

**“FAITH ALONE!!!!”**

**A SERMON BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOK OF HABAKKUK (2:4) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON SEPTEMBER 6, 2020----- (THE THIRD MESSAGE IN A FIVE WEEK SERMON SERIES TITLED STRONG FAITH FOR CONFUSING TIMES)**

**PAUL WRITES IN HIS LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME (ROMANS 1:17): *“FOR IN THE GOSPEL THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED ---- A RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS BY FAITH FROM FIRST TO LAST, JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN: “THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH.”***

**NOTE THE LAST PART OF THAT VERSE WHERE PAUL SAYS, “JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN.” THAT MEANS HE IS QUOTING THE OLD TESTAMENT.**

WHERE DID HE FIND THE PHRASE, “THE  
RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH”? IT COMES  
FROM HABAKKUK 2:4.....OUR TEXT FOR TODAY....  
“FOR IN IT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS  
REVEALED FROM FAITH TO FAITH; AS IT IS  
WRITTEN, BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE  
BY FAITH” (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE  
(NASB))

SCHOLARS APPEAR TO BE UNIVERSAL IN THEIR  
VIEW THAT THIS IS THE CENTRAL VERSE OF THE  
PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK. IT IS CERTAINLY ONE  
OF THE MOST CRUCIAL VERSES IN THE BIBLE.

HERE IS A VERSE SO IMPORTANT THAT IT TAKES  
THREE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS TO EXPLAIN IT.  
THE PHRASE “THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”  
IS QUOTED IN ROMANS 1:17, AS WE HAVE SEEN  
ABOVE, GALATIANS (3:11), AND HEBREWS  
(10:38.)

**THIS IS THE TEXT THAT CHANGED THE WORLD.**

**IT FIRST CHANGED A MAN, AND THAT MAN**

**CHANGED THE WORLD.**

**MOST OF US KNOW THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER, AT ONE TIME AN OBSCURE ROMAN CATHOLIC MONK, WHO ENTERED THE MONASTERY SEEKING TO BE SET FREE FROM THE HEAVY BURDEN OF GUILT HE FELT BECAUSE OF HIS SIN.... THOUGH HE WAS AN OBEDIENT SON OF THE CHURCH, HE FOUND NO REST FOR HIS SOUL IN PRAYER AND FASTING AND PENANCE..... HIS EYES WERE OPENED BY GOD WHEN HE STUDIED THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS..... AS HE CAME TO ROMANS 1:17, HE PONDERED THE MEANING OF THE QUOTATION FROM HABAKKUK 2:4. THAT YOU READ ABOVE....**

REFLECTING BACK ON WHAT THIS TEXT MEANT  
IN HIS LIFE, LUTHER OFFERED THIS TESTIMONY:

WHEN BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, I UNDERSTOOD  
THESE WORDS—"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY  
FAITH"—THEN I FELT BORN AGAIN LIKE A NEW  
MAN. I ENTERED THROUGH THE OPEN DOORS  
INTO THE VERY PARADISE OF GOD.

WHEN MARTIN LUTHER FOUND THIS TEXT—OR  
MORE ACCURATELY—WHEN THIS TEXT FOUND  
HIM, IT TURNED HIS LIFE UPSIDE DOWN. NO  
LONGER WAS HE WILLING TO REMAIN A SIMPLE  
MONK IN AN OBSCURE MONASTERY IN A LITTLE  
KNOWN PLACE.....

**ONCE THE BLAZING TRUTH OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH GRIPPED HIS SOUL, HE IGNITED A FIRE THAT EVENTUALLY SPREAD THROUGHOUT EUROPE AND EVENTUALLY TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.**

**YET THIS LITTLE PHRASE, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH," COMES ALMOST AS AN ASIDE. IN HABAKKUK 2 GOD PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT ON THE WICKED BABYLONIANS. BECAUSE THEY ARE GREEDY AND ARROGANT AND BLOODTHIRSTY AND RUTHLESS, BECAUSE THEY KILL WITHOUT REMORSE, AND BECAUSE THEY GIVE THEMSELVES OVER TO EVERY SORT OF EVIL, GOD PROMISES TO ONE DAY DESTROY THEM.**

