

“The Righteous Shall Live by His Faith” – Pt. 2 – N.T. Applications

(Habakkuk 2:4)

INTRODUCTION:

1. In our last lesson we considered the teaching of Habakkuk, which involved his questioning of God as to why He had done nothing about the sin of Judah.
 - A. God’s answer, however, was that He was going to use Babylon to punish Judah, which was not the answer Habakkuk wanted.
 - B. When God told him to record the vision anyway, God stated a most important point that they (and we) needed to know: “But the righteous will live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).
2. This point is so significant in God’s plan that it is quoted three times in the N.T. where it is applied to the Christian life.
3. Today I want us to consider the three incidences where it is found and see if we can make some valuable applications to our lives.

BODY:

I. Faith in how God’s justifies (Romans 1:16-17).

A. The context of Romans involves certain **struggles**:

1. **Rejection of God** among the Greeks (and Jews to an extent) (Rom. 1:21-24, 32 – “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them....³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”).
 - a. Though does not specify the Greeks, or Gentiles, it was the Gentile world in a nutshell!
 - b. Rejection of God brought with it spiritual and mental darkness, unbridled lust, impurity, and dishonor to themselves and their bodies, all the while ignoring God’s condemnation!
2. Seeking righteousness without knowledge (Rom. 10:1-4 – “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. ² For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³ For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.”).
 - a. The Jews were **zealous for God** and **sought righteousness**, but in their own way.
 - i. They had their beliefs and convictions about **obedience to the Law** and were convinced that their various **acts** of obedience to the Law **would justify them**.
 - ii. They were **sincere...but wrong!**
 - b. In addition to this was their failure to live what they claimed to follow (Rom. 2:17-24 – “But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God, ¹⁸ and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, ¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, ²¹ **you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?** You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? ²² You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the Law, through your **breaking the Law**, do you dishonor God? ²⁴ For “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” just as it is written.”).
 - i. It seems that they thought being a “**Jew**” was **equal to faithfulness to God**.
 - ii. Claiming such without obedience caused the world to blaspheme/speak evil of God.

B. The same struggles continue today.

1. Who can deny the rejection of God and the immorality it has produced in our society?
 2. People today *seek righteousness* apart from knowledge of God's will.
 - a. **Good deeds:**
 - i. People who claim belief in God and the afterlife when asked about their service to God will often say, "I do a lot of good things and I am not as bad as a lot of people. I try to be nice and live a good life."
 - ii. When people live this way, they are **seeking to be righteous by their works**—by doing good things—just like the Jews.
 - b. **Sincerely religious, but wrong:** Do you know people sincerely religious and seeking righteousness without knowledge?
 - i. False religions: People are zealously seeking righteousness through Allah, Vishnu (Hinduism), Hare Krishna, Spiritualism, Environmentalism, Social Justice, etc.
 - ii. False discipleship:
 - 1) There are those who profess to serve God by faith in Jesus, and do so with great conviction, zeal, and sincerity, but they are **wrong in their beliefs**.
 - 2) There is a growing movement among American churches that separates faith in Christ from the following the moral demands of Christ.
 - a) The beer with Jesus movement (i.e., party on Saturday with drunkenness, lust, etc., and worship on Sunday morning!).
 - b) There is a growing acceptance and affirmation of sexual immorality and perversion among churches that claim to follow Christ.
 3. You may know many who fit the descriptions—people who are your friends, co-workers, family, etc. And these differences can cause anxiety for our lives.
- C. What faith does (**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 to faith; as it is written, “**But the righteous man shall live by faith.**”).
1. It is not ashamed of the gospel (1:16).
 - a. True faith knows we have the greatest message, and that it is for all people.
 - b. Faith is convicted that the gospel is the power of God to save and refuses to compromise that truth no matter the circumstances.
 - i. So, faith seeks to tell our friends, co-workers, etc., of the gospel, inviting them to read the Bible with us, to come to a Bible study, worship, etc.
 - ii. True faith does what Aquilla and Priscilla did—to explain the way of truth more accurately to all that will listen (Acts 18:24-28).
 2. Why? Because it believes the gospel to be the righteousness of God revealed and His promises (Gen. 12:1-3) fulfilled through Jesus for all who have faith in Him (1:17)! And we, like Paul, want that message heard and known by those about us.

