

“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”

The declaration made by the prophet Habakkuk “The Just Shall Live by Faith” (Hab.2: 2-4), encloses a diversity of meanings and it is quoted three times in the New Testament: in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrew 10:38.

Righteousness is one of the main topics of the book of Romans. God bestows righteousness on mankind on the basis of faith. That’s how Abraham obtained it: *...he **believed** in the LORD; and he counted it to him for **righteousness**. (Gen 15:6), For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the **righteousness of faith**. (Rom 4:13)*

God then, puts in right relation with Himself the person who believes and He declares that whoever is just on the principle of faith, **shall live**.

A careful consideration of the word “faith” and the word “live”, opens out the meaning of this phrase. “Faith” is a translation of the Hebrew word “Pistis” which is faith in the sense of trust and “Live” comes from “Zao” and can be taken literally or figuratively. To live, means to come alive, to breathe, to stay alive, to be preserved, to enjoy life, to recover health and to live eternally.

To me then, the expression “the just shall live by faith” means that I can experience life in its fullness only as I put my trust in the Lord. He said, “ *I am the Way, the Truth and the **Life***” (John 14:6). He gives life, He enriches it, sustains it, preserves it, restores it and releases it through me by my faith.

In chapter 3 of the letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul addresses those Christians who having obtained salvation by faith are now seeking justification by works. In verse 11, he quotes Habakkuk 2:2-4 to accentuate that God’s way of justifying sinners is faith and faith alone, not works; for “*...a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ,... for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* Gal.2:16. Again he says: “ *...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” Gal.2:20.

Accordingly, those who trust in Jesus Christ, who is our Justification, release the Life of Christ by their faith (they “live by faith”).

The third time that the passage from Habakkuk is quoted in the New Testament is in Hebrew 10:38. Like the prophet of the Old Testament, the writer of the book of Hebrews, quoting the phrase “the righteous shall live by faith” or “the righteous by his faith shall live”, implies that the person who puts his trust in God in the midst of trouble (even while the vision delays), will live by that trust. God, who responds to faith, will be faithful in sending deliverance. In this case, “to live” means to have one’s natural life preserved. By faith, Noah lived through the flood and God preserved Daniel’s life, because of his faith.

...thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives ...And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee...” Gen 6:18-19

“Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God” Dan 6:23.

In summary, the phrase “the righteous shall live by faith”, declared by Habakkuk and quoted by Paul and the writer of Hebrews, delivers the message from God that faith puts us in right relationship with Him and releases His Life through us in all dimensions: eternal, spiritual and natural.