

Habakkuk -1

The just shall live by His faith

Sermon 13 in the Minor Prophets Series

The theme of Habakkuk is the challenge that comes from living life in the midst of difficult even dangerous circumstances, all the while, by faith, waiting for God to answer according to His promises.

In the book we see the tension between the “already” and the “not yet”.

In the OC sense this was true for Habakkuk as he awaited the New Covenant fulfillment.

I. The Prophet Himself – and His Times 1:1.

It is possible he was a Levite or a Temple singer.

Of his life, we know very little.

He lived to see the great revival in the time of Josiah.

He knew of the Salvation God had provided from Assyria.

The book is written during the reign of Jehoiakim (making him a contemporary with Jeremiah).

This was a dark time in Judah’s spiritual life.

Habakkuk saw TWO dangerous enemies

1) External: The rise of Babylon.

2) Internal: The wickedness of Judah – which was far more dangerous.

II. Crying out Against Judah’s Wickedness 1:2-4

“How long, O Lord” is a common expression in the Psalms when the writer is perplexed.

III. God Answers -- Judah will be Punished by Babylon -- 1:5-11

A. The Rise of Babylon 5-6

B. The Might and Power of the Chaldeans 7-11

IV. Habakkuk Perplexed -- 1:12-:2:1

The prophet cannot understand how or why God would work this way.

A. Habakkuk’s Trust –1:12-13 B.

B. Habakkuk’s Complaint 1:14-17

C. Habakkuk waits for a Rebuke 2:1

This is reminiscent of Psalm 73 -- Asaph sees the wicked prosper.

Psalm 73:16-17 -- When I thought *how* to understand this, It was too painful for me—

¹⁷ Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *Then* I understood their end.

V. God’s Answer 2:2-20

A. The Answer will come in the form of a Vision 2:2-4

1. It will be written plainly

2. It will surely come

3. The vision itself – the contrast between the unrighteous and the righteous

B. The Just shall live by his faith – 2:4

“God informed Habakkuk and the people of Judah that there is only one way to survive in the gap between promise and fulfillment – by faith. The only way they could make it through the dark days of the Babylonian captivity was to live by faith in the promises of God believing that God would do what he said he would do. This is the existential struggle of Habakkuk and the people of Judah. It is the struggle which connects the modern believer to the prophecy of Habakkuk and it is this struggle which turns our eyes to Jesus.” (Salvaggio -- p.116)

Chapter 16 – Of Saving Faith – para 2.

“By this faith a Christian believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word...but the principle acts of saving faith have immediate relation to Christ, accepting and receiving, and resting upon him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.”

Paul’s interpretation -- Romans 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

Robert Haldane on Romans 1:17: The passage itself is quoted from the prophecies of Habakkuk, and is generally supposed to relate, in its primary sense, to the deliverance from the Babylonian captivity, which was a type of the deliverance obtained by the Gospel. Through faith in the Divine promises the first was obtained, and the second in like manner is obtained through faith. But in whatever sense the Prophet uses these words, the Apostle speaking by the same Spirit, assigns them to their just and legitimate extension. They are true in respect to an earthly and temporal deliverance and they are equally true in respect to a spiritual deliverance.”

Paul Again -- Galatians 3:11 -- But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

Luther’s understanding – The just shall live by faith.

“Night and day I pondered till I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that ‘the just shall live by faith’. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”

“I have taught this doctrine for 20 years, both in my preaching and in my writings, and yet the old and tenacious mire clings to me, so that I find myself wanting to come to God bringing something in my hand, for which He should bestow his grace upon me. I cannot attain to casting myself on purse and simple grace only, and yet this is highly necessary.”
(quote taken from a 2003 Banner of Truth article by Edward Donnelly)

Compare Habakkuk 2:14 with Isaiah 11:1-2 (Messiah) and Isaiah 11:9,10 (New Covenant)