

View

A Publication of the Folsom Point church of Christ, 900 E. Natoma, Folsom, CA 95630

June 8, 2008

The Just Shall Live by... What?

The importance of faith in a world intoxicated by sight

The words of Habakkuk 2:4, "the just shall live by faith" are familiar to most Bible students. Paul quoted the statement in Rom. 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, as did the writer of Hebrews (10:38).

The statement is instructive, especially when we understand its original setting in Habakkuk. The time is just before the first exiles went into Babylon captivity (606 BC). The prophet voices his concern about the wickedness of his people in Judah, wondering how long God would allow the evil oppressors to prevail over the righteous. Yahweh's answer was not what Habakkuk expected. The Lord would bring in the Chaldeans to punish Judah. Habakkuk can't understand why God would punish Judah with a nation that is even more wicked than they. He asks the question, then waits on the ramparts to see what God would say to him "when I am reproved" (2: 1). Yahweh answers that the Chaldeans (Babylonians) will also be punished. In fact, all the guilty would be punished because, "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith" (2:4). Habakkuk was afraid when he heard the speech of the Lord (3:2, 16), but his fear turned to faith because of the revelation of God

"HABAKKUK... FACED A CRISIS CAUSED BY HIS FAITH AND HIS FAITH WAS ALL HE HAD TO ANSWER IT. THERE WAS NO WAY HE WAS GOING TO UNDERSTAND ALL THAT WAS GOING ON. HE WOULD EITHER BELIEVE THAT GOD KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING, OR NOT."

(3:17-19). Habakkuk improved his outlook and lived by his faith.

Like Habakkuk, our outlook determines our outcome. It is our faith, or lack of it, which determines how we conduct our lives and, ultimately, where we spend eternity. There are only two possible attitudes toward life. We either view our life

in terms of our belief in God and the conclusions we are entitled to draw from that belief or we base our outlook upon a rejection of God and the corresponding denials that result from that rejection.

What conclusions are we entitled to draw from our belief? For one thing, we are

entitled — expected — to believe that God is acting in our best interests in everything we do, whether we understand it or not.

Look at Habakkuk. He faced a crisis caused by his faith and his faith was all he had to answer it. There was no way he was going to understand all that was going on. He would either believe that God knew what He was doing, or not.

But Habakkuk understood what not believing meant. Lack of belief in God's sovereignty was to fail to believe in God at all. And so the conclusion

Habakkuk was entitled to draw from his belief was that God was in charge, in spite of what the circumstances told him. In this, his faith was identical to Abraham's, who "went out not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8) and who "hope against (human) hope" (Romans 4:18). Sometimes, our insistence in making faith and obedience the same thing ignores these obvious examples of believing when there is, in fact, nothing we are to do but believe (which is sometimes much more difficult than doing). As one writer expressed it, "Don't just do something, stand there!"

Living by faith is what justifies us before God. So what is it? "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Living by faith means adopting the standard of nothing less (or for that matter, nothing more) than the word of God. We give mental assent to what God tells us, but it is more than that. We must turn from ourselves and our reliance on all human criteria of judgment, and turn completely to God. A person who is alive by faith will always produce any works God asks of him; obedience from one who has faith "goes without saying" (James 2:17ff.).

But sometimes faith requires a simple commitment to believe God and then wait for Him to act. It is accepting God's word (not just believing it), even though physical circumstances do not warrant such faith. Habakkuk waited for God's answer and then accepted it – not necessarily without question at first (God likes our questions!), but he finally just accepted the answer. It is those who wait on the Lord who will "mount up with wings like eagles" (Isa. 40:3 1). On the other hand, when we attempt to rush or "help" the Lord, we are acting more like turkeys!

There are several alternatives to "living by faith." The most obvious is to live by sight (cf. II Corinthians 5:7). But what does that mean? First, for the average individual, it means living for today. Habakkuk had to understand that his today's were turning to ash and he had to put his faith in the God of tomorrow. Most people refuse to see beyond their immediate future, until it's too late.

