

Habakkuk Ch2v4-20

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[0 : 00] Habakkuk. Now, you've probably heard that Habakkuk is one of the minor prophets. Just a reminder that that is a minor because of its size, not because of the importance of its message.

And Sam will be preaching a little while from Habakkuk chapter 2. So I'm going to read from verse 4 right to the end of the chapter. If you have a church-read Bible, it's on page 941. It's one of those books in the Bible where I have to use the index myself.

It doesn't come very quickly when I'm leafing it through. So index, it's there for a good reason. But 941 if you're reading from the church Bible. So I'm going to read from verse 4.

See, the enemy is puffed up. His desires are not upright, but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness.

Indeed, wine betrays him. He is arrogant and never at rest, because he is as greedy as the grave, and like death, is never satisfied. He gathers to himself all the nations and takes captives all the peoples.

[1 : 14] 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. 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. Has not the Lord determined that the people's labour is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

[2 : 20] For the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters covers the sea. Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbours, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies.

You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now 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 you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you, for you have shed human blood. You have destroyed lands and cities, and everyone in them.

Of what value is an idol carved by the craftsman, or an image that teaches lies? For the one who makes a trust in his own creation, he makes idols that cannot speak.

Woe to him who says to the wood, Come to life, or to the lifeless stone, Wake up! Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver. There is no breath in it.

[3 : 24] The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before him. Let me just pray for Sam before he comes up. Father, as we have just read this passage, there is much that we have read, and we wonder what does that mean.

But I thank you that you have raised up people like Sam to study your word, to be a student of your word, to bring the message from this passage to us.

We thank you indeed that we do not look at these verses by ourselves. You have given us your Holy Spirit to help and to guide us. You have given your spirit to Sam.

And I thank you that he desires to be a workman, approved unto you, correctly handling the word of truth. I pray indeed as he preaches, that he too would be excited at the hope that there is in this passage, and the desire that, thank you for the desire he has to teach, to share.

And I pray indeed that our hearts would be open to understanding, to discipline, to encouragement, to learning, that we would be changed by your word for the very word of God.

[4 : 35] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, Sam. Thank you very much, Jonathan.

And good morning, everybody. Let me just pray as we begin. Thank you. Our Heavenly Father, help us this morning to heed your warning where we need to heed it, to take encouragement where we lack it.

Help us to hear what you want us to hear from your eternal word this day. Amen. Back in June, a group of us lads from church went on a walk in Kerry.

It was on the old road to Kinmare. Some of you may know that one. And it's pretty remote out there. Okay. It's on the hills between Killarney and Kinmare.

It's completely uninhabited, this area. And there are a few points in this trail where you're walking through these deep, dark valleys, and you can get discouraged.

[6 : 00] You can begin to wonder if you're ever going to make it to the end of the path. You're in the middle of nowhere. And you're down in these steep gullies.

But then way in the distance, just in the horizon, you see the top of Torque Mountain. And you remember that at the bottom of that mountain is the car park.

And your car is there. And whenever you get there, you'll be able to take off your soaking wet hiking boots. And you'll be able to collapse into that comfortable, air-conditioned vehicle and drive home.

The end of the journey is in sight when you see that mountain. Fixing your gaze on that gives you hope to carry on through the valley of darkness.

Now, last week, if you were here, we read about the pain and injustice that surrounded Habakkuk on every side. Okay? It was like he was walking through this steep, dark valley.

[7 : 11] And in chapter 1, we noticed that he didn't see any hope at all. And the main question raised was, where is God in the valley of injustice and pain?

And how can he be sovereign over all of this evil? And then we read in chapter 2, verse 5, God's ultimate answer to that question.

It was this. The righteous will live by faith. Now, if that was all that God had to say, it might seem too simple an answer or too vague.

I mean, faith in what? We might ask. Live by faith in my innate strength to somehow push through this pain? Or faith in the latest mindfulness techniques to stay positive when everything around us is crumbling?

Well, in today's passage, we read the rest of God's answer. And he tells us that our faith is to be placed in him alone. More specifically, in what he is going to do in the future.

