

“The Righteous Shall Live By His Faith”

INTRODUCTION:

1. We spent a week at SALT Camp focusing on the message of Habakkuk. And before that is lost in my mind I wanted to share some things I learned in hopes that they will be of value to you also.
2. Difficult times both try and expose the character of those who must endure them.
 - A. And it is during these times that memorable words are often spoken that help encourage and turn the tide of those times.
 - B. After the British and French army had to be evacuated at Dunkirk as the German army swept through France, Winston Churchill rallied England and its allies with his famous words: “We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender!” – House of Commons, 4 June 1940
3. In this same way the Bible has for 1000’s of years now given us words that have rallied and encouraged people to live courageously and righteously in a dangerous and wicked world!
 - A. In connection with that, the title of this lesson comes from a very significant statement from God found in Habakkuk 2:4 which reads, “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, **but the righteous shall live by his faith.**”
 - B. Like those of Churchill, these words were revealed during a very difficult time in Judah.
 - C. Unlike those of Churchill, the significance of these words is that they are **the Holy Spirit’s words** and are **repeated three times in New Testament** (Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews) where they are applied specifically to the Christian life.
4. Today I want to consider the message of Habakkuk as the foundation for the next lesson, Lord willing, in which we will consider the other three incidents of these words found in the N.T.
 - A. For, only when we can fully appreciate the context and application in which these words were revealed to Habakkuk can we fully appreciate the Spirit’s application of them in our life today.
 - B. So, let’s consider the wonderful message of Habakkuk and the lessons it presents to us.

BODY:

I. Habakkuk 1: Questions, Answers, and Questions

- A. Habakkuk questioned God (1:1-4 – “The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw. ² How long, O LORD, will I call for **help**, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, “**Violence!**” Yet You do not save. ³ Why do You make me see **iniquity**, and cause me to look on **wickedness**? Yes, **destruction** and **violence** are before me; **strife** exists and **contention** arises. ⁴ Therefore the **law is ignored** and **justice is never upheld**. For the **wicked surround the righteous**; therefore **justice comes out perverted.**”).
 1. Habakkuk was dismayed with Israel’s moral decline and questioned God’s lack of response.
 2. He wondered “how long” before God would hear him and respond in His **justice** (1:2-4).
 3. Does this situation sound familiar?
 - a. Societal, political, and religious corruption existing in abundance, those in power are seemingly unconcerned, little if anything is done about it, etc.,...**just like today!**
 - b. Do you ever ask why God has not responded? Well, maybe you have not yet. But what happens when the wicked come after you and me **and there is no justice?**
- B. **God’s answer:** I am raising up the Chaldeans/Babylonians to punish Israel (1:5-9 – “Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days—you would not believe if you were told. ⁶ “For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs. ⁷ “They are dreaded and feared; their justice and authority originate with themselves. ⁸ “Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping down to

devour.⁹ “All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand.”)

1. God will use a **most wicked and violent** nation, one that collect captives **like sand** (that is a lot!) for His purposes.
2. God’s purpose is for that nation to **punish His people—to collect Judah!**

C. Habakkuk’s reaction:

1. **What?!** How can the Babylonians be the right answer? (1:12-13 – “Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my **Holy One**? We will not die. You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; and You, O Rock, have established them to correct. ¹³ Your **eyes are too pure to approve evil**, and **You can not look on wickedness with favor**. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? **Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?**”).
2. Habakkuk cannot believe it is right to **allow Babylon**, an extremely wicked and violent people, to **conquer Israel**, who though wicked and violent themselves, are nothing like them.
3. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation where you wanted to know God’s answer to a question only to find that you did not like the answer?
 - a. Maybe you could not understand why or how God could be so seemingly harsh or “narrow” in His judgment against a certain sin.
 - b. Maybe you found him to be very strict and demanding in his requirement for faithfulness and salvation (i.e., “Can He really expect me/them/us to do this, to give up that,...?”)!
4. This bewilderment was what Habakkuk faced **and then some**—that **God’s answer** was the **destruction** of Judah through the **Babylonians!**
 - a. **How does a person of faith deal with this?**
 - b. Habakkuk determined **to look again to God** and wait **for His response** (2:1 – “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.”).
 - i. Confusion and dismay are generally dispelled by talking with God in prayer and returning to His word to gain further insight.
 - ii. Those who trust God and continue to look to Him will find their faith will grow!

II. Habakkuk 2: The Lord’s response (2:1-4 – “Then the LORD answered me and said, “Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets, that the one who reads it may run. ³ “For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay. ⁴ “Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.”).

A. God’s response was that Habakkuk must **record the vision** (2:2-3).

1. Though Habakkuk was confused as to how the vision truly fit God’s holy character, that confusion did not negate his duty as a prophet.
 - a. People today think that if they question something in the Bible, they do not have to do it! But that is not so!
 - b. Habakkuk had to obey God and record the vision though its message was unbelievably heartbreaking and full of terror!
 - c. These were the words that so often resulted in persecution and death for God’s prophets, even as Stephen said (Acts 7:51-52 – “You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are always resisting the Holy Spirit; as your ancestors did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They even killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become.”).
2. God demanded that Habakkuk **inscribe the vision on tablets**.
 - a. God wanted Israel to have a **permanent record** of this vision so **all could see and know**.
 - i. God would have no Israelite blaming Him *because they did not know God said this*.
 - ii. God, as he desires today, wanted His message read and known by all!

