

## *The Righteous Shall Live by Faith*

### *Key Scripture*

***“...the righteous shall live by faith.” Hab. 2:4***

***“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,  
having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,  
and our bodies washed with pure water.” Heb. 10:22 (KJV)***

### *Portion for the Journey*

**“The righteous shall live by faith”** is quoted four times in the Scripture, once in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament. Because it is repeated so many times, it is very important that we take care to understand and apply this truth in our lives! The first time this statement was made was in Habakkuk 2:4 and is in the context of the LORD bringing tremendous judgment upon the nation of Israel for their rebellion and sin. In the midst of His pronouncement that a nation much stronger and very fierce was coming against Israel, the LORD assures Habakkuk that “the righteous shall live by faith.” (See also Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38)



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*The righteous do not just believe in God,  
They believe God!*

R.C. Sproul

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**There are several ways this verse can be interpreted** and it is believed the LORD wants us to understand it in all the various dimensions of the original language.

- The **“righteous”** are those who live not by their own right acts but by their faith and obedience to the standard of God’s righteousness. The word “righteousness” used in this passage is the ethical, moral standard based on the nature and will of God. The righteous will do right things because of their faith in God and their desire to obey him. Abraham believed God and it was counted to Him as righteousness. Gen. 15:6
- The phrase **“shall live”** means 1) to stay alive or be preserved, referring to our protection in times of judgment. God promises to protect those who are righteous and to keep them alive in the day of trouble. 2) This phrase also means to live in a certain manner, to walk in righteousness that comes by faith. Our life, our daily walk, depends on making choices to place our faith and trust in God in all things. 3) to live and breathe by faith, to flourish, to enjoy life, live in happiness, recover health.
- **“by faith”** implies not only the knowledge of God in fact, but the placement of one’s utmost confidence, assurance and trust in Him based on His truth. It is one’s personal confidence and conviction in the total reliability of another to tell them the truth and to keep their promises. True Biblical faith always results in trust and obedience and submission will follow.

The Hebrew word for 'faith' used in this passage is 'emunah' (Strong's #530). It means to be assured, to walk in faithfulness based on the truth, firmness and security of the person or thing in which one trusts. It carries the idea of moral fidelity, stability and steadiness. The heart of the root of this word is "certainty or assurance." (See Heb. 11:1). In the Hebrew, this word is used to portray the strong arms of a parent supporting the helpless infant, or the pillars of support upon which the stability and firmness of a structure rests. In Ps. 31:23; 12:1; 2 Sam. 20:19 the participle of this word refers to 'one who is confirmed, assured and established' in faith. To be faithful or sure includes the basis of our certainty resting on the character and trustworthiness of God Himself and His covenant.

One interesting connection of the relationship between belief (or faith) and being established is found in Isaiah 7:9, in which the LORD warned Ahaz that unless he believes, he will certainly not be established. The New American Standard version of the Bible translates this, "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last." The English Standard Version translates this, "If you are not firm in your faith, you are not firm at all."

Derivatives of this word "Emunah" include, amongst others, 'aman,' one of the names of God that may be translated literally, 'faithful establisher' or 'tender nursing father.' (see Names of God: Aman, Our Faithful Establisher) The word 'amen' used frequently in the New Testament, is also translated 'verily' and was used by Jesus to stress the absolute certainty of a matter. The word 'amen' used at the end of our prayers speaks of Jesus watching over our prayers to bring them to pass. (See Names of God: Jesus, Our Amen)

R.C. Sproul, in his commentary on the book of Romans explained, "the one thing that characterizes the righteous person is, above all else, an abiding trust in God and His promises. Because righteous people trust the LORD, they continue to believe Him when He seems slow to act. Because they believe God, they are faithful to Him and they obey Him—truly though imperfectly—out of their deep loyalty to Him."

**The Lord's desire is that we would learn to trust Him completely** with hearts fully at rest and assured with absolute certainty in His love for us. The walk of faith is not one that comes naturally but is a moment by moment choice to draw near and trust Him to act in our best interests in every situation we face. This is not something too hard for us. It is not out of our reach. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. We can choose to apply and believe God's Word and find His rest! We can choose to become like little children who completely trust their parent! "Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me [ceased from fretting.]" Rom. 10:17; Ps. 131.2 Amp; Ps. 37; Ps. 1:1-3; Josh. 1:1-9