[8 : 30] He gives us three amazing realities on which to fix the eyes of our faith. It's as if God points out three mountains of hope on the horizon as we walk through that valley of injustice and pain.

And those three future realities are as follows. God's justice will be done. God's glory will be restored. And God's name will be revered.

By looking forward in faith to those future realities, we can keep walking through the valley of injustice and pain.

So let's begin with that first mountain of hope. God's justice will be done. And this is the main emphasis of this passage.

God pronounces, I'm counting six judgments over the nation of Babylon. Okay, they were going to come and conquer Israel and Judah.

[9 : 35] And God says, well, you are also going to be judged. But we also need to take this into account ourselves. God is not just pronouncing judgment on Babylon.

It's also for anybody anywhere who lives in these waves. So we need to listen up. And I think these six judgments could be categorized in two ways. The first kind are natural consequences for our sinful choices in the present.

And then the latter kind are all about God's future judgments, his direct intervention, putting all injustice and sin to a stop.

So we're going to run through these fairly quickly. And first, let's take the judgments that are happening in the here and now. And I phrase these as questions to kind of help us think about them

for ourselves more so rather than just, oh, that was for Babylon back then.

So number one, are you greedy? Well, the natural judgment is this. You will never be satisfied. Look at verse four and five.

[10:44] See, the enemy is puffed up. His desires are not upright. And look at verse five. Indeed, wine betrays him. He is arrogant and never arrested because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied.

Now, greed is one of those acceptable sins in our society, is it not? We may not need a new car. But we like the look of that one. Whether it's a luxurious holiday or that latest phone or an unnecessary item of clothing, we slip into greed so easily, don't we?

Be warned. The greedy will never be satisfied. All those things will betray us. Here's a second judgment.

Do you steal? Well, the natural judgment for that is this. You will face the consequences. Look at verse six.

Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion. How long must this go on? Well, here's the warning.

[12:02] Verse seven. Will not your creditors suddenly arise? Will not they wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their prey.

Stop stealing. There will be painful consequences. You will be found out sooner than later. and have to face the full penalty of that. Listen to God's warning. Here's a third one. Do you get rich by cheating others?

Well, the natural judgment is this. You will be shamed and ruined. Look at verse nine. Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin. cheating at work or in school is really common today. It's almost accepted that you're going to act in that way to get ahead. Hear God's warning of judgment in verse 10.

[13:09] He says, you have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life. Be warned. Because every time you look at your wealth or your achievements you've gained at the expense of others, you will feel shame for all the people you exploited to get there.

Here's the fourth judgment. Do you look to idols for life or for guidance? You will not find it. Verse 19.

Have a look down at that. Woe to him who says to wood, come to life, or to lifeless stone, wake up. Can it give guidance? You know, we are all guilty of giving created things God status in our lives. gods of money, family, romance, comfort, whatever it is that you set up as that ultimate thing, rely on it for life and happiness.

[14:29] Hear God's warning in verse 19. It is covered with gold and silver. There is no breath in it. God's love.

Those idols we have will always betray us. They'll never give us what we're truly looking for. Now the last two judgments, and these involve God's direct intervention at the end of time.

Number five. Are you building an empire through injustice? God will destroy it. look with me at verse 12.

Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice. And it's acceptable in our society to build our own comfortable little kingdoms where we live in luxury. We don't really have to care about anybody else. be warned. If that's what we live for, we're building up treasure that will ultimately be destroyed.

[15:47] Look at verse 13. Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?

And here's the final judgment to come. Are you shaming others to increase your glory?

God will bring shame and destruction on you. we get this terrible picture in verse 15 of a nation who gets their neighbors drunk in order to strip them of their clothing, to bring shame on them and boost their own glory.

Now you might say that is repulsive. I would never do that. Yet how quick are we to drag up the failings of others behind their backs?

Shaming them to our friends, all the while boosting our own glory in comparison. Listen to God's warning in verse 16.

[17 : 02] You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it's 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.

And as I look up at that list there, I'm convicted. I'm guilty. It's not just something for Babylon two and a half thousand years ago.

No. This is a picture of my heart and this is a picture of your heart at its very worst. And that's frightening.

God's judgment is coming and we won't have any defense.