Another way of living by sight is to emphasize experience over faith. Some folks are as fickle as water. Their faith is totally dependent upon how God and others treat them (as they see it). If feelings are hurt or shaken then their faith is shaken. If God cannot be manipulated, they pout. They are living not by faith but by feeling, which is to say, "by sight."

A common replacement for faith is "experience." Many have concluded that sound churches of Christ are stodgy and not nearly progressive enough. They would like to see more splash, pizzazz and dazzle in the church. I mentioned in a sermon last week that during a meeting with a preacher who is from California, but whose resonant voice betrays his Birmingham origins, a visitor wrote on the back of a visitor card, apparently to his spouse, "I feel like we're in the 1940's in the South." I'll not judge what he meant by that, but if I were the preacher, I'd take it as a compliment! The spiritual atmosphere of the 1940's was purer than it is today, even in the average congregation of Christians. So, if we are duplicating the simplicity, decorum and purity not so much of the 1940's, especially, but of the first century church, we are doing all right. I hope it means we – as a church – are living by faith and not by sight. Our "excitement" needs to come from our faith in the resurrected Christ, not in a manufactured program of work or gimmicky worship services.

Habakkuk had many questions and was even afraid of the answers he might receive. Yet he took the questions to God anyway, and waited for the answer. We need to pay attention to the path he took, because all the righteous must take it: he traveled from fear to faith. For Habakkuk, it all began with the "fear of the Lord." He was one of the very few of his day to live by faith. He was one of the very few of his day, therefore, to be justified by God.

David Posey

Agenda

The Lord's Day, June 8, 2008

9:30 AM: Worship: Singing, Lord's Supper, Preaching

• Preaching: David Posey, The Story

5:00 PM: Lord's Supper, Preaching.

Classes @ 5:30 PM

Auditorium, I John

• Teacher: Dennis Wade

Room 11-12,

Characters of the Bible

• Teacher: Bryan Byrd.

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

7:30 PM, Classes

Auditorium, Proverbs

• Teacher: Randy Clark (Jeff Clark, Assisting)

Room 11-12, James

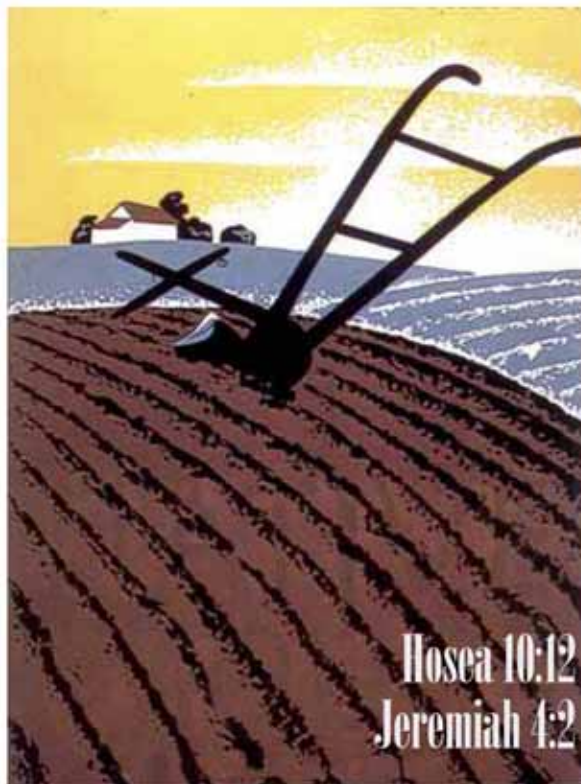
• Teacher: David Posey, Sr. (Zac Brown, Assisting)

Notes

Most sermons are available in MP3 format on our website (www.folsomchurch.com) or on CD (see a deacon).

Chart of the Week

Break up
your
FALLOW
ground!



But Jesus said to him, **“No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”**

Luke 9:62

The church of Christ

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly

9:30 AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM

Wednesday Bible Study

7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.

Private classes arranged
at your convenience.

www.folsomchurch.com

Webmaster: Richard Harvey