

Waiting on God in Hard Times

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Preacher: Andy Robertson

[0 : 00] The reading is from Habakkuk chapter 1, reading from verse 12. I would say quite bad.

Quite bad. Yeah. Better. Yeah, so chapter 1 and reading from verse 12. Lord, are you not from everlasting?

My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment. You, my rock, have ordained them to punish.

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil. You cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks. He catches them in his net.

[1 : 05] He gathers them up in his dragnet. And so he rejoices and is glad. Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet.

For by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choice of food. Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying the nations without mercy?

I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts. I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

Then the Lord replied, Write down the revelation, and make it plain on the tablets, so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time.

It speaks of the end, and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it, it will certainly come and will not delay.

[2 : 03] See, the enemy is puffed up. His desires are not upright. But the righteous person will live by his faithfulness.

Indeed, wine betrays him. He is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave, and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations, and takes captive all the peoples.

Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, Woe to him who piles up stolen goods, and makes himself wealthy by extortion?

How long must this go on? Will not your creditors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their prey.

Because you have plundered many nations, the people who are left will plunder you. For you have shed human blood. You have destroyed lands and cities, and everyone in them.

[3 : 09] Woe to him who built his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin. You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life.

The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it. Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed, and establishes a town with injustice.

Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labour is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbours, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. You will be filled with shame instead of glory.

Now it is your turn. Drink and let your nakedness be exposed. The cup from the Lord's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory.

[4 : 20] The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed human blood. You have destroyed lands and cities and

everyone in them.

Of what value is an idol carved by a craftsman, or an image that teaches lies? For the one who makes it trusts in his own creation. He makes idols that cannot speak.

Woe to him who says to wood, Come to life, or to lifeless stone, Wake up. Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver.

There is no breath in it. The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before him. Amen. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you. Okay. Are you ready for round two? Yeah. Yeah, it is. Ah, that's what I like to hear, Martin. If any of you are sleeping, I'll call you out on it.

[5 : 27] I used to seeing that in my church. That's not for lack of sleep. It's usually because of value, but don't worry. okay yeah this is where we're going to do a lot lot to cover in this session but hopefully it will make sense let's say just remember our aim we want to see how habakkuk helps us move from doubt and uncertainty to joyful hope-filled praise when the times are hard so this is what we've seen so far we've got the next slide the next um two things that we saw in the previous session next one we've got to speak to god in honest prayer and we've got to listen to what god has said that's the two points from the first conversation between habakkuk and god habakkuk has asked for help because god's people are doing evil god has responded by saying don't worry send them to babylonians and they're going to wipe them out now here's something to bear in mind when we come to this passage chapter 1 verse 12 and i think it's a helpful thing to think about and it can seem like verse 12 is habakkuk responding and immediately to what god has just said i'm not so sure i don't think so the second conversation between god and habakkuk seems to take place quite a bit later in history probably decades later so in that first conversation babylon by what god says is implied kind of this unheard of nation and by the time we get to this conversation it seems that habakkuk recognizes very much who babylon are they seem to have grown in power and from what he says it looks like they've already begun to attack judah and so he has seen how violent they are and again he cries out to god and this time when he speaks to god it's almost like he says i regret even asking you to do something in the first place because of what you've done and it's so dreadful what these babylonians are doing it doesn't make sense that you would use an even more wicked people to deal with the wrong of your people and so here's the big thing we're going to think of in this session big word perseverance waiting i don't know what comes into your mind when i mention that word i'm going to do something risky i wouldn't do it if i was in saint silas in glasgow want to talk about football not a wise idea to do that in glasgow um but when i hear the word perseverance gotta be honest what comes to my mind there's a football match now let me confess something from dundee that i'm a hips fan and so when i hear the word perseverance i think about that great moment of may 21st 2016 and after 114 years hibernian won the scottish cup beat glasgow rangers 91st minute david gary rises knocks the ball into the back of the net beat rangers 3-2 and the tagline used by hips and what they had in all their shirts and that victory praise celebration in leith was persevered we did it after 114 years so that's kind of the first image that that comes to my mind maybe you think of something a bit more serious and an example of great endurance in the face of adversity i don't know if you've ever seen that film touching the void you know that film a fantastic film it's about these two mountain climbers that were climbing this mountain the peruvian andes and they got into this horrible accident in which one of them had to cut his mate loose and he thought that his friend had vomited to his death but his friend actually survived and the film is the story of how he basically crawled down the side of this mountain to be rescued you know hydrating himself on the dew that