**BUT THAT DAY IS A LONG WAY OFF.**

**BABYLON WON'T BE DESTROYED FOR ALMOST  
70 YEARS.**

**THEY STILL HAVE LOTS OF LOOTING LEFT TO  
DO....**

**THEY WILL PLUNDER MANY NATIONS.**

**THEIR END IS DETERMINED, BUT IT WON'T  
HAPPEN FOR A LONG TIME.**

**WHAT DO YOU DO WHILE YOU WATCH THE BAD  
GUYS STEAL AND MAIM AND KILL OR ENSLAVE  
THEIR ENEMIES?**

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN EVILDOERS COME TO  
POWER? ----WELL-----THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY  
FAITH.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR PRAYERS GO  
UNANSWERED? ---WELL----THE JUST SHALL LIVE  
BY FAITH.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR DREAMS TURN  
TO ASHES? ----WELL----THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY  
FAITH.

WHEN ALL YOU SEE IS TROUBLE ON EVERY  
HAND, THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON REMEMBERS  
THAT GOD IS STILL ON HIS THRONE, AND WHEN  
THE DARK CLOUDS BREAK OVERHEAD, ONE  
SAYS: "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."



HOW MUCH DID HABAKKUK UNDERSTAND ABOUT LUTHER AND THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING AT ALL. HE UNDERSTOOD THESE WORDS ENTIRELY IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS OWN TIMES. MORE THAN 600 YEARS LATER THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVED PAUL TO QUOTE THESE WORDS TO PROVE THAT THE GOSPEL WAS NO INNOVATION BUT HAD BEEN PREDICTED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. AND 1500 YEARS AFTER THAT, MARTIN LUTHER FOUND REST FOR HIS SOUL WHEN HE UNDERSTOOD THE TRUE MEANING OF “THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

**AS WE REFLECTED EARLIER----THIS IS THE  
VERSE THAT CHANGED LUTHER'S LIFE: "“FOR IN  
THE GOSPEL THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS  
REVEALED ---- A RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT IS BY  
FAITH FROM FIRST TO LAST, JUST AS IT IS  
WRITTEN: “THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY  
FAITH.”**

**IN THE PREVIOUS VERSE OF THAT LETTER PAUL  
DECLARED THAT THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF  
GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO  
BELIEVES..... NOW HE EXPLAINS WHY THE  
GOSPEL IS SO POWERFUL.**

***1. IT REVEALS A RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES FROM GOD.***

**THE WORD RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES FROM THE COURTRROOMS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD. IT MEANS TO DECLARE "NOT GUILTY" AND TO DECLARE SOMEONE INNOCENT OF ALL CHARGES. IF YOU ARE RIGHTEOUS IN GOD'S EYES, YOU CAN STAND BEFORE HIM AND BE DECLARED "NOT GUILTY."**

**THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST PROVIDES FOR US WHAT WE COULD NEVER PROVIDE FOR OURSELVES..... WHO AMONG US WOULD DARE TO SAY, "I AM GOOD ENOUGH TO GO TO HEAVEN"?**

***AS SOMEONE HAS SAID, "A CLEAR CONSCIENCE IS THE RESULT OF A POOR MEMORY." THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY ARE GOOD ENOUGH TO GO TO HEAVEN ARE THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW HOW BAD THEY REALLY ARE!***

**RIGHTEOUSNESS IS WHAT WE NEED BUT DO NOT HAVE. THEREFORE GOD, KNOWING THAT WE COULD NEVER BE RIGHTEOUS ON OUR OWN, PROVIDED A RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES DOWN TO US FROM HEAVEN ABOVE. IT'S NOT EARNED OR DESERVED BUT IS GIVEN TO US BY GOD AS A FREE GIFT.**

THE REFORMERS HAD A SPECIAL TERM FOR THIS. THEY SAID WE NEED “ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS.” THE TERM ALIEN MEANS “FROM ANOTHER PLACE.” TO SAY THAT WE ARE SAVED BY ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS MEANS THAT *WE ARE SAVED BY RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES “FROM ANOTHER PLACE.” IT COMES NOT FROM WITHIN US AS A RESULT OF OUR GOOD DEEDS BUT FROM OUTSIDE OF US ENTIRELY.*

WHERE CAN A GUILTY SINNER FIND RIGHTEOUSNESS “FROM ANOTHER PLACE”? HE CAN FIND IT IN JESUS CHRIST! THAT’S THE “ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS” THAT SAVES GUILTY SINNERS.

