

Habakkuk 2:4

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Preacher: Ife Ojetayo

[0:00] We are continuing in our series in Abacook this morning. We are going to be in just one verse.

! Let's pray.

Holy Father, I ask that you open my mouth to proclaim your word in the power of the Holy Spirit. I pray, Lord, that you will give us ears to hear. I pray that this same Spirit will open the hearts of all hearers here, assembled, to receive your Holy Gospel. I pray that you will write your law and your word upon our hearts, even as you've promised. All of this we ask, gracious Father, in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by faith. The righteous shall live by faith. In case you're wondering in your pew Bible, you can turn there to page, I think it's on page 934 of your pew Bible. You can follow along. We're going to be turning a little bit in our Bibles this morning, so be prepared.

Behold, the proud, the puffed up one. His soul is not upright in him, but the righteous, the justified, by his steadfast trust, shall live. I think this verse is the heart of the whole book of Habakkuk. And we've come to the heart of it here. And actually, there's argument to be said, this is the heart of the Gospel. The principle that is espoused in this verse is at the heart of the whole Gospel. By way of reminder, this book is a conversation between God and the prophet. Habakkuk complained to God. We saw this three weeks ago. Habakkuk complained to God, saying, how long will you allow evil to prevail in the land and justice to be perverted?

[2:29] And God, in response to him, said, he will punish Judah and he will use the Chaldeans, that's the Babylonians, as his agent of judgment. Now, this father troubled Habakkuk because these people are even more wicked, more godless than Judah. So he ponders how God can be true to his promises. How God can be true to the promise that he made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and to their fathers to bless Israel and bless the world through Israel if he will allow these wicked people to crush his nation. But God said to his prophet, as we saw two weeks ago, I will also judge the Babylonians. God says, God assures us that he sees all evil and no sin, none, which is sin is actually an offense against his holiness. No sin will go unpunished. So Judah will be judged, God says to

Habakkuk. Babylon will be judged. The earth will be judged by the Holy One who is of purer eyes than to see evil. But in the midst of judgment is also the pronouncement of God's steadfast love. He says to his prophet in these chapters, in these verses, the righteous shall live by his faith. I want us to look closely at this verse this morning to see how it is not only central to the book of Habakkuk, but it is central to the gospel itself that we proclaim and that we believe. And to help us, we're going to look at three places in the New Testament where this verse is explicitly quoted. We're going to look in Romans chapter 1 verse 17. We're going to look in Galatians chapter 3 verse 10 and 11. And we're going to look at Hebrews chapter 10 verse 35 to 39. That's going to be a lot of leaving through our Bible, but I think we're up for it. So, and I think this will help us to get a fuller understanding of what this verse means. But here in verse 4 of Habakkuk, we have the promise of judgment and salvation. The contrast is set before us. There are only two kinds of people in the world as far as God is concerned. The righteous who shall live are contrasted with those who will endure the judgment of God. Who are these people that will endure the judgment of God? They're the one whose soul is puffed up within them. Those who are not upright. Now, this is a description of not only the wicked nation of Babylon. I think it's a description of all of humanity without God. Remember, this is God's analysis of people in the world. Not mine, not even Abarthus' analysis. This is God's words. Note God's description of the proud here. The Hebrew word translated for puffed up can also mean to be swelled up, to be bloated.

And you've often heard the phrase, I don't want your head to swell up, or he's full of himself. Well, that's really what it's implied here. That's what pride is, right? We use those terms to describe people, or ourselves even, when we get caught up in our own self-worth. It doesn't always have to be bad or good when we use it. We can use it in jest. But here, in regards to God, as it relates to God, to be puffed up, to be full of yourself is bad. There is no neutral way about it. God says here, there are the righteous, and then there are the puffed up ones. Before God, if you are believing in self-worth or puffed up, you are in for destruction and judgment. It's as if God is saying, I will puff their inflated ego. Referring to the Babylonians. They're referring to all who stand before him, trusting in themselves. It's as if God is saying, the proud, those are the puffed up ones, their sense of self-importance and self-exaltation. I will abase them. Notice the consequence of being puffed up or bloated. Such a person cannot, cannot be upright in himself. That's what the beginning of verse 4 says. People who are puffed up cannot be upright in themselves.