was on the rocks as he crawled down the side that is a great example of perseverance well we um might not be fighting for survival or a sporting achievement but here's the truth if you want to follow jesus you need to learn what it takes to persevere because it ain't easy in fact i say to my guys all the time in charleston following jesus won't make your life easier if anything it will make it harder becomes a lot more complicated don't get me wrong it's so worth it it's forgiveness it's life it's freedom it's hope it's what we're made for it's where we're meant to be it's infinitely greater than anything else in this world but it can be brutal and jesus warns time and time again of the difficulties that come from following him especially when you're in a situation like habakkuk the prophet was in he's a godly man but around him he sees violence he sees injustice and he has no clue about what god is doing why why are you letting this happen and there are moments where life just throws you a curveball where you're hurt and confused moments even where you feel close to just packing it in

all together how do we persevere how can we learn to patiently endure keep going to jesus well that's where this second dialogue with habakkuk and god i think can really help us we've got two points today to help you stick with jesus in the hard times first is this hold on to god's character in the uncertainties of the present second point have faith in what god says is certain about the future so the first point comes from what habakkuk says the second point from what god says hold on to god's character and the uncertainties of the present and secondly have faith in what god says is certain about the future let's look then hold on to god's character and the uncertainties of the present so in our first conversation god told habakkuk he was going to send the babelonians to deal with his people's evil and that seems to have happened or certainly at the beginning of about to be happened jesus about to get smashed but habakkuk can't get his head around how this is a solution this is the covenant people god made these covenant promises they are meant to bless the world and so you can see if you look halfway through verse 13 here's the question halfway through verse 13 why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves in other words why are you using a more wicked people to punish your people right you've got a rowdy neighbor who's doing some dodgy deals perhaps in your street i don't know you guys live in glasgow it's my head that happens anywhere in glasgow and you phone the police and the police decide to send the mafia into your neighborhood to kill the neighbors and take over the whole neighborhood that doesn't seem like a good solution it just doesn't make sense i mean this is serious babylon babylon's going to devastate israel what they are going to do is awful but habakkuk's not having a go at god he's confused and before he asks that question do you see what he does he reminds himself of who he's speaking to folks this is so key people often ask the why question in the face of evil and suffering and it's a good question to ask but there's a bigger question we need to think on first who who is this god who governs the world this way who is he can i trust him

and so habakkuk begins in verse 12 by reminding himself of who god is and we've got to do that if we're to keep going in the uncertainties of life and i want to say that for us today we can do it to a degree even greater than habakkuk because we have an even clearer picture of who god is we have jesus in the past god spoke to his people through the prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us through his son and so let's look at what habakkuk says and we'll see how how jesus kind of magnifies that who is the god that habakkuk is complaining to first thing notice that he says he is eternal lord are you not from everlasting he's eternal that means that he will have a perspective on reality that's different to me we are we often tend to think that that in our complaints we know how god should operate but really in the scope of time we're nothing we're just a breath but this is the eternal god who sees the beginning from the end the illustration i use is a common one think of a tapestry right and on one side you've got a beautiful picture on the other side what have you got it's all messy and frayed god is seeing the big picture of human history weaving all these times into something beautiful that we can't comprehend and we only see the back just for a fleeting glimpse we don't have his perspective think about jesus hanging on that cross would have seemed so pointless and yet it was how god saved the world he is everlasting his perspective is everlasting and so we should expect to not be able to understand everything that he is doing secondly though he is personal first 12 notice that habakkuk says my god my holy one my is used a lot in his speech in other words there's a relationship there between him and god you've come to follow jesus he's taking away all your sin and you're adopted into god's family the first thing thomas says when he sees jesus my lord and my god my and i am his thirdly he's in control goes on he says you lord have appointed them that's the babylonians to execute judgment you my rock have ordained them to punish habakkuk acknowledges that the babylonians have been appointed they have been ordained by god and even though it makes no sense to him there's comfort in knowing that god is in control of this like god is never surprised by evil never surprised by it he is using evil again just think of jesus on the cross hanging there it's part of his plan the most evil thing that ever happened in human history the crucifixion of jesus was used to bring about the greatest thing that ever happened our eternal salvation wicked rulers the devil god only ever gives them enough rope to handle themselves he is in control of all of it he's not fighting against them he is ordaining them i can bring up loads of questions but there's comfort in knowing that it's all in his hands because of this final thing that we see about god that habakkuk reminds himself of he is good verse 13 your eyes are too pure to look on evil you cannot tolerate wrongdoing that's something that we really need to think on when life is confusing and hard the goodness of god jesus is a good shepherd honestly i have to remind myself of that sometimes i get so confused by

