

# The Promises Of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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Well, I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Habakkuk chapter 2. Habakkuk chapter 2 is where we continue in our study today. We're going to cover the entire chapter with the exception of the first verse.

So we'll begin reading at verse 2 and go all the way down to verse 20. But we're going to spend most of our time on verses 2, 3, and 4. That's really where the meat of this particular passage is found.

[ 1 : 06 ] Verses 5 through 20 is what is called a taunt song. We're going to talk about that a little bit when we get to it. But it's really just a specific expression of judgment toward this group of individuals.

And we'll talk about that when we get there, but we're not going to spend a lot of time there. We're going to focus our attention on verses 2, 3, and 4. Habakkuk chapter 2, verse number 2.

And the Lord answered me and said, Write the vision and make it plain upon tables that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie. Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come. It will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.

Yea, also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people.

[ 2 : 17 ] Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his. How long?

And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay. Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?

Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.

For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity.

[ 3 : 23 ] Behold, it is not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, and putt thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness. Thou art filled with shame for glory.

Drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered. The cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory. For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beast which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it, the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein to make dumb idols?

Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake, to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach. Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

[ 4 : 42 ] But the Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him. The first four weeks of our study of Habakkuk only covered 18 verses, and there has been so much to learn in the dialogue between God and his prophet.

But the passage we study today is the crucial text of the entire book. Everything that's been written for us thus far exists to serve the purpose of this message from God.

After learning that God was raising up the Chaldean Empire as his instrument of judgment, Habakkuk had difficulty understanding how the actions of God seemed to be inconsistent with the character of God.

With a spirit of worship, humility, and submission, he issued his question to God and patiently waited for a reply. Now, the general confusion of Habakkuk's question, which is found in verse 13 of chapter one, is what God addresses in his response.

In fact, let's read that verse together. Look with me at chapter one in verse 13. Habakkuk says as a part of this question for God, thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity.

[ 6 : 07 ] Why then do you look upon them that deal treacherously and hold your tongue when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he? We find that as we discovered last week, this same question plagued Asaph as he wrote in Psalm 73.

He said, behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world, they increase in riches. It's a common question throughout the scriptures. Job asked the same question in Job chapter 21.

David asked this question in some of his Psalms. And it all boils down to how can you as a holy God not do something about the sin that we see?

How is it that the wicked around us seems to be exalted? How is it that the sinful around us seems to prosper while your own people are in despair?

And though not given in the way that we would usually hope, God's answer as we study this book and as we study Psalm 73 and as we study the book of Job, God's answer brings great resolution and peace to the hearts of these men.

[ 7 : 24 ] But it is here that we must take time to recognize the way in which God chooses to answer our questions. When we bring our confusion to the Lord in prayer, we're typically seeking for him to issue an explanation of his behavior.

It's like an itch that cannot be scratched until every single facet of our perplexity is explained. For some Christians, this process actually ends up revealing a very sinful attitude and spirit to the Lord that shows a lack of trust in God.

Rather than assuming God's perfection and righteousness when they bring their question to God, they actually bring their question demanding that God prove that he is righteous and that he is perfect and that he is good.

And there's a clear distinction. The same question can be asked, but the attitude behind it can determine whether or not a person's heart is right with the Lord in a right perspective of God's character or whether it actually reveals a severe lack of faith.

Whenever we bring our questions to the Lord, we're to come to him with the assumption that God is right and that he is perfect. But many times when we come to him, we're not coming with that understanding simply seeking an answer.

[ 8 : 47 ] We're coming demanding that God prove to us that he's right before we actually trust him. A question that should come from a spirit of faith and submission in reality for many people is in a spirit of judgment.

Now, I've thought a little bit about this. What gives us this tendency? And I do think that perhaps our democratic culture of Western civilization plays a role in our sinful spirits toward God.

Let me explain. We are accustomed to exercising the power of our individual vote to put people that we determined are worthy of it in positions of leadership and authority over us.

