

Habakkuk | Justice Reigns

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Assorted

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Well, last week, we started in this book, Habakkuk, a minor prophet in the Old Testament. And again, he's not called a minor prophet because he wasn't important. He's just called a minor prophet because the book is so small. It's only three chapters. And so we call those minor prophets. And unlike all of the other prophets in the Old Testament, the message that Habakkuk receives and the conversation that he has with God is not meant to be a message that is shared with Israel.

It's not like God is speaking through Habakkuk to the Israelite people. Instead, this truly is neat that we get to kind of see in or peer in to a conversation that Habakkuk is having with God. Now, like the Old Testament prophets, many of them, Habakkuk is upset. He is going through a difficult time because he knows that his people are not following God. They've turned away from God. And as a righteous man, this is difficult for him to accept.

It's difficult for him to work through. He complains to God, and he wants to know, "What is God what are you going to do about this? What are you going to do about our nation and about our people?" He doesn't want the southern kingdom of Judah where he lives to end up like the northern kingdom of Israel, which 150 years prior had been taken over by the Assyrians. His prayer, his desire, is that the Israelites and their leaders would turn back to the Lord.

He wants to be let in on God's plan, and we are a lot like Habakkuk in that way. We often want to be let in on God's plan. Would you please let me know what you are doing? And many times, when God shares with us His plan, we're not okay with it. And Habakkuk is no different. Last week, as we were in chapter one, we saw that God revealed a little bit of his plan to Habakkuk and told him, "Hey, don't worry. I'm going to use the Babylonians.

They're going to come in and conquer the Israelites because of their rebellion, because of the evil things they have done." And of course, Habakkuk is not happy with that because the Babylonians are worse than they are. And so he says, "God, how could you use a nation that is worse than we are to show judgment upon us?" And that's where we stopped right away and said, "Isn't that a lot like us? Don't we often feel that we can do better than God? Don't we often look at God's plan and say, "You know what?

I'm not really sure what you're thinking there. Here's maybe a better way to do this." Just last week, a college football coach from a large program, I'm not going to say the name of the program. Many of you think I'm going to talk about Jim Harbaugh. That's not who I'm talking about, right? This coach was confronted by a fan on a radio program because he was making a lot of money, which college football coaches do, but the team was only four and four.

And so the fan on the radio program confronted the coach and said, "Do you think that you're worth that kind of money and only win half the games?" This was live on the radio program. I loved the coach's response. He said this, "You are more than welcome to apply for the job." I thought that is a good response. It's so easy for us to sit in the stands and think that we have all of the answers.

So then, as we continued in Habakkuk chapter 1, he launches his second complaint against God, just saying, "God, you have totally messed this thing up. You're making a mistake." And as I read that, I thought to myself, "Isn't it fun being a leader and having people second-guess your every decision?" Many of you are leaders. You understand this. I have to be honest that if people are constantly questioning God's choices, I shouldn't be surprised when my decisions are questioned.

I just say I'm in good company, right? And as you guys are leaders in your company or leaders in your household, you know what it is and how it feels to be second-guessed about every decision you make. Imagine being God and people are coming to him saying, "Ah, I'm not really sure you know what you're doing." He's like, "I kind of created you all." you

know This is the struggle that Habakkuk is having. As we move into chapter two, Habakkuk is going to finish his second complaint. And then we're going to hear the Lord's response, which is the majority of chapter two.

Remember that Habakkuk can't comprehend that God would use the Babylonians to execute judgment. They were more evil. And God says to Bakka, I want you to write down our conversation. I want you to write down this vision you're going to receive. And he is going to reassure Habakkuk and us that all nations and all people will be judged for their own actions. In essence, saying to him and to us, "Don't worry, they're going to be judged for what they did that was wrong as well.

Many of you that have kids know that when one kid gets in trouble, they often say, "But what about?" And they want to point to somebody else's, right? And so Hoback is kind of doing the same thing. I know we've been evil, but the Babylonians, they're even worse. And God says, "Don't worry. They'll get punished as well. So what are you and I to do as God's people when we're living in wicked times? What are we to do as God's people? And what exactly will these wicked times look like?

