

To Live by Faith

Habakkuk 2:4

2/8/04

Intro

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The book of Habakkuk was written by the prophet of that name, though nothing is known of his life or ministry other than what we read in his writings. Most scholars believe he wrote the book just prior to the fall of Israel to the Babylonians in about 609 BC.

His name means, “to embrace” which can refer either to embracing God is nearness or of wrestling with God.

What is interesting is that by the time he finishes the book, he has done both. He begins his book wrestling with God and ends the book embracing God in an inspiring and beautiful way.

One of the most famous verses of the bible is found in this book and it is the verse that we want to study this morning. That verse is chapter 2 verse 4, “The righteous will live by his faith.”

On this verse is hung the reformation of the church through Martin Luther, but it is also a verse of which many great truths about the good news of Christ are revealed.

These, then, are the principles found within this one verse, “The righteous will live by his faith.”

I. The Righteous

A. Our righteousness is as filthy rags

- This is the problem, **just who is righteous?**
- Many people think they are righteous enough to go to heaven.

Illus – the Muslims believe that if they just have a little more goodness than badness that they will be saved.

Other people believe that they just have to be better than other people – that God grades on a curve.

The Catholics used to believe that someone could pay for a righteous standing with God.

- But God says that the righteousness of men is filthy to God.

Romans 3:10,12 “There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who does good, not even one.”

Isaiah 64:6, “All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.”

B. Striving is not righteousness

- Many people believe they can become righteous if they make life difficult.
- There are essentially two ways that people often do this:
 - One is through inflicting pain and anguish on themselves. (penance)
 - The other is in creating difficult spiritual feats (legalism).

Illus – Martin Luther is an illustration of the first type of man-made righteousness. He deeply wondered, “How does man find favor with God?”

- **He would beat his body black and blue hoping to purify the flesh.**
- **He would sleep outside in freezing temperatures.**
- **He went to confession repeatedly. Finally the abbot said, “Martin, either go out and commit a sin worth confessing or stop coming here so often.”**
- **Finally, he decides to make a pilgrimage to Rome... (to the Church of St. John)**
- **While there while he was climbing “the stairs that Jesus climbed” on his knees while whipping himself, Habakkuk 2:4 came to his mind. (He was later expelled from the Church by the Diet of Worms)**

C. Righteousness is a gift

- **Once we come to the place of knowing that we cannot make ourselves righteous,**
- **And the Law cannot make us righteous,**
- **And we see how completely hopeless we are,**
- **That is when God shows us that He makes us righteous.**

Philippians 3:9, “not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”

II Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

II. Will Live

A. The righteous will have eternal life

- **Every other religion in the world teaches that man is able to get to heaven by his own effort.**
- **It is only in the gospel of Jesus Christ do we understand that eternal life is a gift of God.**

Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

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...For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The righteous man shall live by faith.’”

B. The righteous will have life even now

- **Many do not understand that God desires that we not only have eternal life, but also life even now.**

John 10:10, “I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.”

- **He gives us the Holy Spirit that we might have the life of God dwelling within us, **that we might become changed by that life...****

John 6:63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

II. By His Faith

A. Faith in Christ alone

- Very early in the church people tried to add other requirements to gain salvation.
- The book of Romans and the book of Galatians are dedicated to demonstrate clearly that we have life eternal based on faith.

Galatians 3:1-7, 11 faith vs law

- **Some taught we need faith and the works of the Law – circumcision in particular.**

Illus – Paul said, “I would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves!” (Gal 5:12)

Illus – We see the same mentality in people who judge others by certain behaviors. – TV, dresses only in Africa, etc.

B. We need the confidence of faith

- This is one of the greatest issues facing the church.
- What we need is a great strengthening of faith.
- We need to believe with all our heart in the truths of God’s Word.

Luke 24:25, And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"

Hebrews 10:22, 35 “Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith!” “Therefore do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward.”

C. “His soul is right within him”

Vs 4

- Habakkuk said that the soul of the one who is proud is not right within him.
- **That is what God does within us by the Holy Spirit, He makes the soul right.**

Romans 5:1, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Conclusion

God invites you today to live – to really live—by complete faith in your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.