And if we're unsatisfied with the way a particular leader has led, we exercise that same power and right to vote to remove them from office and put somebody else there in their place.

We become the judges of whether or not a person is performing adequately. And in this sense, we submit to authority only as long as that authority submits to us.

[10:02] We will submit to their position and their leadership only as long as they lead based on what we have demanded that they do. And for this reason, we refer to these people as public servants.

And I think because we're accustomed to this relationship between submission and authority, we often come to our relationship with God in the same way. But we have not chosen God.

He has chosen us. We have not voted him into office. He is the God of creation. We are not his judge.

He is our God. He is not our servant. We are to serve him. He is righteous, not us.

He owes us nothing. He owes us no explanation for why he works in the way that he does. And any revelation that we have of him and his work only comes by his own love and grace.

[11:11] So we are not to come to the Lord and judge his actions in the way that we would judge the human actions of a human leader. We come to the Lord rather in submission to him as God.

And when we bring our perplexity, it's not to judge him and demand that he prove to us that he's right. It's where to come to him with the assumption that he is God and he is right and he is perfect and seeking to understand not to accuse.

So because of this relationship with him being God and us being his servant, God does not offer explanations. He does not answer our questions in the way that we expect.

When it comes to our perplexities, God deals in promises, not explanations. Let me say it again.

When it comes to our perplexities and our questions and our confusions and the prayers that we pray, God does not answer us on the basis of an explanation.

He answers us with a promise, with a covenant. He is infinitely more concerned about our faith than he is about our complete understanding.

[12:30] His desire is that we trust him even when we don't understand how and why he's working. And this is the pattern of God's dealing all throughout the scriptures.

Think about God's relationship to Abraham. God comes to him and says, I'm going to make a great nation. Your seed is going to bless all other nations. And Abraham says to God in Genesis 18, how can I have a son who I'm so old and Sarah is well beyond childbearing years?

And what did God say? He didn't give him an explanation that explained the physiology of how he was going to make it work and how it was going to come to be. God didn't do anything like that. What did God say?

Genesis 18. He says, is anything too hard for God? Abraham brings his question to the Lord. He's seeking for an explanation. God doesn't provide an explanation.

He provides a promise. Is anything too hard for God? In other words, God looks at Abraham and he says, believe me, Abraham. You don't have to understand. Just trust me.

[13:35] Think about Moses when God came to him and spoke through the burning bush and he told him that he wanted him to go and speak to Pharaoh and deliver the people of Israel from Egypt.

Moses argued with God and there came a point in the conversation where he said, how can I, a man with a speech impediment, I'm not eloquent at all. How can I go and stand and speak before such a ruler?

And God didn't give any explanation about how he was going to bring Aaron in on the equation and how he was going to use these signs through the staff and how he was going to allow Moses to speak in a particular way.

He didn't give any of that. What did he say to Moses? He said, Moses, in Exodus 4.11, who made your mouth? Who made your mouth, Moses? In other words, believe me, Moses.

You don't have to understand. Just trust me. Think about Gideon. Gideon was threshing wheat in a time when Midian was taking over.

[14:33] Hundreds of thousands of soldiers had a mast to take over this tribe of Manasseh. God comes to Gideon and says, I want to use you to lead the army and I'm going to make it interesting by giving you just 300 men to do it.

And Gideon says, I'm the least in my father's house and my father's house is the least in the tribe of Manasseh. How can you use me? Why would you ask me to do this, God?

I don't want to do this. Why would you ask me? And God doesn't give an explanation. He doesn't go ahead and tell Gideon, well, what's going to happen is you're going to go down the hill in the middle of the night. You're going to bang some pots together and scream out the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.

