

Patience In Mission

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Preacher: Martin Goldsmith

- [0 : 00] 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.
- Then the Lord replied, 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 linger, wait for it. It will certainly come and will not delay.
- See, he is puffed up, his desires are not upright, but the righteous will live by his faith. Indeed, wine betrays him. He is arrogant and never at rest.
- But because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples.
- [1 : 08] 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 debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim, because you have plundered many nations.
- The peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood. You have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.
- Woe to him who builds this realm by unjust gain. To set 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 crime.
- [2 : 15] Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labour is only fuel for the fire? That 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. Well, I'm going to invite Martin, if he'd like to come up now.
- He's going to speak to us. There will be opportunity to talk to Martin and to Elizabeth afterwards. So please do that. Take time. I'm sure you'll say a little bit about your books.
- But before you do, I'm going to pray for you and then let you speak away. Is that okay? Thank you. It's more than okay. Great. Well, let's pray. Father God, we thank you so much for Martin and for Elizabeth.
- We thank you for their many years of service. We thank you for their gifts that you have given them. Their gifts of teaching, as we have heard over this past weekend.
- [3 : 19] And we pray that they now would be that continued blessing to us and encouragement to us as a church family.
- And that we would be a people who would understand what it is to see the glory of the Lord fill the earth. And we pray now for Martin.

Fill him with your spirit and us. Speak through him words of life. Amen. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks very much, Martin, for coming. Thank you, Elizabeth, for coming too and to be with us today. Thank you. Well, it's great to be among you and to share with you this morning.

Thank you for allowing us to be part of your fellowship for this morning. That's great. I thought I would just encourage you for a moment, before we turn to the Word, on Thursday, Elizabeth and I will be flying out to India to visit the churches that her great-grandparents planted around 160 years ago.

[4 : 35] During her great-grandparents' time, there was terrific opposition to the Gospel.

Terrific, terrific opposition. And they saw very few people turning to the Lord. A few, but nothing very much.

Today, 160 years later, the fruit of their labors is enormous. There's a central church with a congregation of 700.

And then the actual church that they planted originally has around 200. And they have planted around 240 other churches in the area.

And then they have around 400, what they call for preaching stations. That's congregations of under 35, 40, that sort of size.

[5 : 46] So, altogether, well over 600 congregations out from that central one. And of course, tens of thousands of believers are coming out of this tiny little beginning with all the opposition and so on.

And I'm sure that great-grandfather and great-grandmother, when they look down from heaven, they must smile, I think, and say, wow, we never pictured anything like that, you know.

It all seems so small and difficult and fruitless and tremendous opposition. And yet, out of that has come this major movement of God.

And that's still growing, of course. Well, not of course, but it is. So, be encouraged. You know, as you look out on this area and you think, well, praise the Lord for the little group here and the little group there and the little group you're starting in Kinsale and so on.

And you think, oh, well, you know, we're in a situation of tremendous secularism and tremendous disinterest in the gospel.

[7 : 14] Can't expect anything much here, you know. And yet, the Lord did it in India and he can do it here. And he did it with great-grandparents and he can do it for you.

So, be encouraged. Well, that was all just a little extra there. I hadn't planned to say that, but I thought I would. We're turning back to Habakkuk.

And it's... Habakkuk is such a brilliant book. Let me recommend it to you to just enjoy it and revel in what the Lord has said in Habakkuk.

Just before we turn to Habakkuk 2, let me say that we brought a whole mass of books with us from home. But yesterday, nearly all of them sold.

But you can look up our names on the net. And you can order Elizabeth's life story or my life story.

[8 : 26] You'll see them on the net if you look at Amazon and our name. But there are just a few left, including actually, I think, three copies of a book on Habakkuk.

Any complaints? Blame God. Which is what people do, isn't it? And Habakkuk did it as well.

So, when they do it, they're being quite prophetic. Not just pathetic, but prophetic. Any complaints?

Blame God. Well, what was Habakkuk's problem? What was he blaming God about? Well, let me remind you of the whole book of Habakkuk very briefly.

Habakkuk was looking out on his own society in Judah and complaining about the fact that they were just steeped in sin.

[9 : 28] Tremendous evil and awful. Habakkuk said, Lord, do something for Judah.

And God says to Habakkuk, no, actually, I am doing something you don't think I am. I am at work. Perhaps you don't see it. But I am at work not among your people.

I am actually at work among the nations, among the Gentiles. Not just among Judah. And I am doing fantastic work. And then God shocks Habakkuk and says what he is doing.