But that is not the end of the story. because 600 years after Habakkuk wrote of these judgments, Jesus, the righteous judge himself entered into our world and he suffered the judgment that we deserved on the cross.

[18 : 22] And now anybody who sees the ugliness of their sin, repents of it and looks in faith to Christ, can know full forgiveness and pardon.

And that's how God's future judgment can be a source of hope for us and something that we no longer dread. Because on that day, every wrong will be put right.

Injustice and suffering has an end date. And that is the first mountain of hope that we fix our gaze on as we walk through the valley of injustice.

Now here's the second. God's glory will be restored. Tucked away in the middle of all these judgments, we find another incredible reason to hope.

Now we did look at verses 12 to 13 earlier and we saw that God was condemning those who build their own glory through injustice. I'm not sure how many of you watched the opening ceremony of the Olympics in Paris.

[19 : 33] It was a long night. It was a bit of a commitment to get to the end of it. But during the ceremony ten golden statues of influential French women were elevated above the River Seine as hundreds of millions of people around the globe watched on.

One of them was a statue of a French government minister who legalized abortion in 1974. Her efforts paved the way for the killing of one million innocent babies in the womb in the 50 years since then in France.

Hers is a glory built through injustice. Jesus. And it's not just extreme examples like that.

Everywhere you look around you, you see people building their own glory, not God's.

love. It simply comes natural to us, doesn't it? Listen to how the apostle Paul describes this in Romans chapter 1.

You can read on the screen. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.

[21 : 06] So the people are without excuse. There's no excuse for us. We know that God must exist.

Verse 21, for although they knew God, they neither gave glory to him as God, nor gave thanks to him. But their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

That's a description of our society today. We look around and see all the amazing evidences of God in each other, in his creation, but we fail to give him glory.

Instead, we build up our own. We make much of ourselves, and not much of God. Don't you long to live in a world where everyone, everywhere gives glory to God alone for who he is.

And what's amazing is that God actually promises this very thing in verse 14. Have a look at it with me. Instead of the false glory of people, look at this, verse 14, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

[22 : 37] What a magnificent picture. Almost too beautiful to even imagine. God describes his glory in Exodus 33 as his eternal goodness.

It is God in all his majestic perfections being seen, being savored on every square inch of that new heavens and earth to come.

Revelation 21 says that that future city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it life and the Lamb is its lamp.

All of God's resplendent glory, praised and enjoyed forever by all of the redeemed from every nation.

There will be no one in that new heavens and earth who does not give glory to God for who he is.

And we don't have the words to do this heavenly picture any justice, but what I will ask you is this,

don't you long to be there.

[23 : 53] where God's glory fills up everyone and everything. Or have we become so numb to its absence in our society that we don't even care?

You know, earlier we sang some amazing words in one of the songs called All My Days, and here they are, I long to be where the praise is never ending, yearn to dwell where the glory never fades, where countless worshippers will share one song and cries of worthy will honour the Lamb. Don't you long for that too? we say come quickly, Lord Jesus, right every wrong, restore God's glory again.

It's a glory that we lost sight of in Eden, but it's coming back. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

and here's the thing, it's a glory that's actually reflected in us, in the lives of every spirit-led believer.

[25 : 19] Listen to what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3.18, it's on the screen, and we all who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory.

So here's the deal, if you are in Christ today, you are a mirror, reflecting God's glory to others. And yes, a cloudy reflection it may be, but as you walk with the Spirit, it gets clearer and clearer.

You are being transformed into God's likeness with ever-increasing glory. You are part of the promise of the knowledge of God's glory filling the earth again.

And that means that the choices that we make, the words we say, they really matter. Because God's glory is ultimately at stake in the way we live our lives.

Do our lives make much of him or do they make much of us? When your family, your colleagues, your classmates are looking at you, do they get a glimpse of the goodness of God?

[26 : 26] Do they see his glory? The closer we walk with him, the more we're transformed into his likeness, the more others see God's glory in us.

That's an awesome privilege and a responsibility, isn't it? So let us be diligent, both in our hope for that new heavens and earth, where the knowledge of God's glory will fill everyone, everywhere, but also in the here and now.