And then all of the enemies are just going to end up killing themselves. He didn't give him an explanation. What did he say? He said to Gideon, I will be with you. God doesn't deal in explanations. He deals in promises. What about the New Testament? Remember Thomas asked Jesus, Lord, we have no idea where you're going. [15:37] How can we know the way? Jesus didn't go into this extensive theological diatribe. What did he say to Thomas? He said, Thomas, I am the way. I am the way.

John 14, 6. In other words, Thomas, you don't need an explanation. Just trust me. The disciples toward the end of Jesus' time on this earth said, how will we know when the end is near? How will we know when your kingdom is going to be established? And Jesus gives them a little information. He says, boys, it's going to get pretty rough, but let me tell you, no one knows, but you need to watch and wait.

In other words, just trust me. I'm coming back. God doesn't deal in explanations. He deals in promises.

He is far less concerned with our understanding than he is with our faith in who he is and what he has promised. He's created us with the ability of logic for a reason, but our capacity of understanding is limited by God on purpose.

[16:43] Why? Because he's far more concerned that we trust him without understanding than that we trust him because of understanding.

Instead of providing explanations, he graces us with his wonderful promises. And that's exactly what he's doing here for Habakkuk.

Rather than provide a lengthy explanation that connects all the dots and provides an explanation for why he's doing it this way and not another way, God simply reminds Habakkuk about this eternal covenant that he has made with his people.

And he instructs him to share it urgently and immediately to every generation. And I want to examine this promise with you today.

Three quick things that we'll say about this covenant. The first one is we see the significance of the promise. The significance of the promise. Look with me again at verse two.

[17:48] And the Lord answered me and said, write the vision and make it plain on tables that he may run that reads it.

Now, when we see Habakkuk in verse one, it's clear that he was anticipating God's reply to come with a measure of rebuke. He seems to have thought that there existed somewhat of an audacity in the question that he had just asked at the end of chapter one.

And he expected God to respond strongly. But that's not how God responds at all. Consistent with God's nature of love, he actually responds to Habakkuk very gently.

And it shows and proves once again, God's great love for those that love and follow him. The fact that God answered at all reminds us of his love and care for us, which is exactly why Peter writes in the New Testament that we are to cast all of our care upon him.

Why? Because he cares for us. God is sympathetic to our cries. He wants to hear them. And he doesn't respond with rebuke.

[19:03] In fact, even in the moments that he rebukes his disciples, Jesus in the New Testament, his rebuke is always with tenderness and with gentleness and with love despite its firm truth.

God deals with us in that way. It's an example of his love. And he deals in that way with Habakkuk. And the significance of this particular promise and this particular response is seen in the manner in which God instructed Habakkuk to record his message.

He told him to write it upon a tablet of stone. Look with me again at verse two. Write the vision, make it plain on tables. That's just a reference to a stone tablet.

There are only a few occasions in the Bible where God actually makes this command for his message to be recorded in this way. Most notably, we see this coming in the 10 commandments. As Moses went up on Mount Sinai, God delivered his law to Moses there. He instructed and he actually did it by his own hand for the law to be written on stone tablets.

[20:11] And this was significant. It's a simple gesture, but there's two reasons that the way in which God instructed Habakkuk to record this message is significant to us and it shows the significance.

The first way is this. It shows that this is an eternal promise. The promise God is having Habakkuk write is an eternal one. Now the use of stone reveals that this answer was not meant to serve the

people temporarily.

It's an eternal covenant that would echo throughout every generation. The message that God was sending through Habakkuk was not applicable to his experience with the Chaldeans alone.

The prophecy finds its fulfillment in every generation before and after Habakkuk. As Robertson says, the specific instructions to inscribe the vision and make it plain on the tablets underscore its significance not only for the crucial hour in which Habakkuk lived, but also for the generations to come.

Now culturally speaking, any new covenant made between people in Habakkuk's day was recorded first on stone and it represented permanency and it demanded that the promise be kept.

[ 21 : 29 ] This message of God was to be viewed in light of eternity, not just the time of the Chaldean invasion. So he tells Habakkuk, not like he told Isaiah to write it on a parchment, not like he told Jeremiah to write in a book, he told Habakkuk, write it on a table of stone.

