

Topic	The Just Shall Live By Faith
Reference	Habakkuk 2:4
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About 500 years ago a German monk was plagued with sin and he felt terrible. So what he did he went to Sancta Scala (holy steps), which were the 26 marble steps that Jesus claimed to have walked up when he was judged by Pilate, and he was waking up these steps and he was praying on his knees every step and he was hoping that the church would forgive him, his sins will be taken away from him and as he was doing that suddenly this passage of Habakkuk came to his mind, the just shall live by faith and he stood up immediately and he descended to stairs and he went back to his hometown in Germany and he started going through the scriptures in trying to understand what it means and exactly 500 years ago, October 31, 1517 he took a thesis, a 95 thesis and he nailed it against a German church which marked the beginning of the protestant reformation. This monk was Martin Luther and it is very much this verse that caused him to think through what then caused to be the reformation.

This same passage appears in Habakkuk, Galatians, Romans and it also appears in Hebrews.

### **Just Shall Live by Faith According to Habakkuk:**

#### **CONTEXT**

Judah was having a terrible time in the city and there was lots of idolatry going on, lot of sinfulness going on, a lot of injustice going on and Habakkuk was not understanding and he was crying out to God, why this is happening, how can you let this injustice happen and God answers him. He says, I will take care of it, I will bring Babylon and I will run over your guys with Babylon. Habakkuk said, they are wicked people and how can you do this and it is even worse than what we are going through right now and that kind of sets up the situation where we are in right now. Habakkuk is crying out to God. He is not understanding the times, injustice is happening, turmoil is happening, trouble is happening and Habakkuk is speaking to God and right here we start in chapter 2 with a little interlude where he says,

**I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.**

So here is Habakkuk, he is saying I will not react, I will not do anything, I will wait for you God to answer first and only then I will react based on that and then God comes and God answers and the God says

**<sup>2</sup> And the Lord answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. <sup>3</sup> For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it**

seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. <sup>4</sup>“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, **but the righteous shall live by his faith.**

So he is showing there are two kind of people, the people who could be puffed up and arrogant and later on in verse 5 he says people who will drink wine and they will do everything for themselves and to be selfish and then later on will go into five vows what will happen to those people. So we can see here a differentiation of two kind of people and how these two kinds of people should live as they are waiting for God’s salvation and waiting for God’s justice to come and God’s answer to come.

What does it mean in this context of Habakkuk that the righteous shall live by faith?

In the Hebrew we much better understand that the righteous shall live by his faithfulness. There will be a better translation of this word here. So what does it mean to be faithful. Clearly, what we are seeing here that if you are righteous and who are the righteous people. The righteous people here are the Israelites, a covenant community. They are not righteous because they are acting all morally at that point of time. They are righteous because of the covenant of Abraham and Moses. So they are covenant people and he is saying if you are this righteous people you should live faithfully and faithfully he means to the promises of God, trusting God that God will deliver, that God will answer, that God will come through for you and even though it does not seem like it in this current situation God will have his way live faithfully steadfastly is another way to say this.

So how then do we live faithfully, how then do we live steadfastly, how then do we wait? Is waiting just a passiveness that we sit back and we are just waiting for God to do his work and we do nothing?

Absolutely not. Throughout scriptures if we look at what waiting means we can see a great insight of how we are supposed to wait, how we are supposed to live faithfully. There are many scriptures that talk about that,

James 5:7-8 **Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.**

So he says when we wait we are supposed to wait like a farmer. A farmer who waits between the early and the late rains. It means that the early and the late rains are two different seasons. After the early rains the ground will be soft and he will start doing work, he will work the land and then after he will sow the seeds and there is work to be done as you wait for the late rain. So waiting faithfully like a farmer is not a passive sitting back, it is an active doing. You are doing something, you are preparing land and ultimately here in this passage it says, establish your heart (prepare your hearts for the coming of the Lord). So this is something we can learn here about

waiting, about living faithfully, living steadfastly is a waiting, an active waiting and active preparing of our hearts.

