

## **FAITH WORKS...**

We are not saved by faith plus works, but rather by a faith that works. A living faith demonstrates itself in the life. Paul explains that the gospel “is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes,” but then goes on to emphasize that in saving faith, “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” (Rom. 1:16-17) Here, Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4.

### **Habakkuk 2:4 (NKJV)**

4 “Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

In contrast to the proud are the just (or the righteous) who live by faith. This is the ultimate issue. There are the proud who are lost, and there are the saved who are a humbled people of faith. Faith by its very nature has been humbled as seen in this contextual emphasis. This verse speaks to the very nature of true faith. And this is the great issue before God.

What does it mean when it says, “**the just shall live by his faith**”? Is this saying that we have life by faith or that if we have true faith we will live accordingly? In short, I would argue that the answer is “yes” on both counts.

This verse here in Hab. 2:4b is the KEY verse in the NT that develops the theme of “**Justification by Faith**”. It is quoted three times in three KEY doctrinal NT books as seen in Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; and Heb. 10:38.

“It may be best to enrich our idea of the NT meaning of “faith” from the OT. ... Indeed, if many modern evangelical preachers would give to the word “faith” the meaning which the Hebrew word bears, there would be less superficiality in the profession and practice of Christianity.”

– **Wycliffe Bible Commentary**

That makes perfect sense since Paul and the writer of Hebrews quote from this foundational text in Hab. 2:4b to establish their premise of justification by faith. It makes sense that the principle regarding the nature of justifying faith is being built upon. Further revelation builds on already existing revelation.

The word translated as “**faith**” (Heb. emunah) in Hab. 2:4b could just as well be translated as “**faithfulness**” (cf. 2 Kg. 12:15; Jer. 5:1).

“The word translated *faith* in this passage is *emunah*, which means *firmness, faithfulness, fidelity*. ... The word translated *faith* denotes *faithfulness*. Justifying faith will manifest itself in faithful living before the Lord.” – **David Levi**

“Faithfulness and faith are related. One who trusts in the Lord is one who relies on Him and is faithful to Him.” – **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

“Thus these ideas are more similar than they are different. One who has faith in God will also live in faithfulness to Him. Likely, the author intended both ideas in this verse.” – **The Moody Bible Commentary**

In Romans 1:16-17 Paul emphasizes that the believer’s salvation is acquired by faith, but at the same time shows it is then lived out in faith. The righteousness acquired in saving faith is revealed from faith to faith as the just live by faith. Thus, Paul here combines faith with the fruit of faithfulness. The saved have LIFE through faith and then it demonstrates itself in LIVING by faith.

This phrase, “***justification by faith***” became the watchword of the Protestant Reformation. And fittingly, the Reformers emphasized that ***we are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves does not remain alone***. This is the right balance and nuance of “the just shall live by faith”.

We have life by faith (Gal. 3:11) and we live by faith (Heb. 10:38-39)!