

“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH”

Habakkuk 2

In last week's sermon we learned that Habakkuk prophesied about five years before Judah was invaded by the Chaldeans, its armies defeated, and Jerusalem was surrounded and came under siege. Eventually, Jerusalem fell and a number of its royalty, noblemen, military, religious, and political leaders were taken as captives to Babylon. Jonah was given a message for Nineveh that gave it forty days of warning. Habakkuk's message to Judah was that judgment was eminent, but no certain time was given when judgment would come.

Habakkuk began his prophecy by crying out to God asking how long until God would bring an end to the wickedness, idolatry, immorality, injustice, and oppression that had despoiled and ruined the people of God. God answers by saying that He is sending the Chaldeans to destroy the land and chastise the people.

Habakkuk is thrown for a loop by this revelation. How could God possibly use the Chaldeans as His instruments? God is too pure to look upon evil. How can He use a people even more wicked than the Jews to chastise them? How can He use heathens who after they defeat Judah and capture Jerusalem will then offer sacrifices to heathen gods to whom they will attribute their success?

Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction. You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he? (Habakkuk 1:12-13 NKJV)

All of which brings us to the second chapter of Habakkuk.

1.) I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected. (Habakkuk 2:1 NKJV)

Habakkuk had argued back with God. Instead of running off to Tarshish, Habakkuk waits to see what God will say to him. He waits to be corrected. There is nothing wrong with carrying on a discussion with God, telling Him how you feel, what you want, telling Him what you can't understand or what you can't agree with in the things He is doing or what you think He is doing. He wants that. Jesus said.

"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. (John 15:15 NKJV)

After telling God the things we don't understand and can't agree with, then we must do as Habakkuk did. He watched and prayed. He waited to see what God would say to him. He waited to be corrected by God. I've had people say to me, "I'm going to do so and so. I figure if it isn't the Lord's will for me to do that, He'll find some way to stop me." YOU DON'T WANT GOD TO FIND SOME WAY TO STOP YOU! In fact, He may not stop you. He may let you suffer the consequences of your tempestuous action and live to wish you had waited for His answer.

I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see... This verse is very much like the first line of our National Anthem – "...Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight, O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?"

Habakkuk sat right on the ramparts overlooking the Chaldean army's approach. He would watch and wait to see what God would do.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is." (Mark 13:32-33 NKJV)

2.) Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:2-3 NKJV)

Christians are fascinated with Bible prophecy. Sermons or Bible studies on the Revelation are a sure fire hit. The Left Behind series were some of the best selling books of Christian fiction ever. Now people who aren't Christians are being swept away by the Mayan prophecies that the world will end in 2012.

The Lord told Habakkuk to get off the ramparts watching and waiting for the doom to come and to begin publishing the vision. He gives Habakkuk another vision of a yet more distant time when the Chaldeans will be attacked, defeated and destroyed. God catalogues the offenses of the Chaldeans so that Habakkuk will know that they have not escaped His notice.

"Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, He is a proud man, And he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, And he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, He gathers to himself all nations And heaps up for himself all peoples. (Habakkuk 2:5)

The Chaldeans loved to drink wine, as we see in the book of Daniel. Under Nebuchadnezzar they had an insatiable desire for conquest. They seduced other nations to join them in these campaigns.

"Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him, and say, 'Woe to him who increases What is not his-how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges'? (Habakkuk 2:6 NKJV)

"Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, That he may set his nest on high, That he may be delivered from the power of disaster!" (Habakkuk 2:9 NKJV)

"Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, Who establishes a city by iniquity!" (Habakkuk 2:12 NKJV)

"Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing him to your bottle, Even to make him drunk, That you may look on his nakedness!" (Habakkuk 2:15 NKJV)

"Woe to him who says to wood, 'Awake!' To silent stone, 'Arise! It shall teach!' Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, Yet in it there is no breath at all." (Habakkuk 2:19 NKJV)

These are the five woes Habakkuk is to write on tablets in letters large enough so that even someone running by can read them. Can you imagine the courage it would take to placard the country with signs condemning the nation that would invade and defeat the nation Judah? During World War 2 the Resistance would sometimes post signs against the Nazi occupiers. If they were caught the penalty was usually death.

3.) "For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith."

(Habakkuk 2:3-4 NKJV)

"For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14 NKJV)

"But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

(Habakkuk 2:20 NKJV)

The last half of verse 4, But the just shall live by his faith is quoted three times in the New Testament Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. It was Martin Luther's war cry. Habakkuk was to teach the faithful remnant that though the Chaldeans would invade, conquer, and destroy their nation, even the Temple, and lead them into captivity, that "the LORD is in His holy temple." He has pronounced woes upon the Chaldeans and they will fall. By them the wickedness of the Jews was punished and uprooted, but their own wickedness will not escape God's punishment and their sins will be ploughed under the earth because "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea." These promises are yet for an appointed time. In the meantime God's people are to wait, living by their faith.

How about God's people today? "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:7 NKJV) The word "keeps" means to publish, proclaim, even put it on billboards or signs.

