

Living by Faith(fulness)

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[0 : 00] Habakkuk chapter 1. She's going to read starting at verse number 12 all the way down through chapter 2 and verse number 4. Are you not from everlasting? O Lord my God, my Holy One, we shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.

You, who are of purer eyes than to see evil, and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook, he drags them out with his net, he gathers them in his dragnet, so he rejoices and is glad.

Therefore, he sacrifices to his net, and makes offerings to his dragnet, for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich. Is he then to keep on emptying his net, and mercilessly killing nations forever?

I will take my stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, but I will answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me, Write the vision, make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.

[1 : 24] For still the vision awaits its appointed time, it hastens to the end, it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

Thanks, Josie. Father, thank you again for your word. Would you please help us, as we give it our attention, help us to see you clearly?

Help us to see our Savior Jesus clearly? Help us to see ourselves more clearly? Would you also please help us to see a lost, hurting, broken, needy world in need of salvation more clearly this morning?

We ask all of this, giving thanks. In Jesus' name, amen. Have you ever asked God for something? And he answered, but not the way you wanted? You asked for healing, and you got waiting.

[2 : 43] Maybe you asked for clarity, and you got silence. Or you asked for relief, and you got more pressure.

Or you asked for patience, and you got children. Now, children, young people, I suspect you have also asked your parents for things, and they have given you back something else.

They've answered in a way that you didn't expect, a way that you didn't want. Many of us have asked God for wisdom. What do we do when the next step seems so overwhelming?

Suddenly, we're not just wrestling with these troubling circumstances that led us to prayer in the first place. We are also now wrestling with God's plan.

Because we don't like his answer. Habakkuk is a prophet. He lives in the southern kingdom of Judah, somewhere between 640 and 605 BC.

[4 : 03] About 100 years have passed since the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians. Life is very hard in Judah.

The kingdom is led by corrupt leaders, priests, prophets, kings, who do not obey the Lord. People are going through the motions of worship, but they worship idols too.

If you can believe this, they are bringing sacrifices to the temple to give to God, and then slaughtering their children on the altars of idols.

Culturally, lust and betrayal are normalized. The legal system favors the wealthy and the powerful. Immigrants, blue-collar workers, they are crushed.

Those who work the hardest get treated the worst, and it is not fair. Those who speak up are silenced.

[5 : 06] Sometimes they are even killed. This is Habakkuk's world. Sometimes the most honest thing you can pray is a question.

And Habakkuk is brutally honest with God. We can summarize his first prayer this way. Why don't you do something? Why don't you do something?

Why don't you deal with all of this? And in verse 5, God responds. I am doing something. I am working a work that you couldn't begin to comprehend.

And narrator voice. The Chaldeans, a.k.a. the Babylonians, are coming. Sometimes God answers our prayer, but not the way we want.

So what does Habakkuk do? He asks more questions. One author says about 25% of Habakkuk's lines in chapters 1 and 2 are questions.

[6 : 23] You can check this for yourself. Just look for the question marks. Listen to how Habakkuk responds to God. Verse number 12. Are you not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One?

We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for a reproof?

A couple of observations. First, notice in your text, in verse number 12, that Habakkuk addresses the Lord.

Sorry, let me start this over. A couple of observations. In verse number 2 of the first chapter, when Habakkuk addresses the Lord, he addresses him by name, but only one time.

But here, in verse 12, he addresses him by name five times. This is getting serious. Five times, four different names.

[7 : 32] You can look in your Bible there and notice that LORD in all caps, or Yahweh, is repeated. My God is a common way of referring to the Lord in the Old Testament, but my Holy One is rare.

In fact, this is the only place in the entire Scripture that someone... I should check that. This is the only time in the entire Old Testament that someone refers to God as my Holy One.

Second observation. Look at the third line of verse 12. I suspect your Bible is probably organized like poetry, so we're looking for the third line.

The line that begins, we shall not die, or we will not die. This is how most English translations render this Hebrew text.

But I want you to think carefully about this. Considering what God just told Habakkuk about the fierceness and the destructive behavior of the Babylonians, doesn't we will not die sound just a little presumptuous?

[8 : 55] I thought so, too. And as it turns out, there is debate about this verse, and there is reason to believe that an early scribe may have swapped one letter of the Hebrew word and turned it from, you will not die, to we will not die.

I can see why a scribe may feel uncomfortable saying to God, you will not die, because it sounds sort of irreverent. Of course God is not going to die.

What are you talking about? What? Listen to the beautiful parallelism that we get out of verse 12 if we follow the Jewish tradition and translate the verse like they do.