things and i think about something like people's eternal destinies and the reality of hell and it really shakes me what helps me is what abraham says in genesis 19 i think it is where he says will not the judge of all the earth do what he writes so much i don't know but i know that god cares about evil more than i do i know that god cares about sin more than me i know that god cares about people more than me he is good not me and again i can't look at his son hanging on a cross for my sin and say that he is not good he is so good he is and he has been so good to me not least of which i'm giving me jesus pure in every way perfect and so in the chaos of life when we get to the why sometimes we just need to stop and reflect on the who now look none of these truths about god will solve the problem in fact this is what's making habakkuk confused because this is what he knows to be true but it doesn't seem to be matching up with what he sees god doing and in verse 14 to 17 he's just brutally honest with god about what he sees and so he uses the image involving fishing i don't know if you like fishing i love fishing um but he he uses this fishing imagery and he says look i know all this is true about you god but look at what babylon is like they're like it's like people in the world are just fishing these evil empires like babylon are are gathering them up in their nets it's like they they hook these helpless people gathering up to devour them and interestingly that image he uses in verse 15 of being hooked and it's a fishing image but it's also something literally that the babylonians would do to their captives they would stick hooks in their mouths sign of humiliation and someone being captured by a mighty babylon so god i know what who you are but i'm struggling to see how that fits in with what you're doing we need to have the honesty that habakkuk has here but there's also a humility like most people when they question god's role in evil and suffering tend to do so like they're the ones with all the answers and god we're putting you in the dock you're on trial here habakkuk's not like that he knows that there will be stuff that is unknown about god and he's just honest and there's a humility that comes from him and it comes out what he says in in chapter 2 verse 1 where he says you know i'm going to stand on my watch and i'm going to wait literally he says i will wait for my rebuke if i need to be rebuked by god i'll take it we don't often get the answer to why we do have an answer to who and there has to be as we question and wrestle through these issues humility before the maker of the heavens and the earth reminds me of a quote from tim keller i don't think it's it's not on the slide because i must have deleted it but he said this he said if you have a god who is powerful enough so that you can be mad at him for allowing evil and suffering

to continue in this world you also have a god who is powerful enough to allow it to continue for a reason you might never understand just because you can't see what the point is doesn't make it pointless hold on to the character of god what we know is true of him that's our first point secondly have faith in what god says is certain about the future god has an answer and we need to see again that his answer in no way is going to change the circumstances babylon's going to come they're going to destroy judah it's going to be devastating but god's answer is about what will happen in the future and what he says is trust me have a cook i know what i'm doing i'm going to send these evil people but they will not get away with it all evil will be punished and he wants have a cook and he wants israel to know how certain that is so what does he say in verse two he says to have a cook to write it what he is about to say on on tablets get this engraved in stone in other words this is so certain let's get it on stone that's that's the image isn't it it's kind of like do you remember um rather embansomly when ed milliband had his uh was it the end stone when he had his promises and he put them in stone about what a labor party was going to do is to say this is starting this is definitely going to happen um or i know a few folks and in our scheme who want to highlight their devotion to their partner so they get their names eighth on their arms and often those names can get scored out after a while and well god is not as flimsy as them and so when he writes something down and it's the other thing stone this is happening it's definitely definitely 100 going to happen and nothing can stop it and god is getting habakkuk and and he's getting israel here and i want you to think about the israelites post the babylonian invasion in exile prisoners those that survived to how they must have held on to this to look forward to what is going to happen to what these people did to them and oh how habakkuk needed to see this how the israelites needed to see this and how we need to see this and there's two things that god wants us to be crystal clear about what's going to happen in the future firstly god will judge the proud and secondly god's glory will fill the earth god will judge the proud god's glory will fill the earth let me talk through it first and then god will judge the proud proud babylon puffed up arrogant love the imagery in verse five and describing someone that's never wrecked this consuming monster as greedy as the grave like death that is never satisfied gathering to himself all the nations taking captives all the people this devouring machine that seems

