

Watching and Waiting

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 October 2020

Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] chapter 2 in the first verse and this is what Habakkuk says I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself in the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint. As we know Habakkuk like like all the prophets was a man who who loved his people he loved the people of God and he wanted the best for them and that is always true in fact it's one of the things all God's people not just prophets or ministers or elders or deacons but all God's people want the best for one another as was mentioned in the prayer that one of the things we love to do is to esteem one another we esteem one another highly for the gospel and it's a it's a great thing where we have this love for one another and we do genuinely want the best that's what you want within a family and it's true within the church family as well and it was true for this prophet Habakkuk he wanted the best for his own people but he was perplexed because God was going to allow his people his own people God's people and well Habakkuk's people to be overrun and what was causing the huge problem for Habakkuk was that God was going to use the Babylonians that he was going to allow the Babylonians to overrun the land and that he was going to allow them to destroy Judah Jerusalem the temple he was going to have the people taken captive and Habakkuk just couldn't really get his head around this and he wasn't the only prophet who was like that in fact that was part of Jonah's problem remember when Jonah was told to to prophesy and it was of course God was going to it was with regard to the Assyrians and Jonah again he could not get his head around when God was asking him to go to a nation that was so fearsome and barbaric and was so hated and to preach a message of repentance Jonah said I can't do that because he was a he knew that this was a nation that was such a threat to to his own people and so we find that these were huge problems and if we put our set time put ourselves into the prophet's shoes we can kind of understand some of that why would God allow a nation now Habakkuk recognized that the Jews had forsaken God and that they had gone into idolatry and that they had turned their back so much upon God although there was still a an aspect of worship that that's part of what they did they they combined pagan worship and idol worship with with true worship but it was a really a blasphemy before God and of course there was a turning more and more away altogether from God but why allow a nation which was as Habakkuk would would think a hundred times or maybe even a thousand times worse to overrun God's own people so this is what Habakkuk was wrestling and agonizing with in chapter one before the Lord but then Habakkuk stopped and he reflected and as he prayed and as he focused on the Lord something changed in Habakkuk because he saw that although the circumstances of life were going to change radically for him and his people that God was never going to change and the prophet saw God as an everlasting God and a self-existent and a holy and a faithful

God and as the prophet viewed the the majesty and the glory of the Lord something in him in him changed his attitude began to change and I think there's a huge lesson there's two great lessons that came out of this for us one just in the passing is that when we change your focus away from the problem and begin to focus more upon the Lord it it does something for us because somehow the problem is not quite as acute when we look at the problem through the Lord if we look at the problem purely at the problem and whatever we're facing that is difficult if if we're just looking on it that problem gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger however if we look at the problem through the Lord so that our focus is primarily on the Lord in order to then see a problem our problem appears less because we see that God is in control and that he is in charge of everything and as we focus on him it gives us a stability and it gives us a sense of of calmness in the face of whatever trouble that we're going through and it's it's a lesson that we we're always so slow to learn but it's a lesson that we need to learn over and over again but the other lesson that we we find here is that the prophet shows us here that as he has brought his prayer to the Lord and as

he is agonized and he has confessed before the Lord he then says do you know what I'm going to do I'm going to wait and I'm going to watch and I'm going to see how God answers my prayer and this is really faith at work and he pictures himself as we see here like somebody who's in a watch poster on a tower now as we know back in the day in all the cities there would be there were city walls and there were watchtowers on these walls and there would be a sentry or sentries would be posted there and they'd be scanning the horizon all the time and they'd be looking to see if there were any signs of dangers they would they would see on the horizon when other people wouldn't be able to see so that's kind of what Habakkuk is picturing himself like and he he says that he will that he's going there that's what he says and I will take my stand at my watch post and sit you station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint and I think that's one of the most important lessons that we can learn in prayer and particularly at a time like this as we as we are praying and focusing on prayer so much and particularly as we're coming into a Lord's Day that is a particular call to prayer by your church that part of prayer involves watching as well listening because prayer isn't just one way it's not just us speaking to the Lord although that is a vital part of it it is also looking to see what God is going to say to us I'll hear what God the Lord will speak Elijah is a great example of that remember how the Lord said that he was going to send rain and Elijah you remember how he went up onto the mountain out on the top of Carmel and with a servant he began to pray and remember how he flattened himself on