Their very bloatedness, I prefer to use the word bloated than even puffed up. That is, it's an apt description. Their very bloatedness condemns them because they stand before the Almighty God, the Holy One, as self-reliant people, boasting, trusting in their own merit.

They presume to define themselves before God on the basis of their own goodness. You hear it in the world often. I'm sure you do. This phrase, I'm a good person.

[7 : 58] When you ask a non-believer if they think they will go to heaven when they die, very rarely will you hear someone say, no, I don't think I'm going to go to heaven. Even if they don't go to church and they don't believe in Jesus. Very rarely. If they believe in a sort of afterlife of one kind or another, very rarely will you hear them say, I'm going to go to hell or to the bad place. Because the human heart believes that, you know, I'm good. Instead, this is what they will probably say to you. Well, I'm a good person. I haven't killed anyone. I'm not a bank robber. I think God sees my heart. That's the problem. God sees your heart. But they don't see that. I think God sees my heart. So there's no reason I will go to, I will be condemned by God.

But here's what, here's what God says about such estimations. That the self-exaltation of man, that is self-reliance of any person before him, is not righteous. Such people are not righteous.

And therefore, because they're not righteous, they are under God's condemnation. The Chaldeans in this book are a prime example of this. Popped up, self-righteous, reliant on themselves and their own strength and their own power. I think the man or woman trusting in his or her own goodness outside of faith in Jesus is also a prime example of this.

So we see the two kinds of people and where they fall in God's purposes. We have the puffed up person, those who are soiling with pride in themselves, trusting in themselves. To such people, they're represented by Babylon. And there is the promise of judgment against them.

But we also have the righteous. The Hebrew word for righteous word means one who is just. One who is lawful, who keeps the law. To such people, there is the promise of life.

[10 : 20] This promise, but the righteous shall live by his faith. Here's the principle of the whole Bible. The righteous shall live by his faith. Now, life is given to only those who are just, according to God's economy. Those who lawfully keep the law of God. But we also know, if you're in Christ and you've come to faith in Jesus, you know, unlike the person out there that's still self-reliant in themselves, you know what God says in Romans 3.23.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. You know that you don't qualify as righteous before God in and of yourself. In fact, to think that we are righteous before God by anything in us is to prove the very opposite. That we have come to self-reliance and we've been disqualified before a holy God. God rejects the self-reliant man. To man, it may be a virtue to be self-reliant.

And it is to man to be, to have, you know, moxie and to be able to stand on your own two feet. All of those things are things that we, you know, extol. But that's not the same thing before God.

Before God, self-reliance is a mark of rebellion and rejection of God. It is the mark of our father, Adam.

We rejected dependency on God and trust in God's word and took the word and the lies of Satan and took the path of self-reliance and the path of destruction.

[12 : 05] But Paul also says in Romans 3 that God's righteousness is manifested through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. So that even though all have sinned, some are counted just by His grace through the faith that is in Christ's faithfulness alone.

He is the perfectly faithful one. That is, Jesus Christ is the perfectly faithful one. So the promise of life is only through faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I say again, the Hebrew word, as I said earlier, the Hebrew word for righteousness, it's *sadiq*. That's how you pronounce it, I think. No one really knows. I don't, at least, no. I'm making attempts at it. It means, the word means one who is upright.

One who is lawful and just. Now this same word in the Greek is translated more often in the New Testament as one who is just or justified.

Now you see that it's synonymous with the word. The one who is righteous is the one who is justified. So Romans 3 reminds us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

[13:26] So the means by which we can be counted as righteous is for our righteousness to be a gift from another. The gospel proclamation in Abacut is this.

The life lived by the person of faith is a gift given by the Lord. Because he has come, that person of faith, has come to trust in God's grace for his existence.

That's what makes the righteous one the righteous by God's economy. Trusting in God's grace for existence. The righteous person looks outside of himself to the one who gives life and is justified before God for his trust in the one who gives life.