It is an eternal covenant. It's an eternal promise. Secondly, it shows that it's an urgent promise. It's an urgent promise.

There's a practical note that God gives Habakkuk about the way in which he's to write on this stone tablet and it relates to its size. Look with me again at verse two. The Lord answered and said, write the vision and make it plain on a table that he may run that reads it.

And this is significant. The tablet was to be large enough to be clearly read and understood, but it was to be small enough to be carried throughout the nation by a runner.

The message was to be clearly presented and then it was to be immediately proclaimed. And this indicates for us the urgency of the message.

[ 22 : 40 ] Pictured here is a herald that would go from town to town, maybe on horseback or maybe running from town to town and would cry in the midst of the town, an urgent message or an important or significant message that came directly from his king.

The scriptures refer to angels as heralds and even preachers in the New Testament are referred to as heralds. The task is the same for each one of them.

Proclaim the message from your king. So paired with the eternal nature of this promise, it becomes plain that its truth is to be just as urgent today as it was when it was written.

It's the message of God's judgment against sin and his offer of salvation through Jesus Christ that is so urgent. And listen to me, church. Church, we are the runners.

We are the heralds. The task has been given to the church of God to spread this message. And he's entrusted us as Lakeside Bible Church to proclaim this urgent message to the people of Lake Norman.

[ 23 : 53 ] That's our mission. What we do on Sundays when we gather back together, Lord willing, next Sunday, what we do when we gather back together is worship the Lord. We disciple one another.

But our mission is to take this proclamation that God is coming to judge sin and that he provides salvation through Jesus Christ alone. We are to take this urgent covenant, this eternal covenant, and preach it to the people of Cornelius and Huntersville and Davidson and anyone else who will hear it and even those who will not hear it.

Our job is to proclaim the vision of the Lord. Our proclamation is to be clear and our spirit is to be urgent because it is the promise of God that we share.

Our king church has given us a message to proclaim and it's sinful if we do not go to our neighbor and to our family and to our community and proclaim the message of our king.

So we see the significance of the promise. It was written on a tablet. It's eternal. It's urgent. Secondly, we see the surety of the promise.

[ 25 : 02 ] The surety of the promise. Look with me at verse three. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie.

Though it tarry, wait for it because it will surely come. It will not tarry. Now it's here that we have to remember that Habakkuk is a prophetic book.

And the nature of biblical prophecy is that it often has a near fulfillment that foreshadows a future or ultimate fulfillment.

In Habakkuk's case, the near fulfillment is the destruction of Babylon and the restoration of Israel. But this is only meant to foreshadow the ultimate fulfillment of God's judging of the sin of all mankind and the eternal establishment of his eternal kingdom.

Habakkuk's prophecy is not only meant to tell us of God's work 2,500 years ago. It's also a revelation of how God works now and in the future.

[ 26 : 12 ] And we cannot understand God's message to Habakkuk without seeing it as an eternal message that it is. Now think of it in the terms of the other covenants in the Old Testament.

God tells Abraham, I'm gonna give you a seed and in that seed all nations of the earth will be blessed. The near fulfillment of that prophecy is in his son Isaac. But the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy is in the person of Jesus Christ.

Think about the Davidic covenant. God comes to David and he says, I am gonna provide a king. Your throne will be established forever. Your seed will rule forever in an eternal kingdom.

The near fulfillment of that is in his son Solomon. But the ultimate fulfillment of that is in the person of Jesus Christ, not only in his first coming, but ultimately in his second coming when he establishes his kingdom.

So when we look at biblical prophecy, we see God delivers a message. He uses a near fulfillment that foreshadows the ultimate or future fulfillment of his great work.

[ 27 : 17 ] And we must remember then that prophecy is not fortune telling. This is not the guesswork of a man. This is the true message from the mouth of God who cannot lie.