He is raising up the Chaldeans. And Habakkuk said, but Lord, you can't do that. The Chaldeans are even worse than Judah.

And Judah, in comparison with the Chaldeans, is a, you know, a set of innocents. The Chaldeans are a ferocious, cruel, evil, idolatrous people.

[10 : 35] Any other bad adjectives you want to find, you can apply them to the Chaldeans and they'll fit. And yet God says, that's the people I'm raising up as my instruments.

And Habakkuk says, well, you can't do that, God, because you're a holy God. You're so holy you can't even look on sin. And now you say, you're raising up this appallingly sinful people as your instruments.

How can you do that? And that leads us into chapter 2. And Habakkuk, with this complaint and questioning of God, Habakkuk says, I'll stand at my watch, chapter 2, verse 1, and I'll station myself on the ramparts.

And you can picture an ancient city with its walls around and being the guard standing on the walls there, looking out over the fields to see if there are any enemies coming and seeing what's going on.

Well now, actually the words there could be related to a city and its walls, but it could also, the words actually used in the original, could also relate to a harvest field.

[12 : 04] And all the crops are growing up, and in the middle of the field, they would have a little raised platform with a seat on the top, and usually just a boy would sit on the top there, and there'd be strings going out into the field from there.

And the boy's job was to watch whether any birds were attacking the harvest. And if birds came, he'd lift up the strings and frighten the birds away.

But in one way or another, whether stationed to see that nothing affects the harvest, or whether stationed on the ramparts of a wall of a city, to see that no enemy is coming to destroy you, in one way or another, look out and see what God is doing, and see what is happening around you.

See whether there are things that are bad happening, as well as what is good that is happening. And so Habakkuk says, I will stand at my watch, and I will look to see, it's very interesting this, I will look to see what he will say to me.

You think, well, if God's speaking, surely it's the ears, not the eyes, that are important. That you hear a word, you don't normally see a word.

[13 : 39] Yeah? But Habakkuk, like all the prophets, very much emphasizes the idea of seeing. I mentioned this yesterday, so those who were there yesterday, please forgive me, that a prophet is known as a seer.

A seer. A prophet is one who keeps his eyes open, or her eyes open, if you want, to see what the God of history is actually doing.

And when you see what's going on, then you can have a real understanding of what's the purpose of God, what's the will of God, in the world of our day.

And you have a ministry of a prophet. So I will look to see what God will say, and God speaks through what's going on.

And so, you know, as you pray, and as you plan for the church, you keep your newspaper open, or your television news on.

[14 : 51] But in one way or another, you see the purposes of God. I will look to see what he will say, and then the translation here, it's okay, but it's not really literally accurate.

It's really what he will say in me. And we all know that, don't we? You know, we have some real question, real complaint even.

We're wondering, you know, what on earth is God doing? You know, God, you shouldn't be doing that. This is awful. You know, why this? Why that? And then, as we struggle with it, actually, we give the answer to our questions from within ourselves.

God actually works in us, not from outside, but from within, by his Spirit, so that our minds are actually determined by God and his Spirit, and we actually give the answers to our own questions and problems.

So, I'll look out to see what he will say, actually, in me, Habakkuk says. And, ask the Lord that he will work in you, in such a way, in you, in such a way, that actually, you have the answers to questions, problems, situations that you face.

[16 : 29] I love the, the words of Paul. I don't find them easy. But Paul says, just in parenthesis, it's not a main point or anything, but in the Corinthian letters, he says, we have the mind of Christ.

Now, I find it very easy to turn that into a prayer rather than a statement. Lord, give me the mind of Christ. Lord, help me to, to think the thoughts of God.

That my mind might work in God's way, with God's thoughts, so that I see things from God's perspective.

And I very easily turn that into a prayer because, frankly, I don't find it easy just to say, with confidence, you know, I think the thoughts of God.

I have the mind of Christ. But, as we steep ourselves in scripture and in prayer and in walking with the Lord, the Lord forms our minds.

[17 : 40] And, we have, Paul says, we have the mind of Christ. So, I look out to see, Habakkuk says, what he will say in me and what answer I am to give to this complaint that I've made about raising up the Chaldeans.

And the Lord replied, verse 2, write down the revelation so that a herald may run with it. and, again, if you look at the commentaries, it's got two possible senses there.

One is that you write it, that Habakkuk should write down the revelation of God and it should be so clear that the herald will immediately obey it and run with it.

