

The Righteous Shall Live By Faith – Habakkuk 2:2-5

Main Idea: A righteous man lives his life trusting in the promises and timing of God, while the prideful man lives his life trusting in himself.

I. A Call to Trust | Habakkuk 2:2-3

After standing at the watchpost, God responded to Habakkuk with a command rather than a straightforward answer to his question. The vision God commands Habakkuk to record is given as a message designed to move the one who reads it. The structure of verse 2 makes that intent extremely clear. The reader does not run while reading; the reader runs because of having read. **Scripture is never given to be admired from a distance. It is given to create active change in the one reading.** James 1:22-25 explains the same concept when he warns “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.” This is the posture Habakkuk is being called to. The vision he is about to receive is meant to impact him in such a way that he cannot remain who he was before he received it. The same is true every time we open the Scriptures. **A passage of scripture that has been read and not obeyed has not actually been read in the way the Bible intends.** This is one of the overlooked failures in much of evangelical life today. Believers will sit under faithful preaching for years, accumulate study notes, attend small groups, fill journals, and yet show little evidence in their lives that any of it has changed them. **We have learned to consume Scripture without being moved by it, which is not what God intends Scripture to do.** The God who speaks does not speak to fill our notebooks; he speaks to mold us into Christ’s image.

Verse 3 then attaches a promise to the vision that is meant to sustain the reader through whatever delay lies between the receiving and the fulfilling. “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.” **Every statement points to God’s character before it is a statement about God’s timing.** The reason we can trust an appointed time we cannot see is because the one who appointed it does not lie, does not change his mind, does not forget, and does not run late. Numbers 23:19 says “God is not a man that he should lie,” and the man saying it was Balaam, a pagan diviner who would have happily lied if God had let him. Our understanding of slowness and waiting is very different from God’s. What we understand as slowness, God understands as patience (2 Peter 3:8-9).

What this means for the believer in a long season of waiting is that the wait is not evidence God has forgotten, lost interest, or changed his mind. The wait is often the place in which God’s faithfulness becomes plainly visible. **Every promise in Scripture is anchored to the character of the one who made it, which is why the question is never whether God will keep his word but whether we will keep trusting him while he does.** The danger in waiting is not the time itself; the danger is when we lose confidence in God and begin to take up confidence in ourselves. The remedy is not to stop waiting but to wait with our eyes fixed on God who fulfills his promises. The God who appointed Christ’s first coming at the fullness of time is the same God who has been faithful to his people in every generation since, and his character has not changed.

To Ponder:

1. Much of evangelical life today produces hearers who can quote sermons, fill journals, and recite doctrine without their lives showing any visible change. What have churches gotten wrong about the relationship between hearing and doing, and how does this passage confront that error?
2. If God’s faithfulness is sometimes most clearly displayed in seasons of waiting, what does that imply about the seasons in our lives that we are most eager to escape?
3. Where in your own life right now are you tempted to force your own outcome rather than wait on God’s appointed time, and what would faithful waiting actually look like in that situation?

II. A Call to Live | Habakkuk 2:4-5

In verse 4, God shows two souls side by side and contrasts them. One is puffed up. One lives by faith. **What separates these two souls is not only behavior but the direction in which the heart is focusing, either inward toward itself or outward toward God.** The Hebrew word translated “puffed up” paints the picture of a heart that has sought to fill all the empty space with its own desires. There is no room for correction because the heart has already settled on what it believes to be true and there is no room for God because the heart has made its own god. The soul that lives by faith, by contrast, has been emptied of self-reliance and leans on God according to his revealed character and promises.

The contrast in the second half of verse 4 is one of the most quoted lines in the New Testament. Paul cites it in Romans 1:17 to ground the gospel in justification by faith. He cites it again in Galatians 3:11 to defend the gospel against any attempt to add law-keeping to faith as the basis of acceptance with God. The writer of Hebrews cites it in Hebrews 10:38 to encourage suffering Christians to endure rather than shrink back. **The Bible tells one story and the way a sinner is made right with God in Habakkuk’s day is the same way a sinner is made right with God in ours. By faith in the promise of God, which finds its final and full fulfillment in the person and work of Christ.**

The danger in our day is to turn faith into a blind and bibleless attitude, a calm feeling about God that doesn’t require much of anything from us. Hebrews 11 presents the exact opposite idea. Every time the writer of Hebrews defines faith by example, he reaches for a verb of action. **Faith in the biblical sense is the most active posture a human heart can take, because it gives up its hold on the self and obeys God.** This is where the church today most needs the rebuke of Habakkuk 2:4. **We have produced a Christianity that is comfortable adding faith to a life that is governed by self, when Scripture is calling for a life that is governed by faith and the self has been dethroned.** The puffed up soul will run a household, a calendar, a marriage, even a religious life on the strength of its own management. The soul living by faith brings every one of those things under the lordship of Christ and trusts him with the outcomes.

It is worth noticing how the context of verse 5 intensifies the warning. The puffed up soul is not simply confident; it is restless, never satisfied, gathering nations the way Sheol gathers the dead. **Pride and discontent are symptoms of the same disease, because a heart that is its own god can never gather enough to feel like a satisfied king.** This is the driving-force behind much of what passes for ambition in the modern church where identity is too easily measured by visible output rather than dependence on God. Ecclesiastes 5:10 explains that the one who loves money will not be satisfied with money. Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 calls the weary and heavy laden to come to him and find rest for their souls. Faith is the means by which a person has justification in Christ, but it is also the only posture in which a human being can finally stop striving and rest. **The righteous live by faith because the righteous have stopped trying to be God.**

To Ponder:

4. Verse 5 connects pride directly to an insatiable appetite, picturing greed as wide as Sheol. What does this tell us about the nature of sin itself, and why does Scripture so often link pride and discontentment together?
5. If faith in Christ is the only posture in which a human being can finally rest, why might there be so much constant exhaustion and burnout amongst believers today?
6. What areas of your life might reveal that you say you trust God but your decisions and stress levels suggest otherwise?