Will there be other Babylons that will rule the world? Is it possible that as a church and as God's people, we have forgotten what our calling is during times of difficulty. I believe that Hebak chapter two will be a good reminder for us, and it should give us hope that even though it may look like God has just let the world fall apart, that he is still in control, that he has a plan, and the end is already determined.

How things are going to play out is already determined. And so you and I don't need to live in fear and doubt. So let's pray and then jump into Habakkuk chapter two. Many of you may have struggled to find it last week, so I'll help you out. It's after Nahum. That doesn't help you much, right, because that's also a small book. But right before Zephaniah. And that's a little larger of a book. You may not have heard of it. So go towards the end of the New Testament, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah. So if you get anywhere there, you'll be close, all right?

Old Testament. Did I say New Testament? Sorry. Old Testament. My wife's usually here to correct me. She's not here, so thank you for helping me out. Towards the end of the Old Testament, all right? Habakkuk chapter two. Let me pray and then we'll jump in. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to be here and to open your word. We can't thank you enough for your word. It is still oftentimes incomprehensible to me that here we have this letter from a prophet from a guy named Habakkuk that lived 2,600 years ago.

And yet what he was experiencing and what we are experiencing today are not that different. And so we believe that your response to us through Your Word can give us hope, can give us direction. So we pray that You would draw us close to You, even in the midst of possibly living in a wicked time. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Again, remember when we left off Habakkuk last week, he is just wrapping up his second complaint that God shouldn't use Babylon.

And so that's where we are in Habakkuk chapter 2 as he finishes. Habakkuk says, "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts. I will look to see what he will say to me and what answer I am to give to this complaint." Habakkuk's going to use some imagery that was very common of this time, saying, "Basically, Habakkuk, I am standing on this watchtower, and I am going to protect the Israelites. And so I am going to be the voice between God and the people. And I'm waiting God for your response.

I've given my complaint to you. How are you going to answer? What is your answer going to be? It seems kind of bold for Habakkuk to do that, but I think that you and I often do that. There's times in our lives that we question God's methods and that we find ourselves unintentionally fighting against God. Some of the things that we might say as we find ourselves fighting against what God is doing are things like, "God, you can't possibly use that person to lead a church.

I knew them when they were a teenager and they weren't any good." Sam, I was talking about you. I'm just joking. We say things like, "You can't use that church to help somebody take their next step towards you. I know some of the things they do, and it's just not appropriate." And so you couldn't possibly use them. This one might be hit a little closer to home. Please, I don't mean this to be a political statement. Don't take this out of context, all right?

God, you can't use Iran to destroy Israel. They're even worse. Now, this is close because isn't that what Habakkuk is really saying about the Babylonians? He's saying, "God, you can't use the Babylonians to destroy the Israelite people." And I'm not saying that's what God is doing. So please, please. I'm not saying that. Just using an example that Habakkuk

is looking at the Babylonians saying, "How could you use this evil people to destroy your chosen people, the Israelites?" You can't possibly do that. That's his complaint.

We find ourselves sometimes fighting against God. At the very least, we can sympathize with Habakkuk. We go on in verses two to three, and now God's going to give his response. Then the Lord replied, "Habakkuk, write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a Herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time, it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, Habakkuk, wait for it. It will certainly come and it will not delay.

He says, "Okay, pull out a piece of paper. I want you to take notes. I want you to write it down, and I want you to tell people about our conversation. And I want you to know, Habakkuk, it's going to happen. You just need to wait. Just wait. This is one of the hardest things for us to do as human beings, isn't it? Just wait. And in the end, it will work out. And we say, "Okay, God, that's great, but I want it to happen now." He says, "No, you just need to wait." We go on in verse 4. God says, "See, the enemy is puffed up.

His desires are not upright." And he's speaking of the Babylonians, specifically of the king of Babylon. He says, "But the righteous person will live by his faithfulness." He's making a distinction between the king of Babylon who is puffed up. His desires are not upright. And then on the opposite side of the coin, he's saying, "But the righteous, God's chosen people. You and I, God's people are to live by his faithfulness. Indeed," God says, "wine betrays this leader.

He is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, this leader gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples." He says, "The king is puffed up. He's doing evil. But the righteous, you are to live by faith. You are to wait patiently in difficult times and in good times. You are just to wait because God is in control.