And, that's something we want, isn't it? That the revelation of God, the word of the Lord should be so clear to us and to the people around us that people will jump to obey it.

Jump to follow the Lord in his purposes and his will. That the herald may run with it. But it's also got another rather amusing sense that Habakkuk should write down the revelation and it should be so clear that a herald can actually run with the revelation.

[19 : 12] Of course, it was before books, it was tablets, but run with the tablets there and, you know, when you run, everything bobs up and down, doesn't it?

But it should be so clear that you can run and still read it. Well, whichever sense you take, the meaning is clear. That the revelation of God should be so clear that you obey it, you follow it, and you run to obey it.

It's terribly un-European, this, and I do apologise, if I'm allowed to apologise for the word of the Lord.

But, you know, we immediately say, well, write it down on tablets or in a book and let the revelation of God be so clear that we form a committee and discuss it.

Or, that we write it down, it's so clear that we'll spend a year praying about it. Now, please don't misunderstand me, I'm all in favour of praying about it, and I'm all in favour of having committees sometimes.

[20 : 34] Just in case you're somebody who sits on some committee or other. But, actually, that's not the purpose here.

What Habakkuk is saying, or what God is saying to Habakkuk, is, it should be so clear that you, you get up and run to obey it. The Lord's revelation.

Because, verse 3, the revelation awaits an appointed time. It speaks of God's final purposes, of the end.

And it will not prove false. There's an assurance for us. And then I love the end of verse 3. Though it linger, wait for it.

I like the old Revised Standard version on that. If it seems slow, wait for it. If it seems slow, wait for it.

[21 : 33] That's the sort of word you can write on a piece of paper and blue tack it on next to your bed or on your desk or somewhere where you see it.

If it seems slow, wait for it. Though it linger, wait for it. You know, we live in an age where we expect everything to happen immediately, don't we?

If it doesn't happen by the end of today, then forget it. And God is just appallingly slow.

My wife and I had a little smile this morning because she was holding my tie ready for me to put it on.

She was patiently waiting. And I was doing all sorts of other things. And there she was with my tie waiting and waiting.

[22 : 38] And I said, oh well, that's what we married for that you might learn patience. Well, we've been married for 51 years and we're still learning, both of us.

But God is just terribly slow. Even slower than I am. You know, frankly, if I'd been God, which fortunately I never was, just in case you weren't sure, but if I'd been God, the Messiah, the Savior, would have come a lot earlier.

I wouldn't have waited all those hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years for Jesus to come. I'd have moved history forward much more quickly. Now, you know, you may feel, well, if I'd done that, if I'd had that power, Jesus would have come at the wrong time and the whole thing would have been a disaster.

But I'd have moved it on, you know. And I sometimes think of that blank page between the Old Testament and the New Testament, you know, and that blank page represents 400 years of divine silence.

400 years between Malachi and the coming and the coming and the coming of John the Baptist. You know, no prophets, no scriptures, no new scriptures, no sign of God speaking.

[24 : 15] 400 years of it. just think of 400 years in our history, you know, go back to the year 1613.

It's an awful long time ago, isn't it? And even I, in my antiquity, I can't remember 1613, you know, a bit before my time even.

400 years, 1613 to 2013 with no sign of God speaking. It's appalling, isn't it? But that's what it is.

Actually, there's a Japanese missionary theologian, a guy called Koyama, but don't worry with that. He's written a book called The Three Mile An Hour God.

And in it he says, God doesn't go by jet plane, he goes by water buffalo cart. And those of you who know a water buffalo, water buffalo, they go so slowly, one step, another step, very slowly, and even three miles an hour is probably an exaggeration.

[25 : 36] It's probably only two or two and a half or something. So slow. and you know that in Ireland, don't you?

You know your church planting? How long does it take God to plant a church in Kinsale? Months after month after month and gradually you get a little group and then one other person gets added and then six months down the line or a year down the line maybe another person begins to come and then those people you know they start so inadequate in faith and then gradually the Lord by his spirit and his word works in them.