Now there is another passage that gives us great insight on how we are supposed to live faithfully and that passage is in Luke. In this passage Jesus is talking and he is giving us a parable and He is actually having Habakkuk 2 and 3 in mind as He gives this parable and He says this

Luke 12:42-47 **And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 45 But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.**

Now it is a warning passage, it is a harsh passage but it is a passage that Jesus had in mind. He was thinking about Habakkuk 2. He is saying there are two kinds of people, the one who will wait faithfully, the one who will prepare themselves they will do what the master has done, it is an active doing. It is giving the food to the people and taking care of the people, taking care of self as compared to the other person who will just be about himself, puffed up, arrogant, going on his own ways, drinking wine, going around his own desires. So again we can learn something about faithful living here. What it means that the righteous shall live by faith or that the righteous shall live faithfully here, it is an active waiting. So here when we understand the righteous shall live by faith it is an active waiting, a faithfulness, a steadfastness and again zooming back into the Habakkuk passage itself we can see Habakkuk is doing that. So in the passage itself we can see an application of what it means to be faithful.

Habakkuk in the midst of turmoil goes to the watch tower, he prays. He talks to God. He prepares himself. He says, I would not move until I hear your answer. I will be faithful, I will be steadfast, I will wait for you before I react. So in the passage itself we also understand something about faithfulness. So clearly here when we read the passage, the just shall live by his faithfulness or the just shall live by faith he is talking about a practical faithfulness, a practical righteousness, how we live our lives, steadfastly, continuing on trusting God, trusting that he will provide, that he will have a solution even though it may not seem like it at the moment. So it is a practical living, it is a lifestyle, a practical righteousness.

**SUMMARY:** It means that you should faithfully steadfastly live out your faith, it is a lifestyle, trusting God regardless of what is happening, trusting that He will provide, that He will have a solution.

## Just Shall Live by Faith According to Galatians:

### CONTEXT

Paul is writing and Paul is upset with the Galatian people there. He is crying out to them, he is saying ‘O you foolish Galatians who has bewitched you, what has come over come’. He is asking them, ‘have you not seen Christ crucified, did you come not to faith by believing through hearing, was it by works that you have been saved or was it by faith’. That is what he is upset because something happened in Galatia that the Christian brothers that were saved but suddenly some Judaizers came and they were telling, no, you must get circumcised, no you must eat kosher, no you must do all these works and Paul is upset. He said, don’t you know that you have been saved by faith and not by works and then we come to this passage.

Galatians 3:10-13 **For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” 11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” 12 But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us....**

He is talking of course to the New Covenant community. He is talking about the Galatian brothers here and what does it mean here to live by faith in this context, it is clearly not a practical living out. He is not asking you to do stuff, don’t be faithful in this context in contrast to living by works, living by faith, he is saying that you receive your righteousness by faith, by believing that what Christ has done on the cross will justify you. So this is not a practical righteousness that he is talking about. What he is talking about here is a positional righteousness that if you believe in what Christ has done on the cross, if you have that faith, that faith will position you in a standing with God that will make you righteous. So it is a faith that does that. So here clearly it seems to be a very different kind of application through the same words.

**SUMMARY:** Your faith will justify you. Your faith will make you righteous. It is not by works; it is not by following the Mosaic laws that you are justified but it is by putting your faith in Jesus Christ that you are justified.

## Just Shall Live by Faith According to Romans:

### CONTEXT

So Paul is really excited, he says I yearn to see you guys, I yearn to come and be with you and I want to come to you and I want to preach the gospel to you, because the gospel is awesome and he says

Romans 1:16-17 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”**

The first thing we learn is that this is the righteousness of God that is revealed. So what happens is that when we place our faith in Jesus Christ it is not that he makes us more righteous and we become more righteous people, no it is imputed righteousness, it is an alien righteousness put upon us. It is a righteousness that does not belong to us, it is God's righteousness placed upon us. When Martin Luther discovered that truth about that passage he said the floodgates of salvation opened up for him and Holy Spirit came into his life. He was a catholic monk but when he made that realization that it is not through the works of the church, it is not through Lord's Supper, it is not doing all these works that you are becoming more righteous, no it is a full righteousness of Jesus Christ placed upon you when you so believed in the gospel. So it is an imputed righteousness, it is an external alien righteousness that comes upon us, it's God's righteousness on our lives.