Therefore, what we have in Habakkuk's vision is a message of certainty. It is sure to come about. Verse three assumes that many people will doubt the validity of the message because of what they will perceive as a delay.

But since it doesn't happen immediately, they doubt that it will happen at all. But God reminds us that his work is sure to take place. Just because it doesn't happen on our timeline doesn't mean that it won't happen.

And there's two ways that I believe God reveals the surety of this promise in verse number three. The first thing we see is that there is a certain time, a certain or a sure time.

Look at the first phrase. For the vision is yet for an appointed time. Now, the destruction of Babylon had a specific date set on God's calendar.

[ 28 : 37 ] It wouldn't take place immediately following the exile of Judah, but it would be less than 70 years when it would find its fulfillment. And the ultimate fulfillment of this judgment has yet to take place.

But we are still assured that it will. It is on God's calendar. It has an appointed time. It's not only an appointed judgment, but it's an appointed salvation.

We have to look at the book of Revelation to see it. In Revelation chapter 20, we see that the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy of Habakkuk is seen in an appointed judgment.

John writes in Revelation 20, he says, I saw a great white throne and him that sat on it, that is Jesus, and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened.

And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works, the way that they lived their lives.

[ 29 : 44 ] And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Listen to me. There is a coming judgment.

It has already been prophesied all throughout the scripture. One day it is appointed. God has put it on his calendar. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

And when we stand there, the books will be opened. And if your name is not in the Lamb's book of life, you will be cast into the eternal lake of fire, into eternal hell.

That prophecy, that message from the mouth of God is true, and it is certain, and it is coming. It's also an appointed salvation.

Immediately after this, in Revelation 21, we read of the other part of this promise. John says, I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people.

[ 30 : 47 ] This is a picture of God's eternal reign. And God himself shall be with them, and he will be their God. And listen to what he will do. God will wipe away all their tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death and neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away, the former sinful things, the curse of this sin, wretched world will be passed away.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Right. Why? Because the words that I am saying are faithful and they are true.

It is said, there is an appointed time for judgment. And for those that follow Christ, there is an appointed time for salvation. Though it may seem to delay now, don't think that God is not going to fulfill his promise.

It's on his calendar. It is coming, and it's coming at a certain time. But then we also see that what seems like a delay has a certain purpose.

There's a certain time. There's a certain purpose. Look again at verse 3. Though it tarry, wait for it. Because it will surely come, will not tarry.

[ 32 : 08 ] Now don't be confused by the usage of the word tarry in this verse. There's two perspectives at play here. The first time tarry is used is from the perspective of man.

And the second time it's used is from the perspective of God. In other words, our perspective views God's fulfillment of promise as a delay. But he views it as exactly on time.

His work may seem delayed for us, but it's working exactly as he has divinely determined. He doesn't work on our timeline. He's not bound by time in the way that we are bound by time.

He has said it's a point in time. And what may seem like a delay to us is right on time from his perspective. But that brings up the question. If God is so intent on judging sin and establishing his kingdom, why would he delay it all?

What's the purpose in all these years that have passed? And the early church in the New Testament faced this same question. They believed that Jesus Christ's second coming was very near, but because it still continued, life still continued on without Jesus returning, many people began to doubt whether or not it was actually true.

[ 33 : 27 ] So Peter writes about it. In fact, you may want to turn in your Bibles to follow along with me. 2 Peter 3. Peter addresses it first in verse 2, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, including Habakkuk, and of the commandment of the apostles of our Lord and Savior, knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts, saying, where is the promise of his coming?

For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from beginning to creation. There will be those that will mock, they will laugh at us, they will laugh at the church, they will laugh at the Bible, they will laugh at this proclamation, saying, where is this coming?

You say he's coming soon, where is it? And they will doubt it, and they will mock at it. But Peter wrote that what seems like God's delay is actually a sign of his love and long-suffering to us.