You are not to be like the leader of the Babylonians who is falling into the trap that so many leaders before him and many after him are going to fall into. These leaders that struggle with being boastful, with being arrogant. They struggle with wine and drunkenness. They struggle with greed and slavery, a hunger for power. But God says you and I are to be different. Habakkuk, you are to be different, not like this nation.

He goes on in verse 6, "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, 'Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion, how long must this go on? Will not your creditors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their prey. Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you.

For you have shed human blood. You have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. God is saying, "When destruction comes on the wicked, there is no one there to mourn for them, so much so that most are glad when the wicked are gone." God is judging the Babylonians. He says in the future, "Listen, what you have done to others will be done to you. The tables will be turned.

Judgment will come back upon you. Here, the Lord is referring to Babylon specifically, but the same is true for every evil person in every evil nation. They will get what they deserve." God is reassuring Habakkuk. He's reassuring us. The wicked will get what they deserve. We go on in verse 9, "Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin.

You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life. The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it. Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice. Two more woes upon the Babylonians. God says they're building their city. They're building their wealth through bloodshed and through war.

The Babylonians actually believe that they are so great and their kingdom is so amazing that they're building it up like an eagle's nest that is perched up in a tree so that no one will ever be able to conquer them. But God says eventually their cruelty will come back upon themselves. "They will not be able to hide," God says, "For their very homes will cry out against them." You've heard the phrase, "Oh, if only these walls could talk," those walls will talk against them.

The evil that has taken place, the evil conversations that have happened, it will be turned back upon them, and God continues in verse 13, "Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fueled for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the

waters cover the sea." This is one of my favorite sections of Habakkuk, chapter 2, because I think this is some of the best trash talk that you're ever going to get in Scripture.

All right? God is talking about these Babylonians, and he's saying, "Listen, all of the work that you're putting into building these amazing cities is only going to be more fuel for the fire and its destruction. Every house that you built, every temple that you put up, every thing that you do and you build with wood and stone is just going to be more fuel for the fire once it's destroyed. Your labor is in vain. It's all for nothing. I think about our own lives.

When we find ourselves fighting against God and how much of a waste of time and energy and resources and effort it is. And God says to the Babylonians, "This is how bad it has gotten for them. The only good thing that is good for you is the glory that God receives when He conquers you. The only thing you're good for is for when you're conquered so people can praise God. That's a pretty bad place to be.

I don't ever want to find myself in that place. He goes on in verses 15 through 17, "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wine skin till they are drunk so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn. Drink and let your nakedness be exposed. The cup from the Lord's right hand is coming around to you and disgrace will cover your glory.

The violence that you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destructions of animals will terrify you. For you have shed human blood. You have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. The Babylonians struggled with the same carnal sin as the nations and people before them and many that would come after them. They literally took pleasure in wickedness. Again, the measure you use on others will be poured back on you.

God reminds Habakkuk that He knows how evil these people are, and they will be judged for their wickedness. God, in essence, here, almost is calling them a virus, not just to human life, but to the land in which they live and the animals as well. Wherever they went, destruction followed. Some of you know people like this. Seems like destruction just follows them wherever they go, or maybe people groups or organizations that just are filled with wickedness, where they're almost like a virus.

They destroy everything. It's true we have evil in our world today, but you need to know it's not new. The evil we see today is just a recurrence of what has happened before. Some people truly just don't value life. They don't value life. Let's go on to verse 18. Of what value God says is an idol that is carved by a craftsman or an image that teaches lies.

For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation, he makes idols that cannot speak. Woe to him who says to wood, "Come to life or to lifeless stone. Wake up. Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver, but there is no breath in it. There is no life in it. The Babylonians have put their trust in false gods. They have believed the lie that they're doing something right because their kingdom is growing.

They are advancing. And so I asked the question today, "Where have you put your trust?" I don't know many people today that worship wooden or golden images. So most people look at a section of Scripture like this or the Ten Commandments and they say, "Oh, that's not a problem. I'm not going to worship any golden or wooden image." But I will tell you, I know a lot of people who worship things that are just as futile as a golden image.

Things like money, which is always fleeting, pleasure, which always fades, fame, which disappears, alcohol, sports, power. These pursuits only lead to emptiness. Because of my position here at the church, I have the privilege of meeting with people as they're nearing the end of their life. We often have amazing conversations.

