

Habakkuk "A Portrait of Arrogance"

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Date: 29 October 2017

Preacher: Ron

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

If you have Bibles with you, you can open them to Habakkuk. If you need directions on how to get there, you can turn to Zephaniah.

And it's one more back. No, honestly, just turn to Matthew and make a left and go five books.

And Habakkuk is a part of that group of minor prophets, which sadly, we don't read very often. But this is one of the jewels in that group.

We're going to look at today, chapter 2, beginning at verse 2, and read down through verse 20. So if you would, follow with me as I read this portion of God's inspired word of truth.

[1 : 06] And the Lord answered me, write the vision, make it plain on tablets, so that he may run who reads it.

For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come.

It will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol, like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples. Shall not all these take up their taunt against him with scoffing and riddles for him and say, Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own?

[2 : 09] For how long? And loads himself with pledges. Will not your debtors suddenly arise and those awake who will make you tremble?

Then you will be spoiled for them. Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you. For the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm. You have divided shame for your house by cutting off many peoples.

You have forfeited your life. For the stone will cry out from the wall and the beam from the woodwork respond. Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity.

Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts that people's labor merely for fire and nations weary themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

[3 : 24] Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink. You pour out your wrath and make them drunk in order to gaze at their nakedness. You will have your fill of shame instead of glory.

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

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

What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it? A metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols.

Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake! To a silent stone, arise! Can these teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.

[4 : 31] But the Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him. Let's pray together as we enter into the study of this portion of God's word.

Father, we thank you for your word and how you reveal yourself. We also thank you for how you reveal us to ourselves. Your word is powerful and effective and cuts to the quick, to the very core of

who we are.

As it reveals your glory and greatness, it shows the corruption that remains. And we, as we come to study, need to see both. We need to see ourselves.

We need to see all that we are. But then we need to see you. We need to see you in all that you have done for us.

So draw us deeper into the knowledge of ourselves and of you. Father, pour out your spirits. Use me and all the weakness of my words, so that when all is said and done, we will know that by your spirit we have heard from you.

[5 : 51] And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You know, this is the second of a three-week study through this prophecy.

It's a little-known book by most of us in the Old Testament, but it is quite appropriate for us, especially if you are personally going through struggles and hard times, or, you know, those hard times could be on a personal level, but they can also be on a much broader social level.

Regardless, Habakkuk is in a similar place, and he's going through some very difficult times, and he's wrestling with who God is in the midst of all of this.

But he also leads us and teaches us of how we ourselves can better face these times. This week, as we looked last week, we saw the beginning of this conversation, that there's a dialogue going on here between Habakkuk, who offers his complaints before God, then God comes and answers him, but answers him in ways that are totally outside of anything Habakkuk could have expected, and caused Habakkuk some really great turmoil.

And he goes back to God again and complains even more. But the last time we saw him, he enters into the ramparts, that high place on the wall of Jerusalem, where he is now waiting, waiting for God to respond to him.

[7 : 31] He wants, by faith, he has gone to God, and he is determined to hear from God. And so he's waiting. And this is the response.

This is the response that God gives to him in light of all of his complaints in his previous prayers.

And I think one of the things that tells us this whole book is that we need to beware when there are these very obvious villains in our lives.

And those villains, and when we get into hard places, when we get into these great struggles in life, very, very often, and I think by far more times than not, there are villains involved.

There is someone, either on a broad scale, like on a public stage, or somebody maybe in your family, there's someone that we turn to and we can see is a true villain and what they've done is wrong and maybe are really demonstrating some evil things.

But there's a real danger for us to have people like that. And it's not because of the evil that they bring upon us, but it's the way they hide who we really are.

[9 : 01] Because when I have a villain, and that villain is evil, then my focus is there on the villain.

That's the evil. That's the problem. I am the innocent victim. They are bad and what happens is I then fail to see the real nature of who I am.

And in many ways, this is where Habakkuk is. He has gone to God and made his complaints and in verse 13, this is what he said. He says, why do you idly look at traitors and remains silent while the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

And so here's the villain. It's the Chaldeans and they are villains. No doubt about it. They are a brutal, violent group of people here.