**THAT BRINGS US TO THE SECOND REASON WHY  
THE GOSPEL IS SO POWERFUL.**

***2. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD IS RECEIVED  
ONLY BY FAITH.***

***THE KEY WORD HERE IS FAITH..... OUR TEXT  
SAYS THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RECEIVED “BY  
FAITH FROM FIRST TO LAST.” EVERYONE WHO IS  
SAVED IS SAVED THE SAME WAY. IT IS FAITH  
ALONE AND FAITH ALWAYS. HOW CAN I BE  
RIGHT WITH GOD? THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE: BY  
RECEIVING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THAT  
COMES ONLY BY FAITH.***

**WE NEED THIS BECAUSE WE'RE ALL IN THE  
SAME BOAT AND THE BOAT IS GOING DOWN.  
PAUL ALSO WRITES IN ROMANS: (ROMANS  
3:22B-23) *"THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE, FOR ALL  
HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY  
OF GOD."***

**NOTE THAT LITTLE PHRASE—"NO DIFFERENCE."  
NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RICH AND POOR,  
YOUNG AND OLD, BLACK OR WHITE, MALE OR  
FEMALE..... WE ALL STAND CONDEMNED BY OUR  
SIN AND ALL OF US ARE UNDER THE JUDGMENT  
OF GOD. OUR SINS MAY NOT BE EXACTLY THE  
SAME, BUT WE ARE ALL SINNERS  
NONETHELESS.**

**WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT, AND THE BOAT HAS SPRUNG A HUGE LEAK. IF GOD DOESN'T DO SOMETHING, WE WILL ALL PERISH TOGETHER.**

**NOW----MANY OF US HAVE A BIG PROBLEM WITH THIS BECAUSE DEEP DOWN INSIDE WE SECRETLY THINK THAT GOD MAKES DEALS.**

**THAT IF WE WILL ONLY TRY HARD ENOUGH, DO OUR BEST, CLEAN UP OUR ACT, PLAY BY THE RULES, AND TREAT PEOPLE RIGHT, THEN GOD WILL LET US INTO HEAVEN IN THE END.**



**BUT REMEMBER THIS.....JESUS CHRIST WAS  
PURE, HOLY, AND PERFECT IN EVERY WAY. HE  
NEVER SINNED, NOT EVEN ONE TIME. THOUGH  
HE WAS SEVERELY TEMPTED, HE NEVER GAVE  
IN. ALL THE REST OF US FALL SO FAR SHORT  
THAT WE CANNOT BEGIN TO BE COMPARED TO  
HIM. HE IS THE ONLY RIGHTEOUS MAN EVER TO  
WALK THIS EARTH.**

**AND WE CRUCIFIED HIM.**

**HIS REWARD FOR DOING GOD'S WILL WAS  
DEATH ON A ROMAN CROSS. HERE IS THE  
WONDER OF GRACE AT WORK. FROM THE  
MURDER OF A PERFECT MAN CAME GOD'S PLAN  
TO RESCUE THE HUMAN RACE.**

**FORGET MAKING DEALS....FORGET THINKING  
THAT YOU CAN DO ALL OF THIS ON YOUR  
OWN.....LEARN THIS IMPORTANT LESSON: IF  
YOU COME TO GOD ON THE BASIS OF YOUR  
GOOD WORKS, YOU WILL BE TURNED AWAY  
BECAUSE YOU MISS THE MARK OF 100%  
PERFECTION.**

**BUT IF COME TO GOD ON THE BASIS OF THE  
RIGHTEOUSNESS PROVIDED BY THE LORD  
JESUS CHRIST, YOU WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