I remember a conversation I don't remember who it was with. And this gentleman was looking at me, talking about his life, and he wanted to give me some wisdom, some advice. I often will ask, "you know If you could give me one piece of advice, what is it?" And he said, "Joel, listen, I want you to know. Don't get to the end of your life and realize that the ladder that you have been working to climb the whole time was leaning against the wrong building." Think about that.

How often do we spend all of our time and energy pursuing a goal that we feel once we reach that goal, when we get to the top of the ladder, when we reach that? And then we're going to find out it was leaning against the wrong building. It was empty. It was for nothing. So we end Habakkuk chapter two, where we read, "The Lord is in His holy temple.

Let all the earth be silent before Him." God is speaking to him. He's speaking to us saying, "Put your trust and your faith in me, for I am everlasting. I'm still in control. I know you're living in a crazy time period. I know there's wars taking

place, and nations are rising and falling, and there's all these things that are happening, but I am still in control." There's some truths that we can get from Habakkuk.

We've already talked about most of them. Let's just review. Number one, everyone will eventually get what they deserve. In any given moment in life, life can seem unfair. We may cry out to God, "This is unjust. This is not fair." Recognizing that most of the time we come to that conclusion, it's just because of a lack of perspective. We want that just thing to happen right now because we can only picture here and now.

But the scriptures are clear that those who follow Jesus will receive life, life everlasting, and those who refuse Him will experience death. And so I encourage you and I encourage myself. Don't get caught up in the moment. All things will work out in the end. Number two, as you read Scripture and certainly here in Habakkuk, it's also found I've come up with this statement, and I don't like this statement all the time, but it's true. All right? I'm just the messenger, so don't shoot the messenger.

God can use whoever he wants to accomplish whatever he wants whenever he wants to accomplish it. That's God. He can use whoever he wants to accomplish whatever he wants whenever he wants to accomplish it. It is foolish to try to correct God. His timing is perfect. He knows what he's doing. And even though I don't have the answer to all the questions of why and where and when. I am called to trust and to have faith.

The third truth that we see in Habakkuk and all over in Scripture is that the struggles of man haven't changed much over time. We often think, "Oh, this is a new temptation. This is a new struggle. This is a new issue." People long ago never had to deal with this, but it's not true. All of the temptations are the same, gaining wealth at the expense of the poor, treating other people like animals so that we can gain more power, mistreatment of alcohol and other things, sensual indulgences, idol worship, maybe not wooden stone, but something else that takes the place of God.

The struggles of man haven't changed much over time. The enemy keeps going back to his old bag of tricks. And so know that you are not the first to experience that. And finally, as believers, we should live by faith. You and I should not be compared to the Babylonians. We should look more like the new Jerusalem that is going to come. That we would be people of faith that trust in a God who has our best interest in mind.

When I find myself making the dumbest mistakes in life, it's when I've convinced myself that God doesn't know what's best for me. You say to God, "That's great. I know you have this plan. I know you tell me this, but I really don't think that's the best for me right now. So I'm going to make this decision." And without fail, it comes back and I go, "Yep, God, you were right." You were right. How often do we argue with God instead of just having faith and say, "You know what?

This is not what I would choose right now. This is not what I want to go through. This is not the way the world would look like. If I were in charge, I don't understand it, but God, I'm going to have faith. I'm going to trust you." That's the goal. That's where God is trying to get Habakkuk. That's where he is going to try to get us. And next week, as we wrap up this three-chapter book, we will get the payoff in the last two verses of chapter three. I know many of you have already gone back and read it.

You know You're like, "Habakak, I never heard of that book before." And so last week, you went and read it because it's only three chapters, so it doesn't take long, right? But the payoff comes in the end of chapter three, let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us where we're at. Thank you for allowing us to complain and to voice our opinion, that we've not been created like robots, that we do have our own ideas. Thank you for loving us in the midst of that, constantly questioning you.

But I pray that you would expand our faith, that you would help us to put our trust in you, that no matter what's going on around us or in the world, and no matter the questions that we don't always have answers for, we would live by faith, and you would receive the praise and the glory. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.