

The Righteous Shall Live By Faith

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[0:00] Today's message is going to be based on a portion of Habakkuk chapter 2 that Rashid Hay read this morning. It's located on page 934 of your Bible. I'll be flipping back and forth between 1 and 2 briefly.

Before we get started, let's have a word of prayer. Lord Jesus, we thank you for the Holy Word you've given us. As we open your word now to be taught and to preach your word, may the Holy Spirit grant success on both ends, success in preaching and success in hearing, as we look into the word that you've given to us for our good and for our building up. May we hear the message from your word with clarity, and may we be able to live out the application in our daily lives. Lord, it's in your holy name that we pray. Amen.

So, even though the message is based on a portion of chapter 2, basically verses 2 through 4, I just want to read a few verses in chapter 1, because it's necessary to just reread them quickly to provide some context for the gist of the sermon from chapter 2. So, reading verses 2 to 4 in chapter 1, Habakkuk, the prophet, has a complaint. He says, starting in verse 2, O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you violence, and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity? Why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me. Strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth.

For the wicked surround the righteous. So justice goes forth, perverted. Then, jumping ahead to verse 12, we have another complaint going to verse, into the beginning of chapter 2.

Are you not from everlasting? O Lord, my God, my Holy One, we shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.

[2:31] You, who are of purer eyes than to see evil, and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors, and remain silent, when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook. He drags them out of his net.

He gathers them in his dragnet, so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore, he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet, for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.

Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing the nations forever? Then Habakkuk says, I will take my stand at my watch post, and station myself on the tower, and I will look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

So these verses were describing Habakkuk's time, and the people that were being built up and rising up were the Chaldeans, and God was going to use them to judge Israel.

[3:59] And after they got done with Israel, God was going to raise someone up to judge the Chaldeans. So the cycle goes on. So these times that Habakkuk is complaining about, they're filled with violence.

Like our times. You can take a few minutes and look at the news. There's all kinds of things going on all around the world. And then it happens locally, too.

There's murders, strife, robbery. Internally, externally, there's violence everywhere. We don't really need to spend a lot of time on it. Then Habakkuk says, The law is paralyzed.

Justice never goes forth. Think of the absence of justice in our legal system. Think of the proposition that was read to us today. We have a broken legal system.

It works sometimes, but many times it does not. This was a problem in Habakkuk's day, too. People were crooked. Government officials took bribes and perverted justice at the expense of the poor.

[5:12] Much like what goes on today. The wicked surround the righteous. Well, all we have to do is look around the world and see our brothers and sisters being persecuted for their faith.

Some being put in prison. Some being put to death. In Nigeria, they're just shooting up whole villages as we speak. So there's a plight of righteous people around the world.

And why? We're living in cultures and societies broken by sin. Our sin. Broken people do broken things. That's what we do.

But in Habakkuk's complaint, which sounds a lot like the Psalms, it's a plea. He says, Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you not hear?

And cry to you violence and you will not save. And let's be honest. Don't we think like this sometimes, too? We're like, God, don't you see the headlines?

[6:23] Don't you see what's going on? Look at Ukraine, for example. They're losing. Putin's winning. They're gaining ground every day.

It would appear on the surface that evil is triumphing. Wouldn't it? And he says, Why do you make me see iniquity?

Why do you idly look at the wrong? Do you hear the complaint here? He's complaining to the God of justice that God is idly looking by when wrong goes unchecked, when destruction and violence are running rampant.

He's saying, God, look, the wicked are surrounding the righteous. Justice. You're the God of justice. It's being perverted. That's a strong complaint.

The wicked swallowing up the righteous. But then, I want us to see the faith that Habakkuk exhibits. At the beginning of chapter 2, he says, I will take my stand at my watch post, and I will wait for the answer to my complaint.

[7:40] Habakkuk was very honest. He poured out what was on his heart and mind in his complaint. Kind of questioning God, if we're to be clear. But, he shows faith because he's fully expecting an answer.

And many times when God speaks, it's an answer that we really don't expect. Like in the book of Job. Remember all the suffering Job experienced.

We don't have to outline it. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the book. And then God appears and says to Job, gird yourself like a man. Because Job wanted to question God.

Job says, you know, where? If I could just make my case before God, this could all be cleared up. I'm paraphrasing. When God shows up, God says, I will question you.

And notice, when God speaks to Job in the book, it's really like a long nature lesson about creation. About the stars, about the beautiful animals and the earth he's made.

[8:44] About his power. How he founded the world. He didn't really address Job's suffering, did he? But Job repented when he saw God.