unstoppable they're going to answer to god and in verse six to 19 god gives five woes describing how he will judge them now we don't have time and verbose as it is we don't have time to go into all the details of these woes but let's just kind of hover above them and see what god is saying and i think we are meant to feel a sense of awe at the majesticness of god as this great powerful nation subject to his judgment what will happen firstly the plunderers will be plundered verse six will not all of them talking with ridicule and scourge saying woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes [25 : 49] himself wealthy by extortion and there's a few lads i know who like to pile up stolen goods and if you wanted anything they could get it for you and everywhere in our world there is this greed apparently there's enough money in the world right now to end world hunger but it won't end why because the problem is not finance the problem is greed god is saying that what babylon has done to others will be done to them not just babylon but everyone will answer for how they have exploited others got rich of them and plundered them they will be plundered second woe the fortified will fall verse 9 to 11 they describe those who built great fortifications at the expense in the blood of others and i'm a bit of a history nerd i was watching a documentary on russian history apparently under st petersburg in russia there is innumerable bodies of the dead serfs that built that city under peter the great it's like slaves built using a slave labor force on the blood of those people empires have always done that and god is saying here that the stones of such buildings will cry out for justice those who think they can build their fortifications at the expense of others will fall thirdly the unjust will be undone so it's god saying in verse 12 to 14 these kings who build cities for themselves they will be ruined their labor will be undone it is pointless history is littered with people who are trying to make a name for themselves and they always fall there's a famous poem by shelley called eh ozymandias it's actually the inspiration for the film watchman you've ever seen that or the tv series breaking bad which some of you might have seen and it's all about the folly of human pride it's a poem about a statue that's found in the egyptian desert of ramesses ii and at the base of the the statue and scribe these words my name is ozymandias king of kings look on my works you mighty and despair sounds cool and yet all is left is just a foot in the desert there have always been people who have used injustice to play god to build up their egos and they have all this father fourthly the shameful will be shamed the verse 15 woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors pouring it from the mind skin until they are drunk so that he can gaze on their naked bodies you will be filled with shame instead of glory now it's your turn drinking like you're naked be exposed the cup from the lord's right hand is coming round to you and disgrace will cover your glory this is a sordid description of the perverseness of babel on modern day equivalent i guess someone getting drunk so they can take naked photos of them on their phone god says they will be shaved they will be exposed no abuser will get away with anything i know there are many who need to hear that god has seen the shameful acts that may have been done against you and it does not let us fight finally the false gods will be found out the reason babylon was so evil was because of who they worshipped they have false gods in verse 19 god rebukes them for worshipping the stuff they made uh verse 19 woe to him who says to would come to life where to life the stone wake up can't give guidance it's covered with gold and silver there is no breath in it it's so stupid to worship a false god well people don't do that today well what did babylon actually worship yeah there's these idols made of gold and silver but think of what we've seen so far in habakkuk chapter 1 verse 11 what's their god their strength what did they sacrifice to chapter 1 verse 16 they sacrifice to their necks they sacrifice to their strength to their power to their instruments of war who does babylon worship worship themselves there's plenty of people that do that today we love to exalt ourselves but god says step back have a look the lord is in his temple and all the earth will be silent before him look to the end all these proud empires these proud people these sinful people they want to play it being god all of them will answer to me and evil will be held to account and god did it let me ask you a question feel free to shout out where's babylon iraq iraq yeah don't it's gone if you go to berlin i really want to do this then you go to the museum of natural history you can see the ishtag gate the gate that daniel and his companions would have walked through as they entered mighty babylon babylon all that's left of it is a gate in a museum the empire the people that everyone feared it's gone egypt's gone the roman empire's gone it's not just them though you see there's an ending site for everyone after jesus died he rose from the grave triumphant victorious and he has made it clear that he is coming back and that day will be the day of judgment the tyrants the abusers the thieves the liars the proud and the arrogant all of them will stand before jesus to give an account and so will you and so will i and that is terrifying jesus is not your savior johnny cash once sat you could run on

for a long time you could run on for a long time you could run on for a long time but sooner or later god will cut you down now but if you have turned to jesus you do not need to fear that day he has saved us from that judgment and so we look forward not with fear but with hope knowing that all evil will be held to account and here's the other thing that god says is going to happen and it's kind of buried in amongst the woes and yet it's an incredible verse in the bible did you notice it in verse 14 the proud will be judged but what else is going to happen verse 14 god's glory will fill the earth verse 14 for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the lord as the waters cover the sea the statues of these empires will crumble but it's the knowledge of god's glory that will fill the earth that's the promise and think how ridiculous that would have sounded for habakkuk god's people are about to be destroyed all that will be life for them according to the prophet jeremiah it's around about 5 000 people