Let's be diligent in our desire to reflect God's glory. And that's the second hope that we fix our eyes on, in that valley of injustice.

God's glory is going to be restored. What a wonderful hope. And there is one last mountain of hope I believe that we are given in this passage and it is this.

God's name will be revered. we read in verse 19 earlier that God proclaims judgment on those who worship idols of their own making.

[27 : 38] The people on earth might spend all their days worshipping at the idols of power, sex, money, comfort, but verse 20, look at this, the Lord is in his holy temple.

Let all the earth be silent before him. Here is the hope, friends. One day when King Jesus returns, there will be universal silence before him.

In a moment, every person from every nation will see God exactly for who he is. every mouth that mocked him and cursed him will be silenced.

Every tongue that denied his existence will be hushed. On that day, we will see everything in this world exactly for what it is.

He will show up all the false idols that we ever ran after. we will be rendered utterly speechless by his perfect judgments. In a split second, we will know that he was right about everything all along.

[28 : 59] No one will even consider uttering a word in defense of their own moral purity that will crumble in comparison to his holiness.

We will all be silent before God in his temple. For some, this will be a silence of terror.

Their sin will be laid bare with no excuses. And that is tragic beyond words.

But for those who are united to Christ, there is no terror. This will be a silence of holy awe.

Because our judgment has been taken by the judge himself, Jesus Christ. So take heart because God's name will be revered.

[30 : 08] All who reject him now and who seem to have the upper hand will one day bow the knee and confess that Jesus is Lord.

And let us practice silence before him. That holy reverence for who he is. We don't have to wait until the day of judgment to do this.

We have access to his holy presence anywhere, any time. And how is that possible? Here's how. We are his temple.

You see, when Habakkuk wrote this, he had to go to the physical temple in the Jerusalem building to meet with God. That's where God dwelt at that time. But God does not dwell in that kind of temple anymore.

In the New Testament, we learn that God's redeemed people from every nation are his temple. That means that God has chosen for his Holy Spirit to dwell, not in a building, in his people.

[31 : 18] And because he is at work in us, everywhere we go, we have access to his glory at any moment. And you and I, we desperately need times in our day where we cut out the noise.

Laptop, phone, work, family, and we practice silence before our God. A time to open up his word and let him speak right into our hearts.

To really meditate on what he's saying, to confess our sin and to worship him in response. We need silence before God.

We don't have to wait. God's name so that's the third mountain of hope that we fix our eyes on. God's name will be revered.

All the earth will be silent before him. And we are the temple of his Holy Spirit. We are enabled right now to live lives of holy reverence before him.

[32 : 26] To finish, we are going to sing a song in a few minutes called Living Hope. And this is a song which proclaims Christ's victory over death and our victory also in him.

And there's one line, whenever we sing this song, it just gets me every single time. And it's this, the work is finished, the end is written, Jesus Christ, my living hope.

You know we have such an unusual gift as Christians. We know the end of the story. The books of our lives may have many chapters that we cannot read yet, many surprises, ups and downs, but I'll tell you one thing, we can flick any time we want to that last chapter.

In the end, Jesus wins and we are united to him. His victory is ours. His story is our story.

Here's how that final chapter reads. God's justice will be done and we don't need to fear it. God's glory will be restored God's name will be revered by all.

[33 : 57] God's name will be revered by all and we will live in awe of his holiness forever.

forever. So, as you walk through the valley of injustice and suffering, keep your eyes firmly fixed on those three mountains of hope.

They are a gift from God to you to help you walk each day through that valley on your way to the new heavens and earth, the city that he has prepared for those who love him.

Let's pray. Lord, we confess we are so quick to despair at the injustice and suffering that surrounds us.

It's real and it hurts. Lord, we need a fresh vision of the hope which you have laid up for us.

[35 : 20] Make it wonderfully real to our hearts this day. And together we say, come, Lord Jesus, bring justice to the oppressed, fill the earth with the knowledge of your glory, and silence every mouth of the enemy.

We long for this day. Let us not be content without it. Help us to be ready for it. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. The musicians come up. We will sing that song together now. Living hope. And please use this as an opportunity to respond to what God has been singing to you today through his word.

Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.