

Habakkuk 2.4: The Righteous Shall Live by Faith
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God responds for the second time about what is going to happen to Babylon, and how Habakkuk is to survive, which is really by faith alone.

Just because God has used us for something, it doesn't mean we are perfect in his sight, like Cyrus, or a donkey!

This chapter then is about the judgment to the Babylonians, and how God's people are to respond, that they will live by faith. It contrasts God's people with those of the world. Judgment is coming, things have to be dealt with, and the way we deal with it, is in faith.

Read Hab 2.2-4 "The righteous will live by faith"

God's answer starts at 2.2. He says Habakkuk must write this down. It's going to happen. Don't mistake my patience for weakness! We serve a God on the throne who is not mocked!

So God begins contrasting faith and pride. Faith is the opposite of pride. We either trust in ourselves, or we trust in Christ. **Galatians 5: speaks about how the offense of the cross is that we cannot add anything to it!**

We need to understand the impact that this verse has had in the world. Some say it is the great verse of the bible. The way it gripped the heart of Martin Luther changed the world as we know it.

In Martin Luther's day (1500's) the glory of the gospel was clouded over by medieval Catholic tradition. Today, many churches in our own day are also shrouded by tradition and form, rather than the gospel. This is **the default setting of the human heart**, and it's what happens to us when we forget or simply assume the gospel.

He grew up and entered the monastery tormented by the greatness of his sin.

He would spend hours in the confessional confessing every sin he could remember, and also the motives for his sin, and then would wonder about the purity of his motives for even confessing his sin and so would remain, repenting for his motives for confessing. The other priests would HATE being on confession duty when they saw Luther coming!

In about 1517 he went to the famous St John's Lateran, in Rome. There is a staircase that is supposed to be from Pilate's judgment hall. The pilgrims climb up the stairs on their knees, repeating prayers as they do.

The pope had promised an indulgence to all who had climbed the steps, and Luther had come to claim his indulgence.

Luther was toiling through this scripture, Romans 1.16 that in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, but he hated it because he asked how could God's righteousness be good news? For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed? How can this be? How could the fact that God is completely perfect and Holy and demand the same of us be good news to us? He failed to understand the scripture, and so he hated God because of it!

In His own words: **"Before those words broke upon my mind I hated God and was angry with him, because, as though he weren't content with only frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further increased our torture by the gospel. But, when by the Spirit of God I understood those words 'the just shall live by faith' then I felt born again like a new man, I entered through the open doors in the very Paradise of God".**

It was shortly after that Luther nailed his 95 thesis to the door, and then invention of the printing press propelled copies around Europe, birthing the Reformation.

He was summoned before the Roman Catholic council who hated his teachings, and threatened with his life was ordered to recant. His famous words "**Unless I am convicted by Scripture & plain reason... my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot & I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me, Amen.**" Shortly after his friend, Frederick the wise, kidnapped him for his own safety.

The text in the original Hebrew has only three main sections to it: **firstly, the justified man**, (expounded in Romans) secondly **by his faith** (expounded in Hebrews) and lastly **will live** (expounded in Galatians).

1. Righteous

How do we get righteous? This is what bothered Luther so deeply! Instead of righteous as we ought to, we are sinners! How can a sinner become righteous?

Paul's letter to the Romans tells us that there is not one righteous, no not one.

This righteousness is **our acts, our thoughts, our motives! 1 Cor 13!** It's that we have failed to love God with all our hearts, to trust Him with all our mind, to draw near in pure devotion to Him. "We all like sheep have gone astray.."

Isaiah 64.6 says that all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags.

Philippians 3.8 where he says that all his righteousness (and as a Pharisee he was about as good as you could get, tithing from his spices etc) was like a pile of rubbish, dung.

So then **how do we become righteous?** Romans 1.16: In the gospel, the righteousness of God is given to us. Not earned, given to us as a gift. **Ephesians 2.8 and Romans 4.2**

This is known as the Divine Exchange! Jesus lives the perfect life, and at the cross he takes on our sin, imputed to him, so much so that in that moment he has to cry out to God 'my God my God why have you forsaken me!'. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him!

How do we get it then? It's not ours, it's Christ's **put into our account**. It means that we stop **doing** and we trust God who justifies the wicked. This is what it means to be a Christian. The very foundation of our faith is not what we do for God but what God has done for us!

2. Faith

Hebrews 10.37 – 11.6: how do we receive God's gift? **Simply by believing. It's so simple.**

Faith is believing God with a conviction that makes us act according to that belief. Activity.

There is a big difference between believing in God and trusting him for salvation. Many believe. **Even the bible says that the devil believes.**

We all have faith in something, whether it's other functional saviors or Christ!

3. Live

This faith is not the beginning of our walk with God and then we mature on to other things, greater things. This is what the third word is about, live. This is the word which is emphasized in the third passage, **Galatians 3.1-11.**

We don't start by faith and then proceed onto some other principle. We do not just draw on faith from time to time as we need. It says that the righteous 'live by faith continuously'.

We either live by faith or by sight. There are no two other options. "do not see" faith and sight are contradictions.

2 Cor 5 tells us that we are to live by faith and not sight. If we see it we can't believe in it. That is partly why Jesus never came to earth the first time in full glory!

Nearly all of the seeing of the NT is spiritual. '**Do you not see?**' said Jesus. '**I only do what I see my Father in heaven doing**' said Jesus. '**Fix your eyes on Jesus**' '**Moses saw Him who was invisible**' '**When Jesus saw he had faith to be healed**'. The only way to please God is by faith, and often that implies disregarding what we naturally see. Was Paul blinded for 3 days on the road to Damascus so that he could not be distracted by what he naturally saw?

The antithesis of faith is mirrored Hebrews 3.7-11 (Psalm 95) where it says that they didn't believe even though 'for forty years saw what I did'. The issue is the heart 'their hearts were always going astray', so faith is not even about seeing what God is doing in the natural, it is rather a heart submitted, yielded, and desperate for eternity. What we see in this earth won't help us (even if it is miracles) unless our hearts believe and have faith in God. (See Heb 3.7-11)

Firstly we apply this to Habakkuk. He is only going to have his life spared if he trusts God and listens to Him. No other way!

Faith is the route of trusting God, so we can't trust anything else simultaneously. **Isaiah 7.9**

There is no other way than the way of the cross. Jesus said that He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Him. But, the bible says that the righteous shall live, by his faith.

In the gospel we have |

- Righteousness
- Content / Satisfaction
- Love
- Peace

God is calling us to be a people who live by faith. This means we trust Christ completely, we believe his words and it changes every area of our lives, because as we trust Him, the idols and other things that we have held onto, the lies, the idols, the saviors, the desires for significance, worth, love and joy all fade away into nothingness.

Friends we at RHC are on a dangerous journey! We are peering into the very essence of the power of the gospel! It's a road that will make us willing lay down our lives, give away our money, live to serve others, devote ourselves to Christ, see our priorities and lives changed, and see God's Kingdom come to Singapore.

We turn our eyes upon Jesus, we look full in His wonderful face. And the things of this world, grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.