you get higher attendance at a stint men football match than was left of israel at this time and the world's going to vote about the glory of god ah but it's not the end in the end god's glory will fill this world the knowledge of it will be spread across this world so many people will know my glory folks that's happening now when jesus rose from the grave and gave that commission to his disciples to reach the nations like a rock dropping in the middle of the pool the ripples of the knowledge of the glory of god spread out to the nations we can see it i think that's incredible 12 men these guys the message they had and the impact that is made on this world and there's nothing that's going to stop the knowledge of god's glory spreading out to the nations more and more people are coming to know jesus the church might be in decline in this country but don't let that fool you the end of the 1700s there was one country in the world that every christian would have thought no way will anyone in that nation become a christian and that was the nation of china but in 1807 a man by the name of robert morrison went to china to tell people about jesus robert morrison was a rare breed he's like roman selson i don't know problems here he was an english presbyterian he went to china to tell them about jesus he worked in china for years and after seven years of hard graft baptized first chinese convert a man named please forgive my pronunciation here chai gao and along with others they worked on translating this bible into mandarin and in the 19th century the church in china started to grow by the time of the communist revolution there were around 900 000 protestant churches within china and then it looked like it was all over because the communists were going to kill it out completely they persecuted the church brutally under mouth and in 1953 all protestant missionaries were banned from entering china but you know what happened the church exploded the church exploded an unbelievable rate today these are conservative estimates there are 111 million christians in china it is projected that by 2050 there will be around 280 million christians people are being converted at a rate of 10 000 people a day in that nation the fastest growing church in the world around afghanistan the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of god it's already happening but at the end when jesus comes back it will immerse and cover this world and all those who have been saved by him will be gathered to him and oh how glorious it will be look see if you follow jesus right you don't know how the story that is your life will turn out but you do know the end the chapters in between are yet to be written and they could be sad there could be hopeful there could be some wonderful stuff there could be some really difficult stuff but the end is certain the end is engraved in stone in the end you will be with jesus all tears will be wiped away all suffering will be undone that will happen and what makes it so certain is not what you do but what christ has done hold on hold on to that have faith in that not blind faith but faith that based upon what god has already said and god has already done and that's really the call of this book of abracut to abracut himself to the to the israelites sitting in prison in babylon have faith not in you have faith in me and what i will do chapter 2 verse 4 anyone who's um got a knowledge of the bible these verses will be familiar and the most important verses perhaps in the entire old testament the enemy is puffed up his desires are not upright but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness or by his faith that monumental verse is used multiple times in the new testament and so as we close then i want to think what does that mean for us firstly it's a reminder of how you became a christian so turn with me romans 117 where this is quoted romans 117 romans chapter 1 let me read from verse 16 the apostle paul writes this for i have not shaved the gospel because it is the power of god that brings salvation to everyone who believes first to the jew then to the gentile for in the gospel the righteousness of god is revealed a righteousness that is by faith from first to last just as it is written quote abracut the righteous will live by faith if you want to follow jesus if you want all your sin to be wiped away to be set free from every sin like we saw in act 13 if you want to be loved by god for all eternity it's not about being a good person that counts for squat the righteousness we need for god

to accept us is not ours it's jesus he gives it have faith in him and you will live that's how we become a christian faith but it's not just that faith is how we keep going as a christian it's the second thing to say um we need faith to be saved but we need faith to persevere to wait like abacut did to to look forward to the future so turning me again just final one hebrews 10 and we'll see how habacut 2 4 is applied there hebrews 10 and let me read from verse 35 hebrews 10 verse 35 speaking to a church that's really struggling and i think close to walking away the author says this so do not throw away your confidence it will be richly rewarded you need to persevere so that when you have done the will of god you will receive what he has promised for in just a little while he who is coming will come and will not delay and have a but my righteous one will live by faith and i take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back but we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed but to those who have faith and are saved keep going it's hard keep the faith you are not the ones who shrink back and are destroyed but those who have faith and are saved keep trusting jesus hold on to his character now look to what he has said about the future that is sorry keep the faith let me pray father thank you that it is by faith that we have been saved that it is not through our own righteous deeds or righteous works we just care for nothing useless but it's through the righteousness of jesus that you have given to us and the faith we have accepted and it is faith that keeps us going as we trust you and as we hold on to you we are not those who shrink back and are destroyed but we are those who have faith in our save and so help us please to hold on to what we know about you that is true hold on to your character when those why questions seem all consuming may we come back to the who question have faith in you and i help us to have faith in what you have said is starting about the future no evil and injustice will be unpunished whether jesus will take the punishment or they will bear it themselves but everyone answers to you you're the god who created this world who sustains this world you see the beginning and the end you're eternal you're in control of everything you're so good and so help us have faith in you and have faith in your word we pray this in jesus name amen