

Galatians 3:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Analysis

But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. The conjunction 'but' (de, δέ) contrasts the curse of Law (v. 10) with the impossibility of justification by Law. 'No man' (oudeis, οὐδεὶς)—absolutely no one—'is justified' (dikaiotai, δικαιούται, present tense: is being declared righteous) by Law 'in the sight of God' (para tō theō, παρὰ τῷ θεῷ)—literally 'before God,' in God's tribunal. The phrase 'it is evident' (dēlon, δῆλον)—'it is clear, manifest'—introduces the scriptural proof.

The quote from Habakkuk 2:4—"The just shall live by faith" (ho dikaios ek pisteōs zēsetai, ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται)—is the thematic verse of Romans (1:17) and Galatians. The righteous one (ho dikaios, ὁ δίκαιος) lives (zēsetai, ζήσεται, future tense) 'by faith' (ek pisteōs, ἐκ πίστεως)—faith is the source and sphere of life. The verb 'live' means both spiritual life now and eternal life to come. Faith, not Law-works, is the principle of life for the righteous.

Paul's argument: Habakkuk declares that the righteous live by faith; therefore, righteousness itself must come by faith, not Law. The Law cannot justify because it demands works (v. 12), whereas Scripture declares faith is the principle of righteousness. This verse anchors Protestant theology: justification (being declared righteous) is by faith alone, and the justified live by ongoing faith, not works.

Historical Context

Habakkuk 2:4 was written during Judah's Babylonian crisis (ca. 600 BC), when Habakkuk questioned God's justice in using wicked Babylon to judge Judah. God's answer: the righteous will survive by faithfulness/faith (Hebrew *emunah* can mean both). The Septuagint (Greek OT) translates this as *ek pisteōs* (by faith), which Paul adopts. Jewish interpretation emphasized Torah faithfulness; Paul emphasizes faith in Christ. Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38 all quote Habakkuk 2:4, making it foundational to New Testament soteriology—justification and sanctification are both by faith.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Habakkuk 2:4 ('the just shall live by faith') teach both justification by faith and sanctification by faith?
2. Why is it 'evident' that no one is justified by Law in God's sight? What does this reveal about the purpose of the Law?
3. In what areas of your life are you trying to 'live by works' rather than 'live by faith'? How would living by faith transform your daily walk?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	δὲ	ἐν	νόμῳ	οὐδεὶς	δικαιοῦται	παρὰ	τῷ	θεῷ
for	But	by	the law	no man	is justified	in the sight	G3588	of God
G3754	G1161	G1722	G3551	G3762	G1344	G3844		G2316
δῆλον	ὅτι	Ὁ	δίκαιος	ἐκ	πίστεως	ζήσεται·		
it is evident	for	G3588	The just	by	faith	shall live		
G1212	G3754		G1342	G1537	G4102	G2198		

Additional Cross-References

Habakkuk 2:4 (Faith): Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Romans 1:17 (Faith): For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Hebrews 10:38 (Faith): Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Galatians 2:16 (Faith): Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 (Righteousness): For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Revelation 5:9 (References God): And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Isaiah 53:6 (Parallel theme): All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.