Are you not from everlasting, O Lord, my God? My Holy One, you shall not die. Now suddenly we have Habakkuk saying, look, Lord, you are from everlasting all the way to everlasting.

You are never going to die. Now we have Habakkuk saying an amazing thing about who God is, that he is eternal, that he is outside of time.

[10 : 19] Habakkuk addresses the Lord by his covenant name. He acknowledges that the Lord is eternal and holy. He recognizes the Lord's sovereign authority.

You have ordained. He recognizes that God has authority to bring the Babylonians in judgment. And he calls God rock, the place of shelter, the place of refuge.

Look what happens in verse number 13. You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you look idly, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

Now we noticed last week in chapter one, verse four, Habakkuk refers to his fellow citizens as wicked. But now, look what happens.

Now that he has received God's first response, things have changed. Now the Babylonians are the wicked ones, verse 13, and the Judeans are the more righteous ones.

[11 : 43] Do you feel the tension here? We don't like good things to happen to bad people. And we definitely don't like bad things to happen to good people.

This is what Habakkuk is now feeling. You're going to bring them to judge us? They're worse than we are.

Listen to how Habakkuk describes them. Verse 14. You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.

He, referring poetically to Babylon, to the Chaldeans, he brings all of them up with a hook. He drags them out with his net.

He gathers them in his dragnet, so he rejoices and is glad. You see it? He says, Lord, you've made all of us like fish, and you've made them like the fishermen.

[12:55] He's gathering all of them, and he's rejoicing, and he's glad. Verse 16. Therefore, he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet, for by them he lives in luxury and his food is rich.

Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly, that is a hard word to say, Josie, mercilessly killing nations forever?

There's an interesting word that Habakkuk repeats three times in verses 15, 16, and 17, and it's a word that we might miss, but it's a word that he has used before in his first prayer, and he's using it to connect some dots, so I want to help us connect some dots.

Look back in chapter 1 and verse 4. Notice there, he says, so the law is paralyzed and so justice goes forth perverted.

This word is flexible. It can be translated so, it can be translated therefore. You might see it something like that is why. Look now at the end of verse 15.

[14:21] So, he rejoices and is glad. That is why he rejoices and is glad. Why is Babylon glad?

Because every time he goes fishing, he catches a fish. Isaac, would you be happy if every time you went fishing, you caught a fish?

I would even be happy. I might even consider myself a fisherman if every time I went, I knew I was going to catch something. So, so, that is why he rejoiced and is glad.

No wonder Babylon is living it up. They're just crushing nation after nation. again, verse number 16. Therefore, that is why.

So, therefore, he sacrifices to his net. What is happening here? Well, if you look back at the end of chapter 1, Habakkuk is restating what the Lord said.

[15:29] Back in chapter 1, verse 11, the Lord says this about Babylon, whose own might is their God. Habakkuk's just restating that.

Babylon values and prizes and worships its strength, its might, its power, its ability to wage war, to conquer nation after nation.

It is figuratively, poetically worshiping its nets, the things that it uses to go and conquer nations. And finally, this little Hebrew word turns into a desperate question in verse number 17.

Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?

In other words, is this the way this is going to go? He's just going to go destroy another nation, empty his net of all that he has taken, all of the people, and then go fill up his net again with another nation?

[16:54] Is this how this is going to go, Lord? Are you just going to stand by?

Well, this wicked nation Babylon conquers and destroys nation after nation after nation. Have you ever asked a question and then said, I am not leaving until I get an answer?

I don't know if this is a good bargaining chip or not. I'm not very good at bargaining. I probably don't recommend this. I'm not leaving until I get an answer. This is what Habakkuk says next.

Look at chapter 2 and verse 1. I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

Habakkuk is determined to wait for the Lord's response and while he waits don't miss that last line while he waits he plans his rebuttal to God's answer to his complaint.

[18:12] What an interesting point in this book. Habakkuk receives God's answer to his honest questions but he does not like God's plan and so he asks God more questions and then crosses his arms and says I'll just wait I'm not leaving until I get an answer.

What do you think will happen next? What a merciful God we serve. Verse number two and the Lord answered me.

I mean astounding right? The Lord answered me. Write the vision. Make it plain on tablets so he may run who reads it for still the vision awaits its appointed time.

It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow wait for it. It will surely! it will not delay. Behold his soul is puffed up. It is not right within him. God is honest about Babylon. They are not the good guys here.

[19 : 38] His soul verse four is puffed up. I love the Christian standard version rendering of this. It says his ego is inflated. I think that's helpful.

His soul is puffed up. His ego is inflated. It is not upright within him. Babylon they're not the good guys. I understand.