the ground and he prayed and he prayed and he prayed and he would say to the servant go and see go and have a look can you see any sign because remember there hadn't been rain for years and servant would come back and he'd say no nothing nothing doing same as then he would pray again send the servant servant come back no pray again and again and then he would send to the servant oh go and look again see if you can see anything and then the servant came back and he said you know something there's a cloud about the size of a man's hand on the horizon and Elijah said ah I hear the sound of rain in that God is now going to answer so Elijah was praying and he was praying and he was basing his prayer upon God's word but he was also watching and it's a great example and that's exactly what Habakkuk is doing as well he's praying and he's watching and he's waiting and you know far too often when we pray we we pray but we don't watch we don't wait and far too often when we pray we don't properly hand something over to the Lord I think we've often enough spoken about this and it's interesting how often the Lord tells us in his word that we are to roll our burdens upon him that we are to place our burdens upon him that we are to cast our burdens upon him and the idea is that we get rid of what it is and give it to him because when you cast something you're throwing it as far away from you as you can you don't it's not drop because when you drop something it can almost land your toe or it can be close by but when you cast something you're throwing it away from you when you roll something you're rolling it away from you and that's why the Lord is deliberately using these words and he says I want you to give these things to me what you're praying about and praying for and these burdens and troubles and anxieties and the pressures and the worries and all these things cast them upon me give them to me and rid yourself of them by focusing upon me and waiting upon me to hear what I'm going to say because the Lord often has something to say for a say to us about it so our tendency so often we pray about something but we take it back immediately upon ourselves it's just like what Paul said too that when we're to pray that we're to bring everything to the Lord in prayer by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God and when we do that when we really hand everything over to the Lord it's then we experience the peace of God that passes all understanding so we should go to our watchtower or spiritual watchtower and wait and hear what God will say and remember that God will speak to us he will always speak to us in his word and you see there are times when when we pray and sometimes there are prayers and there's nothing wrong with general prayer don't get me wrong but there are times we have general prayer and times we have specific prayer but sometimes our prayers can be so general that were God to answer we would know whether he had answered or not and I'm as guilty probably as anybody of that but there are times when we are specific in prayer and you know when we're specific in prayer and we're really praying about something we really need to be on the lookout for God to answer now it doesn't mean that God's going to answer right away but he will he will give you he will minister to you in your own spirit through his spirit always in the in the word but sometimes in providence and we'll also remember that God's providence when he if he's leading you or directing you or showing you through his providence it will

always be in keeping with his word because although God's word and God's providence there can be delays between one and the other he doesn't he won't direct you in ways that are contrary to his word and it's then that we we now see that the the prophet's faith because in verses two and three we see that God has honored the the prophet with the answer and God here shows us something about his word and promise and what God shows us here is that his word is absolute there is no doubt about it and what we've got to realize is that there is often a period between the word of promise and the fulfillment of the promise now not always sometimes God works right away sometimes God answers us almost before we finish praying but sometimes we have to wait long for that answer but we should be watching we should be listening in the word and say Lord speak to me and I'm sure all of us can remember times when we've asked the Lord for particular help or guidance or direction and we're saying Lord please show me from your word and maybe it's in your reading at night or in the morning or something and you say that wow it's exactly you can see quite clearly through the reading that God is speaking to you because he's also given you the faith to lay hold upon his word and you keep that you cling to it and you say to the Lord thank you these are these are special times and God does that in our experience every single one of us will remember times in our lives when that is exactly what has happened with us and so that is what what Habakkuk has been doing here but we see that there is often this delay between God giving his word giving his promise and then fulfilling it and there are loads of examples in the Bible of that I suppose two of the classics are Joseph and David because God had given an indication to Joseph early in his life that his brothers and that this family were going to be bound down to him and that it was as if God was going to elevate him into an opposition of authority and it's very obvious that God did give Joseph this promise because I think it's Psalm 105 tells us that until the time of his word came the word of the Lord tried him I think that's how it goes in the maybe in the in the AV in Psalm it's about verse 17 or verse 19 or there about I didn't look at it just now of Psalm 100 I think it's Psalm 105 in other words Joseph when he was young had God's word promising him that he was going into to be given a position of authority and elevation and for years Joseph was in prison and that's what it means that throughout these years the word of God tried him because the word had come to him of what was to happen to him and yet because of what was happening to him it became an even greater trial and you will find that that when there's a big delay between what you believe God has promised in his word we remember what we said where God has made his word clear to you you believe that this word you've been given the faith to lay hold upon upon it's precious to you you have it in your heart and yet you're waiting week in week out month in month out year in year out and nothing has changed and that becomes a trial you're tried by it becomes tough for you but God does he did the same with David he anointed him said you're going to be king and for years it was getting less and less and less likely just as it was with Joseph being sold as a slave into Egypt was bad but then what matters got worse when he got thrown into prison and seemed to be forgotten all about there was a glimmer of hope when remember the the the dream he interpreted for the butler and the baker and he said oh speak a word for me but nothing he was just left and so it was with David as well the promise and then years of not only like it was forgotten but it looked like every day it was going to become less and less and less likely that it would ever be fulfilled David one day said surely one day I shall die by the hand of Saul some days when his faith was shining he was convinced that God would fulfill his word to him but there were days when his faith sunk and these are hard days when your faith sinks and when you're saying maybe I got it wrong maybe maybe maybe I read things into it that I that I shouldn't have maybe and we get all these maybe not well the great thing is this God will be true to his word he will fulfill his word to you and he will fulfill his word to me and that's why God says that the vision that's what he says the vision is for an appointed time write the vision make it plain on tablets so that that he may run who reads it for for still the vision awaits its appointed time it's not great it shows that God has a plan for our lives and as a plan for the future of this world everything is in his hand and what a comfort that is you know when we look around today because of this pandemic there's a huge amount of anxiety and there's a huge amount of frustration and a growing anger and there's just so you can feel this kind of boiling bubbling people fretting and anxious and angry and all sort of thing going on within society