While the puffed up man looks in himself and is condemned. Let's look briefly at the three New Testament interpretations of Abacut 2 verse 4.

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 1 verse 17. And I'm actually going to read it from verse 16.

Romans 1, 16 and 17 is the thesis statement of Paul as he writes this magnificent book of Romans.

[14:46] And he quotes this verse in his central statement as he puts forth his argument. He says from verse 16 of Romans 1.

I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

And here's verse 17. For in it, that is in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.

That is beginning and ending in faith. The righteousness of God. As it is written, the righteous, there's a quote there of Abacut 2. The righteous shall live by faith.

That word from faith for faith in your Bible in Romans 1, 17 means that the Christian life is all of faith.

You enter in to life with God by faith. And you end by faith. In faith. We see this in this interpretation.

[15:47] That the way in. This is what Paul is saying. The way into life with God. The life that is promised. Is by faith. But it's not faith for faith's sake.

It's faith that has as its object the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only this faith that trusts and hopes and has confidence in Jesus Christ that brings life with God.

Do you know that the world out there is full of faithful people? People, everyone. To be human is to be a person of faith. We are all, we have to put faith in something. Once another, other.

But the only thing that would give us life by God's economy is faith in Jesus Christ. He has to be the object of our faith. So this is what Paul is saying here in Romans 1, 17.

The way in to life with God is by faith. And the object of that faith has to be Jesus Christ. Paul shows us further that the way on.

[16:51] So the way on, that is the ongoing life of faith with God. So if you've come to faith in Jesus Christ, if you've believed in Him and trusted Him and even justified, the way on in this life of faith, in this Christian life, is also by faith.

How do we go on living as people of God, you may add, in a crooked and perverse world? Let's look in Galatians. In Galatians, Paul combats those who claim a false gospel.

These people have come along to the Galatian church and they say to the Galatians, You know the way on, you're Christians now, you've come to faith in Jesus Christ. But the way on in your life of Christian, in this Christian journey, is for you to keep the law.

Keep the law. Be circumcised. Do all the things that Moses required. But in chapter 3, verse 10 to 11, Paul disputes that adamantly.

And he says this in verse 10, All who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.

[18:14] Paul just says, The law is not the way to life. Keeping the law is not the way to life.

Everyone who depends on keeping the law as the means of righteousness is under a curse.

Because all the law does is condemn. But he says here in verse 11, That no one is justified before God by the law. For, verse 11, The righteous shall live.

There's a phrase again. The righteous shall live by faith. So Paul essentially is saying to the Galatian church, And he's saying to us, You've entered in by faith, Trusting in Jesus Christ. Now you think that you can go on, In this life of faith in Jesus Christ, By, you know, My devotional daily habit. I keep to my devotion. I do it every day.

And you're building up your own righteousness based on that. You know, The devil is really shrewd. It can even make the things that God has prescribed, By which we can draw close to him, As the means by which we trust in ourselves, Rather than God.

[19 : 21] So your Bible reading, Can be, Something that you trust in, Rather than God himself. So that, Okay, yeah, I've read my Bible, I'm praying.

You know, Being in church, Faithful church attendance. All of those things can be things that, We can come to put our trust in, As the means by which, God will be pleased with us, And we'll have life.

And Paul is saying to the Galatians, And they're saying to us, Don't listen to that lie. The righteous shall live by faith. I think this is a needed corrective, To our natural tendency. Because it is a natural tendency, Towards works righteousness. We are built, As little factory idols, Every human heart. We want to justify ourselves.

We want something we can do, In order to be, To feel like, I've earned it. And that's why the gospel is, Is sometimes a scandal, To the people out there in the world.

[20 : 21] What do you mean, That I'm a sinner, And I need a savior? What do you mean, That I need to come, And just trust in Jesus? I'm a good person.

That itself, Is a scandal to the world. But we are reminded here, Of this corrective. We are reminded, That our trust, And confidence, Is not in our righteousness, But in the righteousness, Of Jesus Christ.

This is Paul's, Bold defense, Of the truth of the gospel. That salvation, Is by faith alone, In the perfect righteousness, Of Christ. And this, Alone, Is the pathway, Of life, With God.