I know they are not the good guys. And yet notice God's plan is certain. Verse three the vision awaits yes it's appointed time.

It will surely come. It will not delay. The plan is not changing. Sometimes we say well that's not written in stone.

But notice what God says in verse two. Write the vision down. Make it plain on tablets. In other words you can write this in stone.

[20 : 49] This is not changing. Babylon will come. And notice at the end of verse number two.

So that he may run who reads it. And we don't know exactly what this Hebrew word means but I do think that we can get the gist of it.

Either God is saying that you ought to write this vision briefly enough that it can be read quickly which Habakkuk is fairly brief considering some of the other prophets Ezekiel for example which I am always scared to read it is brief it may be that God is saying write it briefly so that people can read through this quickly or it may be that God is saying that those who read Habakkuk's vision ought to be motivated to run quickly and warn others there's a sense of urgency about the certainty of God's plan God's coming judgment deserves this urgent response and finally notice

God's direction to Habakkuk at the end of verse number four but the righteous shall live by his faith faith and this Hebrew word that is translated faith is broad enough to also include faithfulness how should Habakkuk live in this world at this time under these circumstances he should live by faith the kind of faith that leads to or results in or is evidenced by faithfulness to God brothers and sisters where are your eyes right now are your eyes fixed on the chaos around you is your attention focused on the corruption and the injustice that you see every day on the people who seem to get ahead by doing wrong are your eyes fixed on your own disappointments are you wondering if it's worth staying faithful to

God that's where Habakkuk is too surrounded by wickedness and injustice he cries out to God aren't you going to do something about all of this and when God says I'm already working on it Habakkuk does not like God's plan how does God respond this second time the righteous shall live by faith so how then should we live in this world at this time under these circumstances when we cry out to God for answers and we don't like his plan how should we live well look at what Paul says in Romans chapter 1 and verse 17 as it is written in

[24 : 59] Habakkuk 2 4 as it is written the righteous shall live by faith we should live by faith because faith clings to God's promises even when we don't like God's plan if your heart is heavy from watching the world burn if you feel burned because you've been faithful if you wonder why do good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people living by faith means fixing your eyes on God he is Habakkuk reminds us eternal from everlasting to everlasting he is not panicked he is not scrambling he is not behind schedule he is your holy one your rock and he's got this

Habakkuk says to God I think the translation is better you shall not die and that is true until it wasn't because God sent his son and Jesus lived by faith trusted the father completely obeyed in a wicked world suffered under corrupt leadership and when the judgment that we rightly deserved came it didn't fall on us it fell on Jesus Jesus died as our substitute so that we could live as his people living by faith means looking to Jesus the author and the finisher of your faith children young people let me come back to you for just a minute

I mentioned at the beginning sometimes you ask your parents for one thing and they give you something else and you don't like it sometimes they do that because they know things that you don't know they know what will help you grow they know what is going to keep you safe they know what's coming next and you may feel really frustrated by your parents response living by faith means remembering that they love you and that they have your best interest in mind and so you ought to honor them and obey them even when you don't like their response secondly living by faith means be urgent with the gospel!

God told Habakkuk to write the vision so that those who read it will run if you believe that God's judgment is coming on this world how can you not run with the gospel?
if you are not asking the Lord for opportunities to share your faith then I encourage you start asking the Lord for opportunities to share your faith and as God answers that prayer be bold be urgent in sharing the good news judgment is coming but everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved finally living by faith means don't give up when life is hard faith does not make life easier faith does not grant us immunity from adversity faith does not make us invincible like
[29 : 50] Mario when he starts blinking maybe your faith is fragile and maybe you feel like giving in or giving up listen to the spirit's encouragement from Hebrews chapter 10 and I hope these words sound familiar because the author of Hebrews clearly has our text from Habakkuk 2 in mind here's from Hebrews chapter 10 you you have need of endurance you have need of endurance for yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay do you see what the author of Hebrews did here in Habakkuk do you remember what it says it will come the judgment is coming it will not delay and the author of
Hebrews takes this text from Habakkuk lifts it into the New Testament right into our time and says yes judgment is coming but brothers and sisters that means Jesus the coming one is coming that's good news that's hope for us when we feel like quitting that's motivation when we wonder if following Jesus is worth it it is worth it so don't give up don't give in live by faith the kind of faith that results in faithfulness to God like Habakkuk we may not always like God's answers to our honest questions I'm so glad that
God is not afraid of our follow up questions either but don't be surprised if his answer is trust me I've got this faith clings to God's promises even when you don't like God's plan because our God who planned both the cross and the resurrection is still working all things for our good even when it doesn't make sense yet let's pray God