And Israel, I mean, obviously they're more righteous. They're God's people. evil. But now there's a problem.

[10 : 21] When we begin to see that they are the evil and we end up taking the eyes off of our own hearts, we are in danger.

So how are we to live? How are we to live even in light of these villains? I mean, where's the difference between them and us if they are, in a sense, if we are, well, we could say this, you know, their evil may not be expressed so graphically, but at the same time, we all have Chaldean roots.

And if that's the case, if we are all similar, if we all have these same roots, what's the difference?

Where does the difference come in between us and them? Well, the difference is faith.

We live by faith. Not our righteousness, not our goodness. We live with the knowledge of who we are.

And we live by faith. Faith is the antidote to arrogance. To arrogance. And so, what does faith look like?

[11 : 44] Well, what we're going to do here is in these verses, as God responds from verse 5 down through verse 19, we get a good picture of what arrogance is as we see this description of the Chaldeans.

So, what God is doing here in his response to Habakkuk is he's pointing to this, yes, the Chaldeans are going to come, yes, they're going to carry out my work, but there will come an end to them as well.

And this is what I'm going to do. But he describes a people that are puffed up as verse 4 describes them.

and it's some things that we can learn about our own hearts. The first thing, when we look at arrogance, an arrogant person is not just someone who boasts about their accomplishments or who's openly proud and loves to bring attention so much to themselves.

An arrogant person may also be a wallflower, may live in hiding because they don't want attention to themselves, they don't necessarily want to be seen, but an arrogant person is somebody whose focus, whose whole world is on them.

[13 : 09] They are the center. They are why life exists. They are a god to themselves. The arrogant man, the arrogant woman is one who is self-sufficient.

They're sufficient unto themselves, they have the resources, they do the work themselves, they are necessarily their own savior, they live for themselves. And so this is the picture of arrogance here that we see in these verses.

But we have three things particularly that describes the arrogant heart. The first one is greed. We see that in verse 5 where he says, moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is wide as sheol, like death. He has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples. There is a hunger in them that is insatiable, that they continue to collect more and more.

It says, how much is enough? Well, always a little bit more. Now, one thing I want you to, I want to point out to you just textually here where he says, wine is a traitor.

[14 : 27] Well, some other manuscripts and I think are accurate actually say, wealth is a traitor. If you look at the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts, that's what they say.

And it fits the context here much better. Wealth is a traitor. A traitor. It promises things. It promises security, goodness, and all these things, but yet it will not fulfill those promises.

Wealth is a traitor. And I think this is an interesting place for, you know, God to begin with here in describing the heart of the Chaldeans.

You know, when a man determines to live life on his own terms and to supply life's needs through his own means and methods, that is the arrogant man.

And what we see here is just then an unending quest, an insatiable hunger to have enough. And one of the reasons they build up this wealth is to give them this sense of security because in the next verses he talks about how they want to build their nest high to where it's basically unapproachable.

[15 : 44] they used to say back in the time of Babylon that the defenses of that city were so high and so strong it was impenetrable.

That there was absolutely no risk of invasion by anyone because those defenses were so good. But that's what wealth does. wealth builds security. It builds status. It builds so many things but it helps us, it gives us the illusion that we can make ourselves safe from any threat, any danger, anything out there that may cause us harm.

but it's a terrible illusion because even Babylon fell and there is no safe place that's that secure.

You know, the second pursuit is not just greed but it's a pursuit of glory. We don't see that term glory used as that they're pursuing glory but there's another term that's repeated and that's the word shame.

[17 : 09] That they are going to, they heap shame on other people but that they are going to experience that same shame even to a much greater degree than they brought on others.

So, what is that base, what is the meaning of that word glory? glory. What glory is is substance.

At the root of the word in Hebrew the word is weighty, substantive. It's something as significance, as value.

It's not some trivial thing but it's weighty, important. And so there's this hunger. The Chaldeans are attempting to build this sense of being important, being substantive through conquering and through invading all of these nations.

And one of the things that you'll see here as he goes through and describes their pursuit of glory is how they use other people in that way. They bring other people to shame, utter shame so that they themselves will look more important, more glorious.