Now, If you have life with God, If you have a relationship, With the Father, Through the Son, In the power of the Holy Spirit, You have it, Only, Through faith, In the promise of God himself.

Not by anything, That you've done, Or you've earned, Or you've merited. You, According to Paul in Galatians, According to the, The witness of God, In the, In his holy scripture, You, If you've come to faith, By trusting Jesus, Your true son of Abraham, Along with Abacut here, And along with Paul.

[21 : 39] Because Abacut, Because Abraham, Paul tells us, Was justified, Not because he was, A perfect man, A righteous man, In and of himself, Because he believed, The promise of God.

The Bible says, In Genesis 15, He was counted to him, As righteousness. Faith, Believe in the promise of God, Was what made him, Righteous before God. And that, Hasn't changed.

It's still the same way, For anyone to be, Righteous before God. So, I want us to see, This, This, This, Verse, Of Abacut 2, 4, Is central, To the gospel.

In fact, The same truth, Was recovered, By Martin Luther, At the reformation. Luther was a young monk, And he was on a pilgrimage, From Germany, In his homeland.

He was crossing the Habs, In the winter, On a 700 mile trek, To Rome. And he was struggling, With the widespread belief, Around that time, Among medieval Christians, Of his day, That the way to heaven, Is by doing more good, Than bad.

[22 : 46] And that's still, What most people believe, In the world today. The way to heaven, Is doing more good, Than bad. But he knew this, Luther at least knows, That, He had a debt, That he cannot really, Spread up, With God.

He will always be, In the red, Against God. I think that's where, We all opt, To come to. A place where, There is nothing, That we can do, To, You know, Improve our ledger, Before God.

In and of ourselves. Luther knew this, And he was troubled. Because, He was a man, Who was pious, And who was trying to, He was a monk after all, Living, You know, A cluster life.

But he knew, That he couldn't really, Be righteous, In and of himself. But the church of his day, Was corrupt. They departed, From the truth of the gospel.

They were selling, Something called indulgences. Indulgences essentially, Is selling good works. People can purchase, With their money, Good works, That will count, Before God.

[23 : 55] So, Or they were selling, Pious acts. If you do, You know, Religious, Pious acts, Acts of piety, You can pay off, Your debt, To God.

So this is what, Actually, Luther was going to do, In his journey, In his pilgrimage to Rome. It was a, Pious act, A pious pilgrimage, To go and worship. And on his journey to Rome, To perform these pious acts, He became sick.

And in his sickness, He was, He reflected, Abacut, Chapter 2, Verse 4, The just, The righteous, Shall live by his faith. And, Eventually, He got to Rome.

He got to the main cathedral there, In Rome, At that time. And, At the main cathedral, There's a, A series of stairs.

It's called, The holy stairs. That's the interpretation of the word in Latin. And, They claim that the stairs, These 28 steps, Are actually the same stairs, That led to, Pilate's praetorium, That Jesus climbed, That walked on, When he was being tried, At his passion.

[25 : 04] So these, These were meant to be holy. In fact, Pilgrims would flock to Rome, To climb these stairs. But they don't climb it on their feet. They crawl up it on their knees. And, And as they crawl up, They're praying.

You know, Thinking and believing that, By this pious act, By this act of worship, They're burning, Storing up, You know, God's pleasure.

But as, As Luther continues to do this, And he's performing this act of devotion, Climbing up on his knees, Up these steps, He remembered what he read, In Abba 2, 4, The just, Shall live, By his faith. And, All that God has been doing in his heart, Became, Even more alive. The true gospel of faith alone, In Christ's work, Became evident to him. It was said, That he stopped, On his way up the stairs, Stood up, Climbed down the steps, And returned immediately, To his own town in Germany. Luther said this, Of that experience, When by the Spirit of God, I understood those words, The just shall live by faith, Then I felt born again, Like a new man.

[26 : 21] I entered through the open doors, Into the very paradise of God. Do you see what Luther is saying, And what Paul says, In Galatians and Romans?