And I'm reminded of the book of Job when I read 2 through 4 here in Habakkuk chapter 2. And the Lord answered me, Write the vision.

Make it plain on tablets so he may run who reads it. 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. Behold, his soul is puffed up.

It is not upright within him. But the righteous shall live by faith. I don't know about you, but if I was Habakkuk, this isn't the answer I would be expecting.

[9:53] I complained about violence and murder. Where is the judgment? I complained about the law being broken and paralyzed. Where is the restoration?

It would seem in this answer to Habakkuk's complaint, God is saying something to everyone. As he's saying, write the vision, make it plain on tablets.

Paraphrase, write it down, engrave it on stone. Don't miss this. He talks about someone whose soul is puffed up, but then he says, the righteous shall live by faith.

Not the answer we expect. But let's look at the first part. The soul is puffed up. I want to highlight verse 16 in chapter 1.

Actually, verses 15 and 16. He brings all of them up with a book. He drags them out with his net. He gathers them in his dragnet, so he rejoices and is glad.

[11:04] Now catch this. Therefore, he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet, for by them he lives in luxury and his food is rich.

You kept that picture there? The idolatry, the self-reliance, the rejoicing in his victory over the people that get caught up in his net.

He's probably living in luxury because he plunders their goods. His food is rich. It's a picture of modern man, isn't it?

We're self-reliant. We think we can control things. We think we can accomplish things in our own efforts. We're not much different than this person described in verse 16, if we're quite honest, because we're sinners.

Look at how God describes him. Behold, verse 4 and 2, behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright within him.

[12 : 16] This is not the place we want to be before an almighty God. But the righteous shall live by faith. So that's the gist of today's message.

We need to unpack this a little bit and we need to talk about it. How do we do this? How do we live by faith?

Because, to be honest, the world that we live in today is arguably just as broken and troubled as Habakkuk's world was in his day. And Habakkuk was told, like we are all told, the righteous is to live by faith.

God spoke about a vision. Verse 3. He said, For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It pastes to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it.

It will surely come. It will not delay. I am going to spiritually speculate that that vision was our Lord Jesus Christ in his Advent.

[13 : 31] The answer to the question, how do we live by faith, is fully answered in the Advent of Jesus Christ and in the preaching of the Gospel.

Living by faith is trusting in God trusting in his purposes and not questioning when he does judgment.

The gist of Habakkuk's complaint, he was questioning God's purposes in all of this, allowing everything to happen that was happening. He was questioning God's justice, implying it was delayed.

What's implied here is Habakkuk in his complaint was asking the wrong questions. We do this too. We question, God, aren't you going to judge that wicked nation?

God, don't you see what's going on in our society and on the Internet? We question God when really we have to be more concerned with what God said to us.

[14 : 37] How are you going to live by faith? If we go through Revelation and the major prophets, one thing becomes really, really clear.

God is going to punish the nations for their sin. God is going to send his son back and there's going to be a holy and just society on this earth. The wicked will be punished.

Justice will be meted out. So if anyone has any questions about that without going through all the Bible verses, rest assured, it's all planned, it's all prepared, and our God will execute it perfectly.

So to dive into the question how shall the righteous live or what is this faith that we were to live out, I'm going to borrow a few thoughts from the New Testament.

In doing this, we're not to just look at ourselves and not look at the evil of the world. What we should be looking for is evidence of God's love in all of this, God's ways, God's plan of salvation.

[15 : 49] an excellent verse to describe this faith is Romans 1, verses 16 to 17, which I'll share with us now.

Romans 1, 16 to 17. And those of you who went through Romans with me are very familiar with this verse because this is the theme of the entire book of Romans.

Romans 1, verse 16. 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, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed.

From faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. Another good verse or two is in Galatians chapter 3, verses 10 and 11.

Amen. 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 the things written in the book of the law and do them.

[17 : 13] Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith.

So if any of us are self-reliant, thinking we're a good person doing good things and that's going to save us, you need to set aside that notion. Salvation is a gift from God, of God, from God, given to us freely because of the shed blood of His Son.

There's nothing we can do to earn it, but we need to have faith. The third verse that's useful in understanding this is actually a few verses in Hebrews chapter 10, verses 35 to 39, starting with verse 35. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which is a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what is promised for yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay, but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. [18:53] But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

I would say to you, the sharpest thing on this entire planet, sharper than any knife or instrument you can think of, is the word of God. Because the word of God cuts through everything, all our excuses, all our pretense, all the mountains in our mind, anything that's contrary to sound doctrine in the gospel that we hold in our heads, the sins that we coddle, the sins that we tolerate in the world and on others and in ourselves.

