

## THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY HIS FAITH

**“See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright — but the righteous will live by his faith— “ (Hab 2:4)**

The prophet Habakkuk is only mentioned by name two times in the Bible (Hab. 1:1; 3:1). He is quoted by Paul as a warning to the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia: **“Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you.” (Acts 13:41)**

This quotation is from Hab. 1:5 and involves the fact that God raised up the Babylonians to punish Judah for their transgressions. When the prophets warned about this, the arrogant Jews scoffed at the idea that God would allow the ruthless pagans of Babylon to defeat His own people. They were wrong! God allowed the Babylonians to pounce on Judah like wolves on a lamb or vultures swooping down to devour. Paul’s warning is applicable not only to arrogant Jews 2,000 years ago, but also to arrogant people in every generation. Whom the Lord loves He chastens (Heb. 12:6). No one should ever be so arrogant and proud that they feel immune to the wrath of God., for pride goes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction (Prov. 16:18).

But what about the Babylonians? Would they be able to escape the wrath of God? The answer “no!”. God was going to punish Babylon too. God wanted His condemnation of Babylon to be written in such bold letters that someone could run and read it at the same time (Hab. 2:2).

Now the tables are turned and the proud Babylonians scoff at the idea of ever being defeated. Some say that the walls around Babylon were 300 feet high and 90 feet thick. When the Medes and Persians gathered outside those walls King Belshazzar felt so secure that he had a party. He arrogantly summoned a thousand of his nobles to a great banquet. You know about the “handwriting on the wall”. It meant that Belshazzar would die that very night, and Babylon defeated.

So our text presents a contrast between the proud and the humble. The proud is puffed up and his desires are sinful. By contrast, however, the righteous live by faith. They believe the Judge of the earth will pay back the proud with what they deserve (Ps. 94:2). The captivity of God’s people did not last forever and their faith in God lifted them up in times of discouragement.

Habakkuk 2:4, as you know, is quoted three times in the New Testament Scriptures. Each time it carries with it the same encouragement and optimism it gave to the Jews who originally received it.

- **“The righteous will live by faith” (Rom. 1:17).** A short time before Paul dictated these words he had been so discouraged that he despaired even of life (2 Cor. 1:8).
- **“The righteous will live by faith” (Gal. 3:11).** The Galatian letter is unique in that Paul gave them no compliment. He states his credentials and immediately expressed astonishment that they were so soon abandoning Christ and preaching a different gospel (Gal. 1:6).
- **“But my righteous one will live by faith” (Heb. 10:38).** The letter to the Hebrews is filled with warnings lest they have a sinful, unbelieving heart and turn away from the Living God (Heb. 3:12).

As we have already stated, the message of Habakkuk carries with it the same optimism about the future every time it is quoted.

What about you? Are you going through a time of testing where the wicked one is tempting you to quit? Are you, like Paul, “hard pressed”, “perplexed”, “persecuted” and “struck down”? (2 Cor. 4:7,8). If so, the Bible has “Good News” for you. God’s righteous ones do not live by sight, but by faith. What we see with human eyes involves things that are temporal, what we see by faith involves eternity (2 Cor. 4:18).