**THERE IS A THIRD REASON WHY THE GOSPEL IS  
SO POWERFUL.**

***3. BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE GOSPEL MEN  
AND WOMEN ARE DECLARED JUST IN THE EYES  
OF GOD.***

**"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." ----IT WAS  
THIS TEXT—QUOTED BY PAUL IN ROMANS 1:17—  
THAT ULTIMATELY SHOOK MARTIN LUTHER TO  
THE CORE AND BROUGHT HIM TO SAVING FAITH  
IN JESUS CHRIST.**

**ON THIS POINT, I QUOTE FROM A LETTER BY DR. PAUL LUTHER, THE REFORMER'S YOUNGEST SON:**

***IN THE YEAR 1544, MY LATE DEAREST FATHER, IN THE PRESENCE OF US ALL, NARRATED THE WHOLE STORY OF HIS JOURNEY TO ROME. HE ACKNOWLEDGED WITH GREAT JOY THAT, IN THAT CITY, THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST, HE HAD COME INTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL. IT HAPPENED THIS WAY. AS HE REPEATED HIS PRAYERS ON THE LATERAN STAIRCASE, THE WORDS OF THE PROPHET HABAKKUK CAME SUDDENLY TO HIS MIND, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."***

***THEREUPON HE CEASED HIS PRAYERS,  
RETURNED TO WITTENBERG, AND TOOK THIS AS  
THE CHIEF FOUNDATION OF ALL HIS DOCTRINE.***

**(QUOTED IN A BUNCH OF EVERLASTINGS, BY  
FRANK BOREHAM, PP. 19-20.)**

***FROM THAT UNLIKELY BEGINNING CAME THE  
PROTESTANT REFORMATION..... AND WITH IT THE  
BATTLE CRY SOLA FIDE, "BY FAITH ALONE."***

***FAITH ALONE!* NOT BY WORKS OF THE LAW.**

**FAITH ALONE! NOT BY OBEDIENCE TO THE  
CHURCH.**

***FAITH ALONE!* NOT BY HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

***FAITH ALONE!* NOT BY BAPTISM.**

**FAITH ALONE! NOT BY GOOD INTENTIONS.**

**FAITH ALONE! NOT BY THE SACRAMENTS.**

**FAITH ALONE! NOT BY ACTS OF CHARITY.**

**FAITH ALONE! PLUS NOTHING AND MINUS**

**NOTHING!**

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE "FAITH ALONE" IN THIS SENSE? IF YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BELIEVE A DOCTOR WHEN HE SAYS, "YOU NEED SURGERY," YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE FAITH. IF YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO STEP INTO AN AIRPLANE ENTRUSTING YOUR SAFETY TO THE CAPTAIN IN THE COCKPIT, YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE FAITH.**

IF YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO ASK A  
LAWYER TO PLEAD YOUR CASE IN COURT, YOU  
KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE FAITH. FAITH IS  
COMPLETE RELIANCE UPON ANOTHER PERSON  
TO DO THAT WHICH YOU COULD NEVER DO FOR  
YOURSELF.

*HOW MUCH FAITH DOES IT TAKE TO GO TO  
HEAVEN? IT DEPENDS. THE ANSWER IS NOT  
MUCH AND ALL YOU'VE GOT. IF YOU ARE  
WILLING TO TRUST JESUS CHRIST WITH AS  
MUCH FAITH AS YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE, YOU  
CAN BE SAVED.*

**BUT IF YOU'RE HOLDING ANYTHING BACK,  
THINKING THAT MAYBE YOU NEED TO DO  
SOMETHING TO HELP SAVE YOURSELF, FORGET  
IT! SAVING FAITH IS PUTTING YOUR TRUST IN  
JESUS CHRIST AND HIM ALONE. IN ORDER TO DO  
THAT YOU HAVE TO STOP TRYING TO SAVE  
YOURSELF.**

**ONE COMMENTATOR SAID THAT BELIEVING IN  
JESUS MEANS TRUSTING HIM SO MUCH THAT IF  
HE CAN'T TAKE YOU TO HEAVEN, YOU AREN'T  
GOING TO GO THERE..... THINK ABOUT THAT....**



