple (Matt 24:34, Acts 13:41). But that generation of persecuted Christians had to wait for the vindication to come. The writer to the Hebrews quotes the LXX version of Hab 2:3-4 because those suffering Christians needed to persevere, and not draw back, while they waited for God’s vindication of His Son (Heb 10:36-39). In other words, these verses are being applied in the exact same way in a similar but historically distinct situation.

Behold the Proud (v4a) – The Chaldeans are a proud people, trusting in themselves and scoffing at all other powers (1:10). God wants Habakkuk to see the stark difference between those who are proud (they are not and never can be upright), and those who are justified by faith. He will go on to ridicule the haughty (2:6-20), but we will rest here on the end of this verse...

The Just Shall Live by Faith – Habakkuk places this simple phrase in the center of his oracle/burden. It is his main point. God is urging the prophet and the faithful with him to a patient and enduring faith in the face of terrible adversity and circumstances. Paul argues the same but applies it universally with the terrible circumstances of being lost in our own sin and condemnation. His theme is the same (Rom 1:16-17). In chapters 1, 2, 3 he shows how all, both Jew and Gentile, are all condemned in their sin and that salvation for any, for all, is only through Another One (Rom 3:23-26). No matter how hard any of your life-circumstances are, nothing is worse than your position before the living God, dead in your sins, if you are not in Jesus Christ. And so your faith must have an object, and that object must be in the faithful One, the Lord Jesus (Rom 10:9-10).

But both in Habakkuk and in Romans, this faith is not simply a propositional assent, it is not dead catechism faith. In fact, as the Westminster confession puts it, the faith that justifies is “no dead faith” (11.2). It is a living faith. The gospel is objective, outside of us, true whether we believe it or not. But hearts that have turned to Jesus beat with a living faith by which they may run the race of life through all circumstances. “If He saved me from myself, what evil can He not outdo, overcome, and use for glorious purposes?” – (Rom 8:31-32). You are invited to apply that right now to your present circumstances. How? By faith. *For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith* (Rom 1:17).

A Living Faith – We are saved by faith and not by any works (Eph 2:8-9). We are not saved by good works. But we are saved to good works (Eph 2:10). There are three applications from these books (at least) in thinking about this living faith.

How Does Living Faith Live Faithfully? – The Hebrew word rendered faith means faithfulness or fidelity. This is not “justification by works”, but it is “justification by faith that lives.” If you have a living faith then it is alive, and it will live today, and on Tuesday, and next week, and so on. It will be responsive to God, not perfectly (in this part of our lives) but genuinely. Living faith is obedient faith. This is trust in the faithfulness of God no matter what our circumstance.

Living Faith Yearns and Waits Faithfully – And in life’s circumstances we walk by faith in God Who is, Who saves, and Who rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). God tells Habakkuk to wait patiently because the proud/wicked will die and the righteous will live by faith.

Living Faith Worships with Hope Before the Deliverance Comes – This is where the application really hits home in our lives, in our times, in your situation. This faith that God has given you turns your heart towards God, looking to Him and not yourself and not your situation. Though we aren’t there in Habakkuk yet, you are invited (over and over again) to join with him in Hab 3:17-19. This is where a living faith turns. This is how the just live by faith.

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