II. Faith versus the Law (Galatians 3:10-11)

A. The struggles:

1. **Expectation of Christ forming within them** (Gal. 4:19-20 – “My children, with whom I am **again in labor until Christ is formed in you**—²⁰ but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.”).
 - a. Paul uses the analogy of the labor of childbirth to describe his current state of being due to these brethren's lack of full commitment to Christ.
 - b. Paul sought for Christ to fill their hearts and life, as Christ had Paul's (Gal. 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ; **and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”).
 - i. The call of salvation means my life must be lived as Christ's, not my own!
 - ii. These brethren were failing to do this! Why?

2. **False teaching:**
 - a. They had been **bewitched** by false teachers promising **justification by law** (Gal. 3:1-3 – “You foolish Galatians, who has **bewitched** you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ² This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the **works of the Law**, or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now **being perfected by the flesh?**”).
 - b. These teachers promised justification by **certain acts of the law**.
 - i. There was emphasis on **circumcision**, the fleshly covenant sign of Israel (Gal. 5:3 – “And I testify again to **every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.**”).
 - ii. There was apparent emphasis on **keeping certain days, feasts**, etc. (Gal. 4:9-11 – “But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.”).
 - iii. So, it was taught that “checking off” these things meant justification!
 3. These struggles continue today.
 - a. People claim to serve God without Christ being fully formed in their heart.
 - i. People worship and fellowship together until someone does them wrong or is thought to have deviated from the truth.
 - ii. You then see in their reaction anything but the love of Christ in them, which is sin (1 Jn. 3:10 – “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, **nor the one who does not love his brother.**”).
 - b. People continue to make the mistake of singling out obedience to certain commands as proof alone of their salvation or righteousness. People do this with...
 - i. **Baptism**, which is commanded and does bring one into Christ (Gal. 3:27 – “For all of you who were **baptized into Christ** have clothed yourselves with Christ.”).
 - ii. **Attendance** at a church with the **right name**, doctrine, etc., which is required (Heb. 10:25 – “**not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”).
 - iii. Yet, when obedience to these commands or others like them are **my confidence** for salvation, then **I am not justified!**
 - 1) I am in no way denying the importance or required nature of these things. We must practice righteousness (1 Jn. 3:10).
 - 2) But, **to trust in them** would be to commit the same sin taught by these Judaizers.
- B. What faith does (**Galatians 3:10-11** – “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “**cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.**” ¹¹ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “**The righteous man shall live by faith.**”).
1. Faith knows law does not justify (3:10).
 - a. Perfect obedience was required to be justified by law, cursing those who failed to do so!
 - b. One might say the Law was like an MRI. It shows our cancer, or sin, but cannot cure it.
 - c. So, faith does not seek justification by law—by trying to “do” one’s way to justification.
 2. Instead, “The righteous man shall live by faith” (3:11).
 - a. Faith in Christ must be the center of our lives because only Christ can cure us of our sin!
 - b. **Biblical baptism** is founded on **faith**:
 - i. Paul said they were “all sons of God **through faith in Christ Jesus... For all of you who were baptized into Christ** have clothed yourself with Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

- ii. Col. 2:12 – “having been **buried** with Him in **baptism**, in which you were also **raised** up with Him **through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead.”
- iii. Without true faith in God, obedience in baptism is meaningless and powerless!
- c. The righteous **live/obey/act by faith** (Jas. 2:20-22 – “But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that **faith was working with his works**, and **as a result of the works, faith was perfected**”).
- d. **Thus, those called to live by faith:**
 - i. **Love one another** (Gal. 5:13-14 – “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through **love** serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”).
 - ii. **Put away sins of the flesh** (Gal. 5:19-21 – “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I **forewarn you**, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**”).
 - iii. **Cultivate the fruits of the Spirit** (Gal. 5:22-23 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”).
- 3. We simply cannot rely on “checkmarks” and exclude the cultivation of deep faith in God that in turn motivates us to do what we do.