Look at verse 8. Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day.

He doesn't work on our timeline. He's got his own timeline. It doesn't matter if it's a day or a thousand years, it's all the same to God. And then he says, the Lord is not slack concerning his promise.

[ 34 : 51 ] He's not lazy. He's not a liar. He's not delayed. What it is is that he is long-suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God's love this scene here. What is this delay about? We long for the coming of Christ. Why does it continue to delay? But it's not a delay because God has determined he will not return.

He will not institute this final and ultimate judgment until all that belong to him come to faith in Jesus Christ. He is long-suffering and loving to us.

And if he were to come and return today and institute this judgment today knowing that a month from now someone would have come to faith in Jesus Christ, he is unwilling to come back now.

He is unwilling for that person to perish before they have trusted Christ. What love and patience and long-suffering that is for us. That's the answer to God's delay.

[ 35 : 54 ] It's not a delay at all. It's love. And then Peter reminds them again of the certainty of Christ coming. Verse 10, But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat.

The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. And then he says in verse 14, Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found in him in peace without spot and blameless.

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Why does God tarry? Because he loves us. But there will come a time when his patience has run its course.

Now is the time to repent and turn to Christ. So we see the significance of the promise. We see the surety of the promise and we're out of time. But we must see the substance of the promise.

Now if you're watching this video at home and you're in your living room wherever you're at, I know it's gone long and I know there's a tendency maybe right now for you to lose focus. If you're gonna focus anywhere, focus here.

[ 37 : 08 ] What is this promise that God is actually making? Please listen to me now. Look at verse four. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.

This verse contains the key to God's eternal, urgent, and certain promise. And here's what it is. God will judge all sin, but salvation is available by faith alone.

This is the promise of Habakkuk's prophecy. And it's also the answer to his question. No sin will go unpunished. The sin of the wicked Chaldeans will not go unpunished, Habakkuk.

The wicked will not prosper. The sin of what would seem to be the righteous Israelites will not go unpunished. All will be judged, but salvation is made available.

But it's not made available on our terms. It's made available on God's terms. Habakkuk's first question had to do with the absence of judgment on Judah. And the second question had to do with the absence of judgment on Babylon.

[ 38 : 30 ] But God's message clearly states that every single person on earth will answer for their sin. The vision given to Habakkuk narrows everything down into two groups of people.

Those who follow after self and those who follow faith. Let's first look at the one who follows self. This is where verses 5-20 come into play.

It provides a specific description of the destruction that will come to the Chaldeans or the Babylonians. Now in Habakkuk's prophecy the Babylonians represent all people who reject God and follow after their own self.

They follow after their own heart, after their own way. They do what they want in opposition to what God has commanded. This section of verses is a literal song. Scholars refer to it as a taunt song. Now a taunt song is a judgment that is sung by a formerly oppressed people towards the people that oppressed them. In this case, God's judgment on Babylon is delivered as one of these songs.

[ 39 : 41 ] There's five stanzas to the song. Each stanza consists of three verses and each stanza pronounces a woe against Babylon.

It highlights a specific category of their sin and then it announces God's judgment against that particular sin. Now we're not going to explore all of this, but let me just mention the five stanzas to you for your own study.

Verses six through eight is the first stanza and the sin that God is judging is greed. It's a reference to piling up wealth through extortion and insatiable appetite for more.

Verses nine through eleven is injustice, covetousness. One of the sins listed in the Ten Commandments is what's at the heart of this particular stanza.

Verses twelve through fourteen is violence. They were ruthless and merciless in their greedy pursuits. Verses fifteen through seventeen is immoral self-indulgence.

[ 40 : 43 ] This element of judgment involves gross immorality. Verses eighteen through twenty is idolatry. This went well beyond for the Babylonians the worship of idols and of carved images.

They were the headquarters in that day of spiritism and sorcery and divination and even what would modernly be called astrology. It was all wicked and pagan.

