

## Habakkuk 2

Have you ever wondered why the good guys win in movies? Have you ever seen a story where the bad guy wins? If the bad guy wins, it doesn't feel good - it doesn't make sense. Just imagine if Drago had knocked Rocky out cold. Just imagine if Smaug had some barbecued Hobbit. Or if Catniss never volunteered. Or if private Ryan was never saved or if Indiana Jones got squashed by the rock rolling after him.

That would be pretty anti-climactic wouldn't it? We'd feel like there was no purpose to the story or no lesson to be learned. What's the point?

That's basically where we left the prophet Habakkuk last week. To review, Habakkuk first asks the Lord, "why do you not judge the sin of Judah?" And God affirms his justice by saying that he is raising up the Babylonians to judge Judah. Which then leads Habakkuk to question God's holiness. How can you use the more wicked nation of Babylon to judge a less wicked nation of Judah?

1:13 says,

*"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?"*

He questions God's holiness and character. And then again in 1:17 he says,

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

But after asking, Habakkuk then responds in faith by seeking the Lord's answer. That's where we have left the prophet. Waiting. Asking. The bad guys all around him. Sin abounds.

we will learn from today's passage that we should have faith in God because He will destroy the wicked.

*2 And the Lord answered me:*

*Write the vision; make it plain on tablets,  
So he may run who reads it.*

And again, the Lord, out of his faithfulness to his covenant promises *responds* to Habakkuk here in chapter 2 verse 2.

What is this vision? When God shows up in Chapter 3. Write it down. Right it big. Put it on a poster in your front yard. The answer to the wickedness will come in chapter 3. Justice will be served in chapter 3.

*Vs 3 - 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*

As Gandalf reminds Frodo, "A wizard is never late, neither is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to."

The Lord isn't late. If it seems late, wait for it. It will not delay in the right timing.

God's answer for the destruction of Judah will come. For Habakkuk, the Lord is telling Him wait at the watchpost. Stand your ground. I work in my own timing. My timing is always perfect Wait for me. Isn't that a word for today. Wait on the Lord's timing.

*Vs 4 - Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,  
But the righteous shall live by his faith.*

Who is God talking about? Its going back to Babylon. The arrogance of Babylon is contrasted with the faith of the righteous.

This incredibly important verse in the Bible is the missing piece of the puzzle for the restoration of God's people to himself. You see separation occurred in the Garden because of Adam and Eve's sin. How will restoration occur? By becoming righteous. How does one become righteous? By faith.

Abraham believed God and God counted it to him as righteous (Genesis 15:6)

God equips Moses so that the people will believe. (Exodus 4)

The Israelites believed the Lord after crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14)

The people of Nineveh *believed* in God after Jonah preached to them (Jonah 3:5)

God says in Habakkuk 1 that he *would not believe if told*. And while Habakkuk did not understand how God could use a more wicked nation to judge Judah, he shows faith in the LORD by climbing up to the watchpost and waiting for the Lord's answer. He didn't believe the judgment - it didn't make sense. But he shows his faith in *God* by seeking His answer. Even though he didn't understand the message, he trusted the Lord.

*The righteous shall live by his faith.*

This verse is a monumental verse in the New Testament. It is the thesis statement in Romans 1:16-17:

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

He then goes on in the book of Romans proving that righteousness does not come through human effort through works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul Quotes this verse again in Galatians three to show the true nature of Abraham's justification that I've already mentioned in Genesis 15:6.

*Galatians 3:11*

*Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Abraham's righteousness was not achieved by the law because the Law was not in existence yet, but Abraham was still righteous before God. How? Because God told him to go to a place that He will show him and Abraham *believed* God and God counted that *belief* as righteousness.

Then the author of Hebrews uses the verse mixed with others to encourage the congregations to endure persecution faithfully.

*Hebrews 10:37-38*

*For,*

*"Yet a little while,*

*and the coming one will come and will not delay;  
but my righteous one shall live by faith,  
and if he shrinks back,  
my soul has no pleasure in him.”*

God’s people are righteous because of their faith.

Habakkuk then shows us that this faith is not just a one time mental decision. You may have a little number or letter above that word *faith* in verse 4. If you trace that to the bottom of the page or margin in your Bible you’ll see it says “faithfulness”. Habakkuk is communicating that it is by faith that we are made right but it is Also faithfulness, a continuation of faith. This was the problem with Israel. As many times the Old Testament shows us that the righteous people believe God, there are even more instances where Israel *did not* believe God.

2 Kings 17:6-20

*In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria... 7 And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods 8 and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced. 9 And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. ... 13 Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.” 14 But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God.... 16 And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal... 18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. 19 Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced. 20 And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until he had cast them out of his sight.*

They did not *live* by their faithfulness.

That is why Judah will be brought under judgment because they did not believe God.

But even in this judgment of Babylon, God is showing Habakkuk that he is still faithful because Babylon will not have the final say. God pronounces five woes upon Babylon here. In order to instill faith in Habakkuk, He shows 5 different ways how babylon will be destroyed. We should trust God because he destroys the wicked.

*“Moreover, wine is a traitor,  
An arrogant man who is never at rest.  
His greed is as wide as Sheol;  
Like death he has never enough.  
He gathers for himself all nations  
And collects as his own all peoples.”*

Wine here is a depiction, sure of Babylon in this case, but remember there's nothing really new under the sun. Kingdoms and empires come and go. Wine here is depicting the worldliness, the lavishness, the pride of the wicked. In in Habakkuk's day it just happens to be Babylon. Assyria came before. Medo-Persia came next followed by the Greeks then Romans. The wicked will always be there. But to echo what Habakkuk asks in chapter 1 verse 17, will this keep going on forever? Will the wicked have the final say?