III. Faith in suffering (Heb. 10:38)

- A. Living by faith in God and what it requires is rarely applauded by the world. In fact, most of the time it produces that opposite reaction.
 - 1. Of course, when we think of living by faith we are reminded of Hebrews 11, the great chapter of faith.
 - 2. But, just before that chapter is where the writer quotes from Habakkuk 2:4 and does so while addressing suffering for Christ (**Hebrews 10:32-34** – “But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, **you endured a great conflict of sufferings**, ³³ partly by being made a **public spectacle** through **reproaches** and **tribulations**, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you **showed sympathy** to the **prisoners** and **accepted joyfully the seizure of your property**, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.”).
 - a. Note the nature of their suffering—being made a public spectacle by reproaches (ridicule) and tribulations, imprisonment, and seizure of their property.
 - b. You see why the quote from Habakkuk would be quite relevant, seeing those in Habakkuk’s day that would “live by His faith” did so by faithfully trusting/obeying God while enduring tribulation, reproaches, and loss of property caused by the Babylonians.
 - c. Though these Christians had held up for a time, their endurance/faithfulness was waning.
- B. The struggle:
 - 1. **Danger of falling away!**
 - a. Many people in the 1st Century chose to obey the gospel in the face of persecution from the Jews, Gentiles, and even the government.
 - b. And though they initially knew the great joy of salvation, persecution because of the **word** caused (and causes today) many to struggle and fail to maintain their faithfulness.
 - 2. As Jesus pointed out in the parable of the sower, this struggle will always exist (Mk. 4:16-17 – “In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, **immediately receive it with joy**; ¹⁷ and they have no firm root in

themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises **because of the word**, immediately they fall away.”).

- C. What faith does (Heb. 10:37-39 – “For yet in a very little while, He who is coming 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 to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.”).
1. Faith trusts that Jesus is coming for His people and lives like it (10:37).
 - a. Verse 37 was basically the same language used by God in Habakkuk to warn the Jews not to forget that His judgement on them through Babylon **was coming!**
 - b. So, we should know that God’s judgement of the world at Christ’s return **is coming** and will happen precisely at God’s time without delay...though it may seem to be delayed!
 - c. There is never a time for letting down one’s guard and living like the world.
 2. Refuses to give up and go back into the world (10:38).
 - a. Though the faithful may cry out in pain through trials and suffering they do not understand, they will not walk away from their hope!
 - b. So, if life’s difficulties have caused you to pray less, read your Bible less, etc., you need to reverse your course and live by faith (Heb. 10:35-36 – “**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 was promised.**”).

CONCLUSION:

1. Just as Habakkuk warned of how the Babylonians were coming to bring judgment on Israel, God warns us today of greater judgment that is coming when Jesus returns.
 - A. God wants to reward you, to give you all the wonderful blessings He has promised, which are ultimately received when we are with him forever in heaven.
 - B. So, as was true then, so it is true now. To **live** you and I must submit to that judge, Jesus Christ, in faith (Heb. 11:6 – “And **without faith it is impossible to please Him**, for he who comes to God **must believe that He is** and that **He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.**”).
 - C. For, this is what all those faithful people of the Bible did—they lived by faith and were justified by God because of it.
2. So, though you will never achieve heaven by your deeds, by earning it, God has made it possible for you to please him by trusting in Jesus as your Savior, who requires you to repent of your sins, confess your faith in Him, and to be buried with Him in baptism so that your sins can be forgiven and you can be raised up with Christ in faith to newness of life!
3. Will you come today and begin your life of faith?