- b. God also wanted a permanent record so that the **“one who reads it may run”** (2:2).
 - i. This did not mean that upon reading the tablets one was to run away from trouble by leaving Judah for a better future.
 - 1) For, God had said that Judah was to submit to the Babylonians (Jer. 27:8-9 – “As for the nation or kingdom that does not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and does not place its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish by sword, famine, and plague” — this is the LORD’S declaration — “until through him I have destroyed it.”⁹ **But as for you, do not listen to your prophets, diviners, dreamers, fortune-tellers, or sorcerers who say to you, ‘Don’t serve the king of Babylon!’**)!
 - 2) **Can you imagine what it was like to hear those words?** It would be like God saying for us to allow China, Russia, or North Korea to invade, destroy our cities, and take us to their homeland as captive slaves!
 - ii. **So, what did it mean?** This was apparently a (difficult) Hebrew idiom that meant the vision was to be plainly stated so that one could read it 1) quickly and easily, or 2) read it easily and **run to convey the vision’s message** to others!
 - 1) God wanted this done because this terrible event **would certainly come to be** and would not fail though much time might pass before it happened.
 - 2) God knows human nature and wants His word ever before them (and us) because time breeds *complacency*, and we *forget* only to be caught unaware and lost!
- B. God’s timeless words (2:4 – “Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but **the righteous will live by his faith.**”).
- 1. Note that this statement is made in contrast to **the proud one** (2:4a).
 - a. This likely refers to Nebuchadnezzar the ruler of Babylon and his motivation for conquest—he had arrogantly deviated from God’s way.
 - b. As a result, he would come to know God’s judgment! (cite 2:5-20)
 - 2. Yet, for those who would listen to God, **“the righteous will live by his faith”** (2:4b).
 - a. This was God’s answer for those in Judah who were about to endure times of great trial, distress, and confusion, as it is God’s answer today! Trust God and live!
 - b. Do not miss that one would live by **“his faith.”**
 - i. It would be by one’s **personal faith** in God that he/she would receive life!
 - ii. This meant **giving up all false assurances**, such as their hope in the **temple** residing in Jerusalem, even as Jeremiah pleaded for them to do (Jer. 7:3-4 – “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. ⁴ Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’”).
 - iii. God’s requirement for us is no different—genuine, personal faith in Christ to live! (Jn. 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”).
 - 1) So, if I find myself only faithful in Bible study, prayer, holiness, etc., when I am around certain people, I have not made faith in Christ my personal faith!
 - 2) Only when I choose to **pray, pour over God’s word, and seek His holiness in thought and deed always** is my faith truly my own!
 - 3) Without that kind of faith we will not live with God!

III. Habakkuk’s Prayer of Faith (Hab. 3):

- A. Habakkuk begins his prayer by expressing his awe of God’s power and a petition (3:2 – “LORD, I have heard the report about You and **I fear**. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; **in wrath remember mercy.**”).
 - 1. Habakkuk stood in fear, in **awe**, of God’s great power and sovereignty shown throughout the years, inspiring in him complete trust and obedience!
 - 2. He petitioned God to make known again his great works, **remembering mercy** in His **wrath**.

- a. Wrath is not the fullness of God's nature, but it is part of God's nature and does express his attitude toward those who break his covenant, as had Israel (1:2-4).
 - b. As God brought wrath Habakkuk asked Him to remember His character of mercy also.
- B. Habakkuk praised God's power (3:3-15):
1. **The reality of God's power:** God came with great splendor and radiance causing terror through pestilence and plague, He shattered mountains, collapsed hills, and brought distress and trembling on Cushan and Midian (3:3-7).
 2. **The question behind His power:** Why did Jehovah come with such rage, anger, and wrath (3:8-12)?
 3. **The answer:** He acted for the salvation of His people and His Anointed (3:13-15 – "You went forth for the **salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed.** You struck the head of the house of the evil to lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah. ¹⁴ You pierced with his own spears the head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; their exultation was like those who devour the oppressed in secret. ¹⁵ You trampled on the sea with Your horses, on the surge of many waters.").
- a. God's coming in judgment had always been **for the salvation of His people.** An **this judgment**, though against Judah and executed by Babylon, **would be no different!**
 - b. For, God's judgment was necessary for Israel to survive so that God's **Anointed**, Messiah, could come. Think about how hard it would be to see this at that time!
 - c. And though punishment would come by Babylon, that wicked nation would not escape God's judgment (3:13b-15).
- C. With Jehovah's assurances before him, Habakkuk expressed his faith in God (3:16-19).
1. Though sensing dread, he would not run but "wait quietly for the day of distress" (3:16 – "I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. **Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.**" – ESV – "**to come upon people who invade us.**").
 - a. He had to **wait** for that **day of distress**, whether it comes *from* those who invaded or *upon* those who invaded.
 - b. Either way, Habakkuk accepted that Babylon was coming for Judah was right!
 2. So, despite the loss of all things needed for life, Habakkuk will trust God (3:17-19 – "Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ **yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.** ¹⁹ The Lord GOD is my **strength**, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places...").
 - a. Here is the pinnacle of faith—the faith by which we will truly live.
 - b. It is to **trust God no matter what**—to trust his great and abundant salvation, His promises of eternal life and joy in His presence, that He will truly make his people triumph in the end no matter the circumstances here on this earth!
 3. **That is what it means that "the righteous will live by His faith!"**

CONCLUSION:

1. Will you live by your faith? Do you have the heart needed to accept His word, bow your knees before Him, believe His promises and assurances, and live your life in confident obedience?
2. If so, will you begin to live today by coming in F-R-Bp?