The song doesn't include an exhaustive list of sins but it's a summary in verse five that holds us all guilty. The wicked person that is pictured by the Babylonians is consumed with self.

They follow their own way which only leads to eternal death. As Proverbs tells us Proverbs sixteen twenty five there is a way that seems right unto a man but the end thereof are the ways of death.

The promise of God's message is that all sin will ultimately be judged by sin. It's an eternal promise and it will result in a certain judgment. And we must remember then Paul's writing in Romans that we are all guilty.

[ 41 : 58 ] We've all sinned. We all fall underneath the scope of God's judgment from the greatest to the least from the oldest to the youngest. We are all guilty.

So we see the one who follows self but fortunately we finish with the one who follows faith. Look again at verse four. Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him but the just shall live by faith.

Verse four is the most important verse in the entire book of Habakkuk. It's the verse that brings hope to the prophecy. Without it there would be no hope at all.

We would be utterly hopeless as a people. And so significant is this part of the prophecy that it's quoted three different times in the New Testament in regards to salvation.

Let me give you the three times. First we see it in Romans chapter one and the context of its use there is that salvation comes by faith alone. Salvation comes by faith alone.

[ 43 : 05 ] Paul writes I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

Not to everyone who does their best and tries their hardest but to everyone who believes. And then he says for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written the just shall live by faith.

Salvation comes by faith alone. And as we understand the New Testament and the New Covenant that salvation that faith is specifically in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and in his resurrection and making him our Lord.

Then we see it in Galatians chapter three. The context here is that works cannot save us and that Christ has paid the penalty for our sin. He has taken our death.

Galatians chapter three in verse ten. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the law and do them.

[ 44 : 16 ] Now it is evident, Paul says, that no one is justified before God by the law. For the righteous shall live by faith.

But the law is not of faith. Rather, the one who does them shall live by them. Christ redeemed us, Paul says, from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree, so that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

Christ became a curse on our behalf. And he says, if you will just trust me, that salvation that awaits in Revelation 21 will be yours.

Just believe me. You can do nothing on your own. Surrender all of your works and trust in me. Follow me.

[ 45 : 19 ] Let me be your Lord. The third place is in Hebrews 10 in the context here is that those with true faith will continue in faith and in righteousness.

They will not fall away. Verse 35, cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward for ye have need of patience that after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise.

And then the writer says, for yet a little while and he that shall come will come and will not tarry.

That's a quote of verse number three. And then comes the quote of verse four.

Now the just shall live by faith. That is the just will continue to live by faith and that faith will result in a righteous behavior.

But if any man draw back, the writer says, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

[ 46 : 26 ] Just as eternal judgment will come on those that continue in sin by rejecting Christ, so will eternal life come to all of those who live by faith in Jesus Christ.

The promise of salvation is absolutely certain, but it only applies to those who trust in Christ alone for it. As James Boyce said, the foundation of our Christian life is not what we can do for God, but what God has done for us.

Therefore, the entrance into that life is not by working, but by receiving. Receiving what? The free gift of salvation that Christ offers, if you will, but believe in him.

According to Habakkuk's prophecy, if salvation comes as a result of our goodness, we would all be doomed, but praise be to God that salvation is not of works, it is of faith, and it is offered freely by the gracious hand of our loving and merciful God.

We each and everyone belong to one of these two groups. We are either living by faith in Christ alone, or we're not. Judgment day is coming, and we will all give an account of our lives to God, and in that judgment you will not be declared righteous for working hard and doing your best.

[ 47 : 56 ] Only those who have trusted Christ's sacrifice for sin and followed him as Lord will be declared righteous. And this is ultimately the message of the book of Habakkuk.

The promise of judgment is urgent, and it is certain. The question is, to which of these two groups do you belong?

Will you be judged, or will you stand justified? God. Thank you for listening to this sermon made available by Lakeside Bible Church. Feel free to share it wherever you'd like.

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