[19:17] and it'll always be like that if we take God out of the picture but you know when we put God into the center of everything it changes and that's why the Christian even in the midst of everything that's going on has still an element of peace yes of course at times we get frustrated and annoyed about things as well of course we do but overall we have a sense of God is in control God

is an appointed time for everything he knows what he's doing and what is good is that the God's people have a heart of prayer and that is that is important yes we would love that our leaders would but at the end of the day it's not our leaders that bear the ultimate responsibility before God it is his people and that's what it says if my people who are called by my name if they if they turn from their wicked ways if they will repent and such like then he says I will hear from heaven and I will heal their land so the ultimate responsibility actually lies with the people of God and that is why although what we're doing this Lord's Day is a correct thing it is something that we should be doing all the time is repenting and humbling before the Lord and praying to him and so we find that that there is a the Lord is saying everything I say is going to happen there's a time when it's going to happen but there's going to be a delay but my word will come and so it then goes on to say in verse 4 that the righteous shall live by faith that's what that's what it tells us in verse 4 the righteous shall live by faith and that's how we are tonight we live by faith because we believe God's word we accept God's provision in Jesus Christ and we seek to obey God's word irrespective of what we feel or what we see and we know that every single thing will come to pass and this Babylon that was going to override and overrule and cause havoc amongst the Jews this Babylon that became the great world power the might of Babylon there was nothing nothing it's equal in the world and it's height and very often when when there is a world power and dominance people will think this power is going to go on forever and ever and ever well Daniel knew all about the power of Babylon because he was he was one who ended up in Babylon in the captivity but Daniel who was a wonderful man of God he was the one remember who interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream remember how Nebuchadnezzar had this dream of this huge image and the head was made of gold and there was a silver and the brass and the legs of iron and clay and such like the big Jim the differing empires but the top the great one was a Babylonian one then there was this stone that was hewn without hands came down and demolished the image and the stone went on to fill the whole world and that's that was a vision that Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar and in a sense it's what we read about in verse 14 in verse 14 in this in chapter 2 for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea this Babylon which at one point you'd think

could never ever be destroyed we read that's what we're reading about the woes that God was predicting against it great judgment was going to come upon Babylon it was going to be demolished and it would become taken over of course we know it was taken over by the Medes and Persians and so it goes on history keeps changing world powers are broken but there's one power and one kingdom that can never ever be broken thy kingdom hath none end at all it doth through ages all remain as the psalm says and that is the kingdom of the Lord and that is the wonderful thing that today although we're living in this day of uncertainty and all the rest we know God doesn't change and that his purposes won't change and that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and the wonderful thing is that you and I are part of that kingdom and that as a result of that then there is a safety and a security irrespective of what might happen to us there is an inner security and safety that can never ever be broken let us pray

Lord our God we give thanks for just sharing for a little and reflecting upon your word and we pray that this word will go down deep into our hearts and that you will bless us by it watch over us and bless all our families and every single one whom we love we commit to your care and keeping forgive us our sin in Jesus name we ask it Amen we're going to continue