Who then is this righteousness for?

In Habakkuk 2 it was for the covenant community, he was talking about. In Galatians 3 the context seems to be the righteousness, he is talking about the Galatians Christians but here it is something else, I am not ashamed of the gospel as it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. He is saying that righteousness is for everyone. What does that mean for us here today? It means that everybody here regardless of where are you from, what you have done in your life, how your past week looked like. Whether you have been to church all your life or whether it is the first time you have ever stepped into a church, whether you have a porn addiction, a drug addiction, whether you are a workaholic, whether you cheat on your wife or your husband, whether your eyes wonder, whether you take a bribe or receive a bribe, regardless of how your sins look like right now the gospel is for you. You need the gospel; the gospel is for everyone who believes. So if you have never considered those truths and thought you were never worthy of receiving this, that you thought that you must first change your life before you can come into a church or you must change your life before you can follow Jesus, you must change your life before you can baptize. No, the gospel is for everyone right now where you are at. All you have to do is believe that Jesus Christ 2000 years ago came down to earth and he lived the life we should have lived. He lived faithfully, he lived obediently, always trusting God regardless of what circumstance may look like, even in face of persecution, in face of his own death he says not my will but your will. He lived a perfect life. He lived the life that all of us were supposed to live and he also died the death all of us deserved. All our sins, all our addictions, all the things we have done wrong past, present and future were put on that cross and he died on that place for us. This is what the gospel is that Jesus Christ took our sins, died for us and if we so believe in him that he died for your sins too and then he rose again overcoming our sin. So as we place our faith in that we are imputed with his righteousness, which comes upon us.

There is something else we learn about this passage that this gospel news is that when we believe it, it is powerful. It is the power of God unto salvation. If you believe in this, it will change the way you live your life. The gospel changes everything. If you place your faith in that truth here

in this passage it says, it is the power unto salvation and then if you being righteous you shall then live by faith. The way you live will be changed. When you accept Jesus into your life it is the Holy Spirit that comes into you and gives you new convictions, he gives you new desires, he gives you new heart, he gives you new identity. If you tell me that all those things do not affect how you live I don't know if you have experienced it. The righteous shall live by faith in this context clearly shows that it is not our righteousness, it is God's righteousness and as we live out those gospel truths in our life every day, this is how the righteous live by faith because the gospel is the power that changes us and changes our desires and therefore changes our lives and in this passage we have one more great implication it says, therefore I am not ashamed of the gospel.

What does that mean?

That means when we go into work places, when we go into our schools, in our universities, when we go around in our neighborhoods we should not be ashamed of this truth which has powerfully changed us and ultimately changed the way we live. There are couple of reasons why we can be ashamed. Because if we truly accept the gospel we must first come to the realization that we are sinful people, that we are sinners, that we are incomplete, that we are not perfect, that we are broken and to admit that sometimes we feel shame, but it is such a vital thing for us to admit that we are those broken people and that we should not be ashamed of that but we have Jesus Christ who died for us and we are not ashamed that we need a savior, we are not ashamed that we cannot save ourselves, no we boast in our weakness and that gives us strength to go then into our workplaces, into our schools, into our neighborhoods, to go and tell everybody about that gospel. The gospel must so impact your life that you want to go and tell everybody and not be ashamed about it. That is how the righteous live by faith.