It seems to take forever before they're mature and really alive in Christ you know God is just awful really so slow so God says to Habakkuk though it linger wait for it it will certainly come and it will not delay God's purpose is actually sure it may be slow it may require patience but it will come to pass God has promised it God has planned it God is doing it and it will be exactly as he has planned it's wonderful it will certainly not possibly but certainly come and it will not delay it will be exactly at the time that the

Lord has planned and his timing unlike mine is perfect wonderful to be confident of it well all of that was introduction and let's get to the point what is God actually planning Habakkuk says God is planning a final judgment you may think oh Habakkuk you may think that I shouldn't raise up the Chaldeans and that there's an unholy plan there that this goes against the whole holiness of God and righteousness of God that God is raising up this appalling evil people as his instruments but the time will come I planned it God says the time will come when actually the Chaldeans will collapse and they will be judged and in chapter 2 verses 5 to the end verse 6 to the end

I beg your pardon verse 6 to the end you get this judgment of God not very popular these days to talk about judgment but actually it's really important because it vindicates the righteousness of God and in the world in which we live sin and sinners seem to have all the glory they're the successful ones they're the rich and the powerful and so on you know and you think well what's going on that the sinner's flesh and the righteous go down the drain and that's particularly true of course for people living in persecution situations you know just picture yourself in some of these Muslim countries where there are not very many believers and

[30 : 00] Christians get terribly persecuted some get killed many get thrown out of their families and homes many lose their jobs because they're Christian tremendous persecution what a situation where you begin to think well it's the opposite of prosperity theology you know it's a failure theology a suffering theology but then we follow a suffering saviour don't we a suffering servant amazing just the opposite of prosperity but there will be a vindication where actually the powerful will go down the drain and the people of God will be lifted up and rewarded that's

God's promise they seem so powerful so successful now with everything going for them but judgment is coming and the righteous rule of God the kingdom of God will finally prevail and so you get in chapter 2 a whole series of words of judgment woe to you who woe to you who woe to you who and I don't want to go through all the woes but you can do it for yourselves in chapter 2 verse 6 woe to him who piles up stolen goods etc and in verse 9 woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain and sets his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin and verse 12 woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and verse 15 woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk very modern isn't it and the final one in verse 19 woe to him who says to wood come to life or to lifeless stone wake up can it give guidance it's covered with gold and silver it looks wonderful but actually there's no breath in it what a contrast with verse 20 but the

Lord but the Lord lovely words but the Lord the contrast is in his holy temple let all the earth be silent before him because he is the sovereign Lord in control of everything well in the midst of all that judgment we get the very well known amazing positive verse of verse 14 the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea and that's what we're working towards that's why you're planting a church in Kinsale that's our aim in our church here that's our aim as Christians that the earth may be filled and it's a promise the earth not only may be filled but will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the

Lord and it's really complete as the waters cover the sea I want to go through that verse with you the earth Martin Luther in the Reformation added to scripture in order to underline it and scripture talks about being justified by faith and Luther added the word by faith alone now of course if you're really going to be biblically acceptable you have to do it in Latin so not just fide by faith but sola fide by faith alone yes well if Luther can add to scripture so can I and so I'm wanting to add not just the earth but to underline it and explain it and emphasize it the whole earth well let's do it in

Latin so it really is theologically acceptable and true not just terra the earth but tota terra the whole earth the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord I love that Saudi Arabia wow will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord amazing can you picture that Saudi Arabia so strongly Muslim so fanatically Muslim Saudi Arabia will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord well we were talking about Laos one or two of us just before the service Laos will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord can Laos be filled that way surely not it's impossible to conceive it this is the promise of the Lord though it linger wait for it and work for it and pray for it

[36 : 06] Laos will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord Ireland will be filled you know your particular town will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord Elizabeth and I live in a little village called Stansted Abbott Stansted Abbott no that's too much of a miracle Stansted Abbott will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord your street will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord it's fantastic isn't it wait for it it's coming though it linger wait for it the whole earth will be filled not just one or two here and one or two there and a little bit here and a little bit there and a tiny fellowship here and a tiny fellowship there no no it will be filled it's a strong word it's a word actually same basic word as you get in Romans 11 the fullness of the

Gentiles the mass of Gentiles non-Jews will be brought in wonderful multitudes of Europeans and multitudes of Africans and multitudes of Asians and multitudes of this country and that country and this town and that town in their crowds what the book of Revelation talks of as the 144,000 amazing a thousand is always in Jewish thought a huge number limited yes it's not everybody but it's a vast number but it's a thousands coming in wonderful we look forward to it don't we we'll be filled and then just let me mention all Israel will be saved as well again it doesn't mean everybody but a multitude of my

