

(Hab. 1:1-4) - Habakkuk's prophecy began with the prophet's cry over the great "burden" the Lord had laid upon his heart concerning the sins of Judah. Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah who also cried out to Judah. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) was gone at this time, and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was on the verge of being captured and destroyed by the Babylonians. After King Josiah, every king in Judah was evil, and the whole nation followed their evil ways. Habakkuk asked, "Why does God permit (put up with) this evil? Why doesn't He do something? Why doesn't He bring judgment upon the nation and put a stop to it?" Any time we think this way, God reminds us of three important things:

(1) God is longsuffering but not unjust. He will most certainly bring judgment against all sinners to whom sin is imputed. God reveals and glorifies Himself in judgment against all sin. He judges according to truth (*Rom. 2:2*) and will by no means clear the guilty (*Exod. 34:7*), which shows us that God's way of salvation and forgiveness is to remove the guilt of His people by placing it on Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. God's justice must be satisfied both in condemnation and salvation. For this reason, God imputed our sins to Christ, and He imputed Christ's righteousness to us.

(2) God reminds us that we are all sinners who deserve and have earned condemnation and wrath. It is only by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ that any of us are not totally consumed by His wrath - "*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not*" (*Lam. 3:22*). Christ is our hiding place, our shelter, from the storm of God's wrath.

(3) No one will escape judgment (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 5:10; Heb. 9:27*), not even the saved, but the judgment of the saved has already taken place on the cross when Christ died for our sins imputed to Him, and we stand justified and redeemed before God by Christ's obedience unto death. His blood (the merit of His death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer) has settled our sin-debt, and His righteousness (the righteousness of God) has been imputed to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34*).

(Hab. 1:5-17) - Habakkuk was perplexed that God would use a nation more sinful and idolatrous than Judah to bring judgment on His people. But God assures him that it is all well within His immutable and sovereign purpose to work all things after the counsel of His own will and to accomplish His purpose to bring Christ into the world (*Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11*). He also tells the prophet that such judgment would eventually come upon them for their sins, especially their rejection of Christ and the Gospel (*1:5; cf. Acts 13:36-41*). In *1:13*, Habakkuk speaks of the Chaldeans in comparison with the Jews, but he fails to keep in mind that God's judgment upon Judah was because of their sins. Judah deserved no more than Babylon. But in each generation of the Israelites, there was a remnant of righteous people, made so by the grace of God and based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to them and received by God-given faith. The only way that God can favorably look upon sinners is as they stand before Him in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Rom. 8:33-34*).

(Hab. 2:1-4) - The prophet's name, "*Habakkuk*," means "one who embraces" or "clings." The lesson of this prophecy is that, as true children of God, we must live in this wicked world and continue in our state as SINNNERS SAVED BY GRACE embracing and clinging to Christ for our

whole salvation. When Habakkuk states, *“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH”* (Hab. 2:4), this is exactly what he was saying. To live by God-given faith is to LIVE IN AND BY CHRIST Who is the foundation and object of God-given faith. Habakkuk draws a clear line of distinction between God’s enemies and God’s children. The true children of God are not distinguished by works of righteousness that they have done. They are distinguished by the grace of God (Rom. 9:11-16) and by the faith that God has given them by which they look to and rest in the righteousness of the promised Messiah (Rom. 10:4-10).

The unbeliever’s soul *“is lifted up”* and *“is not upright in him,”* *“but THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH.”* The *“lifted up”* soul describes all who are in unbelief of God’s way of salvation by His grace in Christ. They are totally driven by pride and self-righteousness, thinking that salvation is conditioned on their works and/or wills. The *“just”* (justified) are those who have been forgiven of all their sins by the blood of Christ and declared righteous in God’s sight by Christ’s righteousness imputed to them. As they, by God-given faith, received Christ, they have received Him and submitted to God’s way of salvation by grace (Rom. 5:21). To live by faith is not to live by the power, sincerity, and goodness of our believing. It is live by and rely upon the power, goodness, and merit of Christ. So, the JUST SHALL LIVE BY CHRIST as they look to and rest in Him by God-given faith.

Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use this statement to show that both Jew and Gentile are justified before God based on the very *“righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith”* (Rom. 1:17). *“From faith”* means truth revealed to us by God the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). *“To faith”* means truth received and believed by us in the power of the Holy Spirit Who gives us spiritual life and convinces us of the truth as it is in Christ. Paul was also inspired to use this statement in Galatians 3:11 - *“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”* The emphasis here is that sinners cannot be declared righteous before God by their works. It is only by Christ’s merits alone, His righteousness imputed, that sinners can rightly be declared righteous in God’s sight (cf. Rom. 10:4). This phrase is also repeated in Hebrews 10:38 - *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”* The emphasis here is on that God-given faith in Christ by which true believers persevere (continue) in the faith (cf. Heb. 12:1-2). And it is made clear that those who, by God’s grace and power, persevere unto the end are those whom God preserves in that faith that looks to and depends upon the goodness, merits, and power of Christ - *“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”* (Heb. 10:39; cf. 1 John 3:9).

(Hab. 3:17-19) - Chapter 3 records Habakkuk’s prayer to the LORD God for revival. He concludes it by showing the proper response of man under the sovereign power of God. He recognized his own weakness and low standing before the God of all majesty and power. This is where the LORD brings us all when He brings us to bow to Christ as our hope of salvation, righteousness, and eternal life. The *“fig tree”* is Judah in all of its failures throughout the Old Covenant. In spite of Judah’s failures, the prophet proclaims, *“Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* It reminds us Job who said, *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”* (Job 13:15). He concludes with words of faith and worship acknowledging that the LORD God alone would save and establish him. The ultimate fulfillment of this desire and prayer can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ in His righteousness and in the life that He gives unto His people. The hope of Israel was not in the law or in the elements of the law but in Christ to come. Truly, the justified shall live by and in Christ.