[18 : 32] One of the terms there they'll use particularly in verse 15 where it talks about them getting other nations drunk so then they can look on their nakedness.

Basically what that is describing is getting people drunk so they can sexually have their way with them and humiliate them in the process. that's what these arrogant Chaldeans are doing.

The third thing that they're doing and this is really kind of the culmination is idolatry and we see that in verse 18 and 19 it's a sad picture.

I mean it's kind of funny too where somebody, a man, will create this object and then declare to it, this is come alive.

Or they'll take this lifeless rock and say arise and maybe even decorate it up with gold and silver and then they bow down to it as if that thing which they've made in their hands is somehow going to save them.

[19 : 57] So in that idolatry one of the things of arrogance is foolishness but it's worship.

where does the arrogant go to worship? He worships his own creation, his own doing, things of his own making, things that come from himself.

That's what he worships. Now, this is a picture of the Chaldean villains. the problem comes, those descriptions really apply to more people than just the Chaldeans.

And I have a hard time reading those. Let's take them one at a time. Greed, do I use wealth to build walls of protection for myself?

Yeah, I do. You know, it used to be, and in some ways it still is, when it came to bill-paying day, Gail would pretty much figure that I was going to be in a bad mood.

[21 : 27] Because of all the money that went out, and the little bit of money that remained, happened, and I would think through all of the contingencies, all the things that might happen, all the things that I would need, and it's like it didn't add up.

And now I'm living in anxiety and fear because my fortress is not high enough. So how much would I need for it to be enough?

Well, a little bit more. What about glory? Am I hungry for glory? Hungry for glory? glory? I have been so convicted by this lately. In fact, just a couple minutes ago.

I am willing, in order to be seen by you as clever, smart, and funny, I am willing to throw friends under the bus.

[22 : 39] in front of all of you, I referred to Derek as strange because I knew it would get a little bit of a laugh.

And it may not sound like much to you, but what I did there was I was pursuing my own glory, and his did not matter one ounce to me.

just like the Chaldeans, I am willing to use other people to give me a sense of status, of weightiness, of importance and significance.

I've done it time and time again. I think the theme of my life over the years has been this hunger to be significant, to be weighty, to be important.

And I'll use you to that end. And that's grief. Which brings me to idolatry.

[24 : 04] You know, it's just the culmination of all these other two things. You know, I don't have little statues around my house. You can come over and look. They're not there. You may find some Marshall stuff.

That's about as close as you'll get. But what is it that will truly make me happy? How do you fill out this sentence? I will be a happy person if...

And far too often, it's either what I accomplish, what I acquire, what I achieve? And how foolish is that?

Something that I think I create in my own efforts, in my own strength, that I bow down to it and say, give me life. That's what the arrogant person does.

It worships. It worships the work of our hands. It worships created things that have no life and we have no power to give them life.

[25 : 17] I am far too much like the Chaldeans. And if God's fierce judgment was deserved by that evil people, then I cannot remove myself from deserving that judgment.

So what's the answer? It's faith. faith. It is faith. Faith is not just some mental acknowledgement of certain truths or doctrines or principles.

Faith is what is the opposite of faith? The opposite of faith is self-sufficiency. So faith is dependence. Faith is just dependence on another, humble dependence.

It is a sense of helplessness and a reaching out of hands to one who can supply need. Instead of being a life that depends on me and what I do, it's trusting somebody else.

It's looking outside of my life to find life. Instead of life being that which centers around me, it's centered around someone else.

[26 : 54] it's centered around a covenant God in particular. In God's revelation to Habakkuk points there's two core aspects of faith that he brings out here that actually give us, that help us learn what faith is, but gives us hope.

even as we face these really tough hard circumstances. In the first one, I'm going to take them in reverse order.

So I'm going to start with verse 20. And there we see God's sovereign rule where he says, but the Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him.

keep silent. This is in light of complaining. To keep silent is now coming to that place where it says, I have nothing to say.

This is not me. This is all about you. And what faith is here in the sovereign God, it's simply the acknowledgement that I am not God.