God's word is so sharp it cuts right through this right to our heart. And do you see where the focus of living has to be? Endurance.

Endurance and the faith. And when I talk about the faith, I'm talking about the gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. I'm talking about Genesis to Revelation, the complete revelation of God from beginning to end.

This is the gospel. It's the source of life and sound doctrine. And like Paul, we should never be ashamed of the gospel.

[20:19] You know, there's all kinds of problems in our lives. There's all kinds of problems in the world and in society. And everyone's asking why, who, what, where.

It's the gospel. Paul died for it. the apostles died for it. People are dying for it now as we speak. The answer to all of the questions that beset us, the answer to Habakkuk's complaint, God, where are you?

God, what are you doing? It's the gospel. It's the cross. It's the answer for everything. Think of life as a funnel full of questions.

And if you all go down the funnel, we all arrive at the same place. We all arrive at the foot of the cross. We have to have faith. But I would have to mention to everyone that having the right confession of the right doctrines and the right beliefs isn't necessarily sufficient.

I'm going to read something that Father E. Faye wrote and I've got it on my phone. So please allow me to have an exception and use a phone during the service. And he's answering the question what faith is.

[21:50] Faith is the way in. It is the way on. And lastly, faith is the way through to heaven. Even as we wait upon God for the day of the second coming, when he will judge the living and the dead, how are we to live as we await that day despite many obstacles we face in the world?

Habakkuk 10, 35-39, we just read. We, that is those who have placed their confidence in Christ, are those who persevere in faith, knowing that yet a little while in the coming one will come and will not delay.

God's purposes will be fulfilled. Did you catch that? God's purposes will be fulfilled. And the people of God have always been called to wait upon God from Abraham to us.

The waiting in faith is not the twiddling of our thumbs or standing idly by. Rather, it is the active, hopeful, trusting in the one who promises.

That means, in our lives, there's evidence that we live this out. Our faith in Christ informs our actions, our choices, our thoughts, our deeds. It follows from a true confession in a truly repentant heart.

[23:14] Even now, it may seem like the world around us is closing in, and it seems easier to compromise your stance upon God's word. We must remember that our faith is not man-made things, not in man-made things, be it the church building, our denominational affiliation, our family, our political wins, our moral resessitude, our safety, and our comfort.

When we place our confidence in these things, we are shrinking back from faith in the promise of God that in Christ, he has rescued a people for himself, and at his coming again, he will perfect them.

To shrink back is to leave the path of life for the ways that leads to destruction. So, the Bible says faith is a gift.

God the Father gives us that gift. So, what's our job? What are we supposed to do? And I think with this question, what are we supposed to do with our faith, or what is it we were supposed to do? I think Jesus answers our question with his question. John 6, verses 28-29. Then they said to him, that is the people who were around Jesus, what must we do to be doing the works of God? [24 : 57] Verse 29, Jesus answered them, this is the work of God, that you believe in him, in him whom he has sent.

Meaning, Jesus Christ, our Savior, the Lord. So, even though faith exalts God and debases us, because faith is saying we can't do it, God, you can do it, it's a gift. Our job is to hang on to it. That's what's meant by the perseverance of the saints. We hang on to our faith in Christ no matter what.

And, believing upon the one whom God has sent means we live our lives in accordance with that belief that we confess.

So, we really need to stop questioning God's purposes. We really need to stop questioning the timing of his justice and his plan.

[26 : 02] what we really need to focus on is fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ, the faith that he's given to us to keep and to live by. Think of it this way.

A faith confessed and a faith lived saves. a faith confessed and not lived is of no avail.

Our work, that means something we do, our work, our job, our participation in this equation called salvation is to persevere.

our faith is going to be challenged just like Habakkuk. You heard what Habakkuk was saying. He was saying, God, where are you?

What's going on? But God answers his question with a question just like he did with Job out of the world. What are you going to do?

[27 : 09] Are you going to hang on to your faith no matter what? and are you going to live by it? I'm convinced that we will. Like Paul was convinced that the congregations he wrote to would turn around and live by the faith.

So today's message is very simple. Live by faith according to the gospel that God has given us. That is our job.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we thank you for the simplicity of your word. And Lord, in your word you ask, when I return, shall I find faith on earth?

Lord, help us to not be dismayed and discouraged by the perversity and wickedness of the world around us. Evil can be like acid on our faith, Lord.

Give us strength and faith to persevere no matter what. and help us to be those who have faith doing your good will and your good works when you return.

[28 : 19] Lord, may we all live in such a way that we receive a great reward. And may we love each other as you command in your word. Lord Jesus, in your name we pray these things.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.