Habakkuk - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 55. We Walk by Faith

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“A.,” Cheltenham. The scripture which has occurred to us in connection with your case is Habakkuk 2:4, which is quoted three times in the New Testament; namely, Rom. 1:7; Gal. 3:11; and Heb. 10:38. “The just shall live by faith.” It is not by laborious efforts, made in a spirit of bondage, but by simple, artless trust in Jesus, that those blasphemous thoughts which so afflict you can be overcome. Faith purifies the heart and gives victory over the world. Do not be “trying to keep up” anything; only trust, and you will get down everything.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 5, Living by Faith

" The just shall live by faith." This weighty statement occurs in the second chapter of the prophet Habakkuk; and it is quoted by an inspired apostle in three of his epistles, namely, Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, with a distinct application in each. In Rom. 1:17, it is applied to the great question of righteousness. The blessed apostle declares himself not ashamed of the gospel," For it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, on the principle of faith, to faith; as it is written The just shall live by faith."1

Then, in the third of Galatians, where the apostle is seeking to recall those erring assemblies to the foundations of Christianity, he says, " But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident, for The just shall live by faith."

Finally, in the tenth of Hebrews, where the object is to exhort believers to hold fast their confidence, we read, " Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith." Here we have faith presented not only as the ground of righteousness, but as the vital principle by which we are to live, day by day, from the starting-post to the goal of the christian course. There is no other way of righteousness—no other way of living, but by faith. It is by faith we are justified and by faith we live. By faith we stand; and by faith we walk.

Now, this is true of all Christians; and all should seek to enter into it fully. Every child of God is called to live by faith. It is a very grave mistake indeed to single out certain individuals who happen to have no visible source of temporal supplies, and speak of them as though they alone lived by faith. According to this view of the question, ninety-nine out of every hundred

Christians would he deprived of the precious privilege of living by faith. If a man has a settled income; if he has a certain salary; if he has what is termed a secular calling by which he earns bread for himself and his family, is he not privileged to live by faith? Do none live by faith save those who have no visible means of support? Is the life of faith to be confined to the matter of trusting God for food and raiment?

Who would cede aught so monstrous? It seems to us a complete lowering of the life of faith to confine it to the question of temporal supplies. No doubt, it is a very blessed and a very real thing to trust God for everything; but the life of faith has a far higher and wider range than mere bodily wants. It embraces all that, in anywise, concerns us in body, soul, and spirit. To live by faith is to walk with God; to cling to Him; to lean on Him; to draw from His exhaustless springs; to find all our resources in Him; and to have Him as a perfect covering for our eyes, and a satisfying object for our hearts. To know Him as our only resource, in all difficulties and all our trials. It is to be absolutely, completely, and continually, shut up to Him; to be un-dividedly dependent upon Him, apart from and above every creature confidence, every human hope, and every earthly expectation.

Such is the life of faith. Let us see that we understand it. It must be a reality or nothing at all. It will not do to talk about the life of faith; we must live it; and in order to live it, we must know God practically—know Him intimately, in the deep secret of our own souls. It is utterly vain and delusive to profess to be living by faith and looking to the Lord, when, in reality, our hearts are looking to some creature resource. How often do people speak and write about their dependence upon God to meet certain wants, and by the very fact of their making it known to a fellow mortal, they are, in principle, departing from the life of faith. If I write to a friend, or publish to the church, the fact that I am looking to the Lord to meet a certain need, I am virtually off the ground of faith in that matter. The language of faith is this, " My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." To make known my wants, directly or indirectly, to a human being, is departure from the life of faith, and a positive dishonor done to God. It is actually betraying Him. It is tantamount to saying that God has failed me, and I must look to my fellow for help. It is forsaking the living fountain and turning to a broken cistern. It is placing the creature between my soul and God, thus robbing my soul of rich blessing, and God of the glory due to Him.

This is serious work, and it demands our most solemn attention. God deals in realities. He can never fail a trusting heart. But then He must be trusted. It is of no possible use to talk about trusting Him when our hearts are really looking to creature streams. " What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith?" Empty profession is but a delusion to the soul and a dishonor to God. The true life of faith is a grand reality. God delights in it, and He is glorified by it. There is nothing in all this world that so gratifies and glorifies God, as the life of faith. " Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" Psalm 31:19.

Beloved reader, how is it with you in reference to this great question? Are you living by faith? Can you say, " The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me?" Do you know what it is to have the living God filling the whole

range of your soul's vision? Is He enough for you? Can you trust Him for everything—for body, soul, and spirit—for time and eternity? Or are you in the habit of making known your wants to man, in any one way? Is it the habit of your heart to turn to the creature for sympathy, succor, or counsel?

These are searching questions; but we entreat you not to turn away from them. Be assured it is morally healthful for our souls to be tested faithfully, as in the very presence of God. Our hearts are so terribly treacherous that when we imagine we are leaning upon God, we are really leaning upon some human prop. Thus God is shut out, and we are left in barrenness and desolation.

And yet it is not that God does not use the creature to help and bless us. He does so constantly: and the man of faith will be deeply conscious of this fact, and truly grateful to every human agent that God uses to help him. God comforted Paul by the coming of Titus; but had Paul been looking to Titus, he would have had but little comfort. God used the poor widow to feed Elijah, but Elijah's dependence was not upon the widow, but upon God. Thus it is in every case.

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