Jewish people all Israel will be saved this type of Jew and that type of Jew Moroccan Jews and Yemeni Jews and British Jews and Irish Jews and you name it any other Jews you like to think of Ashkenazic Jews if you know what know a bit about Judaism and Jewish life and Sephardic Jews and Indian Jews and Ethiopian black Jews and Chinese Jews etc etc etc all Israel will be saved I look forward to it wow well the earth will be filled and we need in our little context in Europe where the church is still terribly small the number of believers is still a small minority we need to lift up our eyes and keep that vision before us of the multitudes the whole earth being filled so that we're not content anymore with the little bit here and the little bit there but we're looking for the multitudes praying for the multitudes

I encourage you with that Indian scene you know the tiny little beginning and that's the picture of God's kingdom in the new testament isn't it Jesus teaching on the kingdom of God that it starts small you know a tiny little bit of leaven but it grows like leaven does and it leavens the whole lump and the big tree of the kingdom with all the birds of the air the nations of the world finding their shade under the branches the great kingdom tree but it starts as a tiny little seed and that tiny little seed grows and grows and grows until it becomes a great tree the kingdom of God starts small well of course that's the picture of the

Christian life isn't it new birth and most of us when we're born are relatively small I don't know were you born as a great big adult six feet tall I don't think so poor mother but no we're born small and then we grow and grow and we develop until we're full size some of us grow beyond that and get obese but no that growth and we're looking for it now of course having lived and worked in Asia and in the great churches there and seen the multitudes turning to the Lord it's easier for us because we've seen it in different places but let's look for it here in

[42 : 09] Ireland let's look for it all over the world that the multitudes of the whole earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord to know the glory and knowing in the Hebrew has the idea not just of an intellectual knowledge and understanding but it's a total relationship we would say in English of the head and the heart in every part of us relating to the glory of the Lord it's actually the word excuse me but it's the word that's used for sexual relationship a man knows his wife there's not just something intellectual there is it there's something a little bit more than that it's a relationship of the totality of your being the whole of you the emotional the physical the spiritual everything else that we are relates together yeah well now of course the knowledge of the glory of the Lord is not some sexual thing but it's the totality of our being in every way knowing the glory of the

Lord wonderful the glory of the Lord knowing the glory experiencing the glory relating to the glory of the Lord not some old fashioned God not some irrelevant weak God but the glory of the Lord and of course we immediately ask well as followers of the Lord as the ambassadors of the Lord what sort of Lord are we taking to the people of Ireland or as we go overseas to the people elsewhere what sort of Lord are we taking because we do take the Lord wherever we go whether we like it or not and whether other people like it or not the only question is what sort of Lord are you taking you know Christopher Columbus is not one of my favourite church heroes but

Christopher Columbus wrote a journal most of it sadly has been lost or maybe fortunately I don't know but in the remnants of his journal there's one passage where he glories in the fact that he is crossing the oceans taking Christ wherever he goes and he rejoices in his name Christopher and those of you who remember your Latin which of course used to be fluent in the good old days but Christopher the one who bears Christ who carries Christ you know all of us are Christophers actually all of us are saints as well so all of us are little St.

Christopher's isn't that nice so when you come to the fellowship here next Sunday you can say to each other good morning St.

Christopher so that'll give you safety on your journeys but leave that aside we are Christophers now when you come to Christopher Columbus you say well what sort of Christ did he actually take to the Americas was it a good representation of Christ well I don't want to discuss Columbus that's not my point but for us too what sort of picture of Christ what sort of Christ are we conveying to the world yeah because all of us are Christophers bearers of Christ good ones bad ones old passion ones relevant ones holy ones unholy ones attractive ones unattractive ones but there we are the glory that's what we're to bring the absolute splendor and beauty and holiness and attractiveness and everything wonderful in the love and grace and mercy and kindness the glory the absolute splendor that's what we carry the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the

[47 : 22] Lord not of us not of our church not of our type of Christianity not of anything else but the glory of the Lord the Lord himself well citizens and brothers that's the promise of God that's what is going to take place the earth will no doubt about it will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea totality of it let's work for it let's pray for it let's expect it and pray God that increasingly we may experience it and so may the

Lord richly bless us as we work for and pray for his purposes his plans for the whole earth Amen thank you Martin well do talk to both Martin and to Elizabeth have a look at their books and ask them any questions that you like about their service let's just close as we pray Father God thank you so much for our gathering this morning thank you for the great reminder of your wonderful promises keep us faithful keep us looking give us eyes to see all that you are doing and saying to us today in Jesus name we pray Amen

Amen Amen