Your change is a supernatural change, but it is a difficult change. If we read through the whole New Testament and say that becoming a follower of Christ is easy, I don't know which book you are reading. All over the place it says there will be suffering, there will be turmoil, there will be persecution. Jesus himself said, if you become my disciple and follow me pickup your cross, count your cost. I think he was showing us clearly that it is difficult to follow Jesus, to be a righteous person to live by faith, to trust in the gospel, to trust God all the time, to live out those truths. Now that the gospel has changed everything in our live, to live it out in the workplace, is in our homes, in our neighborhoods, it is a difficult task, nobody said it is going to be easy. Persecution will come because when we live out the gospel in our workplaces we might just not take that bribe or give that bribe, we might just have to confess our addictions to other people so that they can help us out of it. We might just have to confess to our spouses that we haven't been faithful. We might just have to confess to people that we are not treating them right. We might not have to think about ourselves anymore but about others. It is a difficult task, but the prize is great.

## Just Shall Live by Faith According to Hebrews:

Because it is difficult we have another passage. Hebrews exactly into that difficulty. If we look at the righteous shall live by faith according to Hebrews we have an author who is writing to people who are suffering people, who are straining on, trying to be faithful to God and he is trying to give them encouragement and he says this,

Hebrews 10:32-38 **32** But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, **33** sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. **34** For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. **35** Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. **36** For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. **37** For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; **38** but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” **39** But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Here the righteous shall live by faith is that you will hold on in spite of suffering, in spite of the difficulties and right after this little passage here we step into Hebrew 11, the hallmark of faith. It says by faith peoples' life have been transformed, by faith people overcame things, by faith people were justified and ultimately Hebrew 11 compile together, Hebrews 11:1 **Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.** The righteous shall live by faith, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

How does it apply to our lives?

It says here do not lose heart. As you are the righteous one who is living by faith, do not lose heart even though we are suffering. Our inner selves are being renewed day after day in the face of Jesus Christ, in the image of our creator through the gospel of Jesus Christ as we preach the gospel to ourselves. We are being renewed day by day and therefore these momentary afflictions, these momentary troubles are producing for us an eternal wait of glory. So we do not look at the things which are seen, we do not look at the transient things, the temporary things, the seen things. No, we look at the things which are unseen for they are eternal and they last and they are forever. So the righteous shall live by faith means the righteous shall live with hope. So if we look at everything that we have learned today from Habakkuk that the righteous shall live by faith, they should faithfully trust in God and we see that the righteous live by faith that they shall place their faith in Jesus Christ and by that faith they are being made righteous and that righteousness according to Romans is not their our righteousness but an imputed righteousness that everybody can receive if you shall so believe, and you can live that out faithfully by being not ashamed of the gospel and if trouble comes your way and suffering happens you have hope and the righteous can live by faith in that hope that we have. The problem that we have so often

is that we think that there is a dichotomy that there is a difference between faith and faithfulness, but it seems that here in scripture faith and faithfulness are always linked together. You cannot separate faith from faithfulness for whenever you have faith in something you will be faithful to that. Whatever you place your faith in that is what you will be faithful to. Your positional righteousness will affect your practical righteousness. What you believe in will affect how you live.

It is like, if you see a bridge and you have faith of a bridge and the bridge is over a chasm and you have faith that bridge will hold but do not walk over it, you are not living by faith. If you have faith in your marriage but you are unfaithful to your spouse, you are not living by faith. If you have faith in your wife but sent a private detective to follow her around, you are not living by faith. Your faith will always impact your faithfulness. Faith and faithfulness cannot be separated.

### **So what does it mean that the righteous shall live by faith?**

We should have faith in Jesus and we should live it out faithfully. It is interesting how Hebrews 11 finishes. First Hebrews 11 gives a hallmark of all the all the people, all the overcomers who did every great thing, the heroes of faith and then it comes to another section in Hebrews

**32** And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— **33** who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, **34** quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. **35** Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. **36** Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37** They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— **38** of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. **39** And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, **40** since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

*God has provided something better for us and that is heaven and that heaven is secured for us by the blood of Jesus Christ. So our hope is found on nothing less than Jesus blood and his righteousness and that is how the just shall live by faith.*