God is answering this question. In verse 6 he says,

*Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him?*

Who are these? It's referring back to the all nations and all people in verse 5. So these captives are the kind of chorus that is speaking against the wicked in the rest of the chapter.

What do they say? They say, "Woe" woe is a word used to describe the sound of someone who is going through utter destruction. If someone is being destroyed, the very sound that escapes their mouth is this "woe". So basically they declare woe or destruction upon the wicked.

Reason number 1 why we should have faith in God.

1. The wicked will be destroyed by stealing  
*"Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own -  
For how long? -  
And loads himself with pledges!"*

Destruction upon the wicked who steals for personal gain. And loads himself up with the loyalty of men. This leads to a natural response:

*Will not your debtors suddenly arise,  
And those awake who will make you tremble?  
Then you will be spoil for them.*

What's going to happen to these wicked that steal for personal gain?

*Because you have plundered many nations,  
All the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you  
For the blood of man and violence to the earth,  
To cities and all who dwell in them.*

The wicked will be destroyed because the people they plunder will eventually rise up and overthrow them. What goes around comes around. You reap what you sow.

Reason number 2 why we should have faith in God

2. The wicked will destroy his own house through his greed.

*Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house,  
To set his nest on high,  
To be safe from the reach of harm!*

Utter destruction be upon the wicked who gains for his house through evil means.

*You have devised shame for your house*

*By cutting off many peoples;  
You have forfeited your life.*

Will the wicked win? They will be destroyed. Their wickedness will bring down their house of shame.

Why?

*For the stone will cry out from the wall,  
And the beam from the woodwork respond.*

The materials that you build your house with will one day catch up to you. If you build your house with straw, it will crumble. If you build your house through evil means it will be destroyed.

Will the wicked win?

Reason number 3 we should have faith  
3. The wicked will be destroyed by his sinful endeavors.

*Woe to him who builds a town with blood  
And founds a city on iniquity!*

Destruction be upon the person who gains through evil means not just for himself or his household but now for the city.

*Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts  
That peoples labor merely for fire,  
And nations weary themselves for nothing?*

Ultimately the the nations that are taken captive by the wicked are just laboring to build up the kindling for the fire that will eventually destroy the wicked.

Why is all this wickedness ultimately going to be destroyed?

*For the earth will be filled  
With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord  
As the waters cover the sea.*

Will the wicked win? NO! Who will win according to this text? God. God is the ultimate winner. Righteousness will prevail. Truth will be brought forth. All wrongs will be made right. Why? Because God, the Righteous One will have the final say!

Reason number four we should have faith:  
4. The wicked will be destroyed by causing his neighbors to sin.

*Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink -  
You pour out your wrath and make them drunk,  
In order to gaze at their nakedness!*

The wicked drag down their neighbors ultimately for their own gain.

*You will have your fill of shame instead of glory.*

*Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision!  
The cup in the Lord's right hand  
Will come around to you,  
And utter shame will come upon your glory!*

Whatever glory the wicked gain in this world will be met by a right hook from Yahweh. The wicked will not have the final say, God the Holy One will have the final say!

*The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you,  
As will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them,  
For the blood of man and violence to the earth,  
To cities and all who dwell in them.*

What goes around comes around. You reap what you sow. The violence the wicked brings to those around them will be met with violence to themselves.

Will the wicked win? No!

Reason number 5 why we should have faith  
5. Because the wicked will be destroyed by his idolatry.

*What profit is an idol  
When its maker has shaped it,  
A metal image, a teacher of lies?  
For its maker trusts in his own creation  
When he makes speechless idols!  
Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake;  
To a silent stone, Arise!  
Can this teach?*

Utter destruction to the wicked for their idols are an ironic picture of their destruction. They worship something that they make with their hands! Utter destruction comes upon those that worship these idols. This idol will not teach.

And what is the Lord doing through all of this?

*But the Lord is in his holy temple;  
Let all the earth keep silence before him.*

God is sitting on the throne worthy of worship because he is worthy of all praise because the wicked will be destroyed. God is using Babylon to discipline his children, but Babylon will not have the final say. God will have the final say. He is sitting on his throne and is worthy of worship.

As Judah is already starting to be taken from their homes and will be in exile for who knows how long. Their family members have been slaughtered. You are going to a foreign land. For us it's like being shipped off to Canada or California. Can imagine how miserable that would be? But then they here these words: Babylon will not have the final say.

We find ourselves in another Exile. Our kingdom is here but not yet. We are in a foreign land. We are aliens in a difficult world. And again hear these words, Babylon will not have the final say. The wicked of this world will not win.

Where is our faith? Our faith is in the conqueror of the wicked. Is our faith is in the one who was afflicted for our wickedness? Our faith is in the One who gathers the nations to himself for His glory and their good. Our faith is in the One who is from everlasting to everlasting. We worship a God who is sitting on his throne in victory. The enemy has been defeated and all his followers are doomed to die. There is not power of hell over you. The risen King rules and reigns over you. Look at how he even uses the seemingly most powerful force on earth, the Babylonians, to bring about his glory on the earth by destroying them forever.

For those who are in Christ, he became sin for us so that we might become His righteousness through faith in Him. For those who are outside of Christ, who do not have faith in Christ will be destroyed on Judgment Day. Wickedness is either dealt with in Christ or on Judgment Day. Because in the end God wins. Have faith, Christian. Have faith in Him.