The way to paradise, The way to life with God, Is not by works, Or human merit, It is solely, By faith. That is what makes you, That it is the faith in Jesus Christ, That gives you new life, That makes you a new man, A new creature. So God used this verse, To set Luther free.

He also used it, To set free the gospel of Jesus Christ. And God used this man, To rekindle the fire of the gospel, In Europe and the world. But it is on the basis, Of this knowledge.

This statement of God's standards, Defended by Paul, Discovered by Luther, Is how we live the Christian life. The assurance of our standing before God, Is not on the basis of our ability, To perfectly keep God's statutes.

[27 : 26] We do not hold on to God, So much as he holds on to us. So we know that the way in, Is true faith, The way on, And the way through, Is also true faith.

This is what Paul, The author of Hebrews says, In Hebrews 10, 35. Finally, I want us to hear this, I am going to read Hebrews 10, 35 and 39. Because I should think about, Your life in God.

How do you continue in this world, Perverse generation? How do you stay faithful, In the wicked and perverse world? How do you stand, Upon the promises of God? When like Abacuc, It seems like, God is nowhere, And is silent.

And he doesn't see evil. How do you stay steadfast, And faithful? The writer of Hebrews tells us, In Abacuc 10, Reading from verse 35, He charges us, To persevere in faith.

He says, Therefore, Do not throw away, Your confidence, Which has a great reward. The confidence is, Confidence in Jesus Christ's salvation.

[28 : 29] Don't throw that away. It has a great reward. For you, Have need of endurance. Anyone feel like, They need endurance from God? You have need of endurance, So that, When you have done, The will of God, You may receive, What is promised.

For yet a little while, And the coming one, Will come, And will not delay. But, My righteous one, Shall live, By faith.

But my righteous one, Shall live, By faith. And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But the author of Hebrews, Encourages us, And says this, But we, Are not of those, Who shrink back, And are destroyed.

But we are of those, Who are faith, And preserve their souls. That is the charge, To us, Brothers and sisters in Christ. We, That is those, Who have placed their confidence, In Christ Jesus, Are those, Who persevere in faith.

Knowing, That yet a little while, And the coming one, Will come, And will not delay. Do you know, That he is coming? Do you know, That he sees evil, And wrongdoing?

[29 : 53] Do you know, That none of it, Will go unpunished, Or unjust, By a holy God? Do you know, That he sees you, Even as you suffer, Even as you stay steadfast, And faithful to God, And you stand upon his word, And the world looks at you, And ridicules you, For saying, Thus says the Lord, And I trust God's word, Rather than man, And I will stand on God's word, Rather than what man says, And I will stand on God's word, No matter the cost, To me.

Do you know, That God sees that, And he will reward, Your perseverance of faith, In him. Look at what, The author of Hebrews says, Look at what, The Abba says, God is not late, He will come, At his chosen time, We might get impatient, We might long for him, To come sooner, But he will come, That's the promise, That we rely, And stand upon, The coming one, Is personalized too, Is a person, The person of Jesus Christ, He's come once, To save, He will come, To judge, And to save, And to restore, His chosen ones, And he will not delay, So even now, As it seems, That the world around us, Is closing in, It seems easier, To compromise, Your stand upon God's word, We must remember, That our faith, Is not in man made things, Be it this church building, Be it this, Our denominational affiliation, Our Anglican heritage,

Be it in our family, Our faith cannot be in any of those things, Those are good things, They're not necessarily bad things, But we cannot put our faith in them, We can't put our faith in our political world, Twins, We can't put our faith in our moral rectitude, Our self-exaltation, We can't even put our faith in our safety, Our comfort, All of these things, Will fade, May fade, Away, But when we place our confidence, In them, Rather than in Jesus Christ, We're shrinking back, From the promise of God, And Jesus says, For such people, There is no life, Rather, We are to remain steadfast, To persevere, To stick to the path of life, Jesus is the path of life, His promise is the path of life, Brothers and sisters, Stand first, Stand fast,

Stick to the path of life, Persevere in faith, And may God help us, Let us pray, If you are to come, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, You are to be your best, It is a good, The first, all