[28 : 20] Of course, you knew that. But why is it so hard for me to figure that out? Faith, you know, I cannot build enough security to bring me peace.

I cannot provide for myself adequately. I cannot protect myself from evils in this world.

I cannot determine what happens tomorrow. I cannot undo what happened yesterday. I am not God. I'm not God for me.

I'm not God for anybody else. God for us. And that statement alone takes me out of the center of things. It takes me out because if I'm not God, then the world does not revolve around me and my needs and my wants and my agenda and my plans.

I don't determine. Somebody else does. And that in itself in some ways may be comforting.

[29 : 34] It may not be. Because if there is a king, if there's somebody else making these determinations, what if he's not good?

Well, see, we have hope here because if you see in this verse, it's not just anybody who's in his holy temple. It's the Lord. It is the covenant God of Israel.

It is the God who brought them out of slavery, out of the land of Egypt. It is the God who carried them through the wilderness. It is the God who planted them in Canaan.

It is the God who declared that he would be their God, they would be his people, and he would dwell right in their midst. This God is the sovereign ruler of all things.

And so faith begins with this humble place that, yes, God rules, but the God who rules is good.

[30 : 52] he is for me, his rule is for me. He is the God of the covenant, a covenant that was fulfilled and satisfied through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

God God. And if he would do that for me, I think I can trust him.

The second thing here is God's ultimate glory. Look at verse 14. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

That statement says so much. And it indeed is, it is a huge comfort because I'm made for glory.

I was created for it. I was created by the one who is the king of glory. I was created in his image.

And so I'm made for significance.

[32 : 23] I carry the image of my maker. I'm not weighty in myself.

I will never be in what I do. I will never create significance or value than any achievement or any purchase or any position that I would hold.

I am valued because I belong to one who is glorious. you know, Habakkuk, as he wrote this, he had no idea what was coming.

Maybe just a glimpse, but we can look back. We look back to John chapter 1 verse 14 where he wrote, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son of the father, full of grace and truth. What Habakkuk probably could not realize fully is when the glory would fill the earth, the glory would not just be the light of glory, it would be the glorious one himself, that God would come, not in a cloud, not in fire that the nation of Israel had known in the past, but he would come in a man, they would see him face to face, not just his backside like Moses saw in the wilderness, but his face, that the God of glory would come.

[34 : 20] And incredibly, the way he came was just the opposite of the way that we seek glory. We want to build it up and cling to position. He laid aside his position.

He laid aside his right to be at the right hand of the Father, to be in that glorious place, and he took the form of a servant. He came to the arrogance to serve glory.

And die and die so that we could once again know real glory.

And that's not all. We look at John 17 verses 22 and 23. The glory that you have given me, this is the prayer of Jesus right before he was to die.

The glory you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them, you in me, that they may become perfectly one.

[35 : 28] You see that? You know what glory is waiting for us? We are now in Christ.

We have been given his glory. The Father is in him. He is in us. We are in them. And now this fellowship, unlike any we could have ever dreamed, that we would be one with God himself.

And then one day we would stand before his face and see his glory and realize we will be just like him.

We are promised real glory. We will be like the sun. For all that we were made to know, living by faith, rest in those promises so that we don't have to create these things by ourselves.

But living by faith means we rest in the one who controls all things and the one who is taking us to glory. We rest.

[36 : 57] trust. We trust. In your struggles, in your trials, beware the villains.

Beware your self-sufficient efforts to make things right. Beware your self-righteousness that's always in your eyes you look better than they do.

Remember that we have a God that has come already as a servant. Remember that he has now called us to be that servant.

He has paid the ultimate price and all to bring us into his glory. Wait. Trust him. and you will be satisfied.

Let's pray together. Father, we have such a hard time conceiving of these things. We have such a fainting vision of what glory it really is.

[38 : 14] But it's coming. It's coming. Father, we resist so much letting you control things because we're not sure you're really good.

But you are. Would you empower us by your spirit to walk by faith? Would you empower us to rest? Would you empower us to trust you?

Father, bring us to glory. bring us near that we may know you. And we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. God bless you.

Todd- God bless you.

[39 : 17] ■■■■