**FOR ME-----IF JESUS CAN'T TAKE ME TO HEAVEN,  
THEN I'LL NEVER MAKE IT BECAUSE I'M GOING  
"ALL IN" ON HIM..... I DON'T HAVE A PLAN B.**

**SOMETIMES PEOPLE SAY, "DON'T PUT ALL YOUR  
EGGS IN ONE BASKET." THAT MAY BE GOOD  
ADVICE WHEN IT COMES TO INVESTING YOUR  
MONEY, BUT IT'S TERRIBLE ADVICE FOR  
INVESTING YOUR SOUL.**

**SO-----I'M "ALL IN" ON JESUS!**

**THERE IS GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS FROM  
OUR TEXT. THE BAD NEWS FIRST: YOU HAVE NO  
OTHER HOPE OF HEAVEN OUTSIDE OF JESUS  
CHRIST. GOOD WORKS CANNOT SAVE YOU.**

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CANNOT SAVE YOU.  
BAPTISM CANNOT SAVE YOU. GIVING MONEY  
CANNOT SAVE YOU. KEEPING THE TEN  
COMMANDMENTS CANNOT SAVE YOU. NOTHING  
YOU CAN DO WILL MAKE THE LEAST BIT OF  
DIFFERENCE CONCERNING YOUR ETERNAL  
SALVATION. IF YOU ARE TRUSTING IN YOUR  
GOOD LIFE OR IN YOUR RELIGION TO GET YOU  
TO HEAVEN, SOMEDAY YOU WILL BE SADLY  
(AND ETERNALLY) DISAPPOINTED.**

**NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS. THOSE WHO PUT  
THEIR TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST ARE SAVED  
FOREVER. THAT'S THE REAL MEANING OF "THE  
JUST WILL LIVE BY FAITH."**

**A METHODIST PREACHER NAMED JOHN  
STOCKTON WROTE A HYMN THAT BECAME  
POPULAR WHEN IRA SANKEY USED IT AS AN  
INVITATION HYMN DURING D. L. MOODY'S  
EVANGELISTIC CAMPAIGNS IN GREAT BRITAIN IN  
THE 1870S.**

**IT TURNS OUT THAT SANKEY THOUGHT THE ORIGINAL WORDS WERE A LITTLE TOO SENTIMENTAL SO HE CHANGED THEM SLIGHTLY.**

**BUT ONE COMMENTATOR HAPPENED TO FIND ONE VERSE OF THE ORIGINAL VERSION WRITTEN BY JOHN STOCKTON..... THIS IS THE VERSE THAT REALLY SUMMARIZES OUR MESSAGE/OUR TEST FOR TODAY:**

**ANYONE ANYWHERE CAN BE SAVED**

**O JESUS, BLESSED JESUS, DEAR,**

**I'M COMING NOW TO THEE;**

**SINCE THOU HAST MADE THE WAY SO CLEAR**

**AND FULL SALVATION FREE.**

**THOSE WORDS, THOUGH RARELY SUNG TODAY,  
PERFECTLY EXPRESS WHAT I'VE BEEN TRYING  
TO SAY IN THIS SERMON.**

**ANYONE,**

**ANYWHERE,**

**ANY TIME,**

**CAN BE SAVED BY**

**TRUSTING IN CHRIST.**

**THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL!!!!.**

**THE DEATH OF CHRIST PROVIDES THE FULL  
PAYMENT FOR OUR SINS. WHAT WE COULD NOT  
DO FOR OURSELVES, GOD HAS DONE FOR US  
THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON. THE ONLY  
THING LEFT IS TO BELIEVE IN HIM.**

**IT ALL COMES DOWN TO SIX SIMPLE WORDS:**

**THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**

**THAT'S THE MESSAGE WE PREACH.**

**THIS THE TEXT THAT CHANGED THE WORLD.**

**AND IT ALL STARTED WITH HABAKKUK 2600  
YEARS AGO.**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND  
FOR ME!!!! AMEN**