Hannah Whitall Smith, in her book "The Open Secret", states that "...the assurance of faith is meant a clear and definite knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, of reconciliation with God, and of our relationship with Him as our Father. About these vital matters we must be able to say, "I know." Not "I hope so," or "I wish so," but firmly and unhesitatingly, "I know." She goes on to say that this assurance is necessary for all that we do and that the absence of this certainty is the cause of much of the failure of Christians today because they doubt their parentage and are afraid to take possession of their inheritance in Him. She states "The Old Testament never contemplated the idea of Israelites, who did not know whether they were Israelites or not. Every law given to them or promise made to them, was founded on the previously acknowledged and understood fact, that they did in very truth belong to the family of Israel, and were indeed the people of God. ...No one can read the history of the words and

deeds of the apostles and early believers, without seeing that they were saturated through and through with an utter certainty of their salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was as much a part of them, as their nationality as Jews, or their nativity in Israel, and was no more open to question. Let us try to imagine them as being filled with the doubtings and questionings of modern Christians, and think what effect it would have upon their preaching and their work. We can see in a moment that it would have been fatal to the spread of the Gospel, and that a Church founded on doubters and questionings, could have made no headway in an unbelieving world. This tone of utter assurance runs through all the Epistles. 1 Thes. 1:1-4; Ps. 89:15-16; Isa 60:16; John 14:20; Rom 8:14-17; 8:35-39; John 14:1-3; Eph 1:3-8; 1 Pet 1:3-5

**We are saved by faith. The only condition of our salvation is believing God:** Our decision to believe in Him is based on faith and is a choice. As we walk with Him, develop a greater knowledge of His personality and character through His Word, our faith will deepen and expand. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. John 1:12; John 3:14-18, 36; John 5:9-11, 24; John 6: 28-29; 35; 47; John 11:25-26; John 20:30-31; 1 John 5:1, 13; Romans 10:8-9

**We are not placing faith in “our faith” but in the One True God.** Our faith comes from knowing His character, His love, His word, and His name. Is He trustworthy? Our salvation depends on Jesus. Our assurance of faith comes by knowing Him, not by the strength of our faith. Our faith grows as we take our eyes from ourselves, our weaknesses, and inadequacies in spiritual matters, and look into the face of Jesus Christ. He wants us to know that He is our “All in All.” We are required only to believe and trust Him, and we will be saved. It is often easier to believe that He is our Savior for eternal life than to believe He will help us with pressing matters we face this week. Isa 49:15-16; Ps 37:23-25

**He will perfect what concerns us.** We will have peace with God when we know we can trust Him to do all that is needful in order for us to be perfected in Him. His word says He has already done this through Jesus. The entire message of the Gospel is that we have been reconciled with God, we are granted right standing in His sight because of Jesus. There is so much truth in the beautiful old hymn, “Trust and Obey for there is no other way.” Eph 2:13; Rom 5:1-2; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Gal 3:26-27; Col 1:12-14; 2:13-14; 1 John 2:12-14; 1 Pet 2:9; Heb 11:6

**Holiness comes as a result of our salvation; we are not saved because we are holy.** This is a great misconception of many, who still live according to the law. Satan would desire to keep us wallowing in guilt and condemnation because we are not yet perfect, but God's word tells us that we are being perfected in Jesus and that there is NO CONDEMNATION in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1) The Lord does not want us to walk in sin, to always be seeking to walk in righteousness but He loves it when we take our sin to Him, confess it and ask and rely upon His help in overcoming it. Would a doctor send people away from His office because they are sick or injured, no, it is his business to help those people. So it is God's business to help those who desire to be freed from sin, He is the only answer, He won't reject any who come to Him in their sin and seek His help. Col 3:2-5; 1 John 3:1-3

**God wants us to serve Him as His child,** not as a servant or slave who works because he must, who works for wages, God wants us to serve Him out of love. We cling so tightly to the Lord, afraid that we shall let go of Him and fall. We fail to realize that He is the Father, and He is holding us. The baby does not rest in His mother's arms by his own efforts, neither do we stay in the Lord by our own efforts, He holds us and has promised that He will not drop us. Gal 4:7; Eph 5:1-2

**God is able to keep us in him: We do not need to fear falling away from Him because He has promised to keep us.** Hannah Whitall Smith calls Psalm 121 the “Bible Keep”. She says, ‘the Keep in an ancient castle was always the strongest and best protected room in the Castle, the one which could be the last reached by any enemy. In this Keep all the sick and weak and helpless inmates of the Castle were hidden in every time of danger. The qualification for entrance was simply and only, need and weakness. How foolish then it would have been for any to have made their weakness the reason for remaining outside! And yet how continually is this done towards the Lord’s keep.” Gen 28:15; Psalms 91:1-11; Proverbs 3:23-26; Jude 1:24; Isa 27:3; Jer 31:10; Deut 32:9-10; Psalms 121:1-8; 116:6-8; John 17:11-12; John 6:38-39; 2 Tim 1:12; Isa 26:3; Ps 31:19-20; Ps 25:20; Josh 24:17; John 17:15; 1 Pet 1:5-7; Phil 4:6-7

For further understanding , see the following studies in the Faith series:

Lord, Help My Unbelief Part 2  
Contend Earnestly for the Faith Part 3  
A Childlike Faith Part 4  
Entering Into His Rest by Faith  
Handout: Entering Into His Rest by Andrew Murray

*What is the LORD Speaking to My Heart?*

*My Response to the LORD:*