

Living by Faith When Life Doesn't Make Sense

Faith that Lives

Habakkuk 2:2-2:20

In our last message, we left the prophet Habakkuk standing watch upon the walls of one of Judah's fortified cities—waiting, listening, and wrestling with God. He had begun by crying out over the violence, injustice, and spiritual decay that had overtaken his people. The covenant nation had drifted so far that God's law—once meant to reflect His justice and mercy—had become powerless in practice. It was still recited, still referenced, but no longer obeyed. Justice was twisted to favor the wealthy and the powerful, while the righteous were pushed aside.

Habakkuk longed for justice because he loved God. He could not bear to see the Lord's holy character misrepresented by a corrupt society. Yet he also longed for mercy because he loved his people. This was not the cry of an angry prophet seeking vengeance, but the prayer of a faithful intercessor yearning for repentance and restoration—perhaps even hoping for a return to the reforms once ignited under King Josiah. At its core, his first complaint was simple and painful: God seemed silent when decisive action was desperately needed.

But when God answered, the response only deepened Habakkuk's struggle. The Lord was not silent—He was already at work. Judgment was coming—through Babylon. A fierce and ruthless nation. A people whose horses were swifter than leopards and more ferocious than wolves at dusk. As Habakkuk stood on the wall, waiting for further word, we can almost feel the weight of his second complaint forming in his heart. How could the everlasting God—his Rock, pure and without blemish—use a nation even more wicked than Judah as the instrument of His justice? How could the Holy One employ a people whose god was their own strength, who swept up nations like fish in a dragnet and showed no mercy?

Surely this could not be justice. Surely this could not be right.

It is here, in Habakkuk 2:2–20, that God finally speaks with unmistakable clarity. Faith that prays and faith that waits must now become faith that lives. God calls His prophet—and His people—to listen with reverence, to trust with patience, and to live with confidence in His holiness and righteousness. Though the wicked may appear to prosper for a season, their end is certain. And though the righteous may struggle in the present, their way is secure.

As we listen to the Lord's response today, we will see two sharply contrasting ways to live: one marked by pride, self-reliance, and eventual ruin; the other marked by humble faith and enduring life. May God grant us ears to hear—and hearts willing to live by faith.

Faith Lives by God’s Revealed Word

Before God explains what He will do, He begins by showing how His people are to live while they wait. The Lord does not respond to Habakkuk with dates, details, or deadlines. Instead, He anchors the prophet’s faith in something far more enduring than a timetable—His revealed Word, meant to be written down, clearly understood, and faithfully trusted.

Then the LORD replied:

“Write down the revelation

and make it plain on 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.

Habakkuk 2:2-3

Habakkuk’s struggle had begun with a simple but agonizing question: How long, O LORD? He longed for action. He longed for relief. But when God finally answered, He did not reveal the exact moment Babylon would come, nor did He explain the full sequence of events that lay ahead. Instead, He reminded His prophet that divine purposes do not unfold according to human schedules, but according to God’s sovereign timing.¹

Habakkuk had placed his daily life on hold to stand watch upon Judah’s walls, waiting for God to speak. To be told that the vision was for “an appointed time”—with no date attached—must have tested his patience deeply.² Yet God, in His mercy, commanded Habakkuk to write the vision down. This was not because God feared the prophet might forget His words, but because God wanted His truth preserved, proclaimed, and passed on.³ The vision was not

¹ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 196.

² Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 196.

³ Carl E. Armerding, [“Habakkuk,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 511.

meant for Habakkuk alone; it was meant for all who would need to live by faith while they waited for God’s promises to unfold.

Faith Lives by Trust, Not Pride

Once God establishes the certainty of His Word and the certainty of His timing, He now draws a clear line between two ways of living—one rooted in pride, and the other rooted in faith.

See, the enemy is puffed up;
his desires are not upright—
but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness
Habakkuk 2:4

The Babylonians embodied the first way. They were self-reliant and proud, trusting in their own strength, power, and military might. Their nets, their armies, and their conquests became their gods. From a human perspective, it appeared that injustice would reign unchecked. But the Lord calls Habakkuk to look again—this time with spiritual eyes.⁴ Though injustice may be permitted for a season, it is never ignored, excused, or endorsed by God.

The sovereign King calls His prophet to walk not by what is seen, but by what is believed: “For we live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Genuine faith trusts the Word of God without wavering—without divided loyalty and without hypocrisy⁵—for “he that doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6–7). It is as though God were telling Habakkuk that his ascent to the watchtower was never meant to be merely intellectual,⁶ but deeply devotional—the expression of a heart fully committed to a loving God who alone was his true Treasure and Pearl (Matthew 13:44–46). Faith, then, refuses to chase what looks impressive now, and clings to what God is doing for eternity. It shapes how we endure hardship, respond to injustice, and walk in obedience when God’s answers remain incomplete.

⁴ John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 68–69.

⁵ Carl E. Armerding, [“Habakkuk,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 513.

⁶ James Montgomery Boice, [The Minor Prophets: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 410.

Faith Lives Counterculturally in a Corrupt World

Having shown us how the righteous are to live, God now exposes how the proud actually live—and why their way, though impressive for a moment, cannot endure. And God does not merely describe Babylon’s pride—He pronounces a verdict.

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 peoples who are left will plunder you.
For you have shed human blood;
you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.
Habakkuk 2:5-8

Israel had been warned long before that covenant disobedience would bring public shame and ridicule: “You will become a thing of horror, a byword and an object of ridicule among all the peoples where the LORD will drive you” (Deuteronomy 28:37).⁷ Babylon now stood as the

⁷ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [*Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 200.

living embodiment of that warning. Though they were used as an instrument of God’s righteous judgment, they were not exempt from accountability themselves.

Their insatiable greed,⁸ relentless violence, and self-exalting ambition did not escape the notice of a holy and sovereign God. Those who had ruthlessly taken what did not belong to them would one day face those they had wronged. The language is striking: the plunderer would become the plundered; the predator would become the prey. Ironically, Babylon’s downfall would come through the very nations they had crushed. The Medes and the Persians—once victims—would rise to reclaim what had been unjustly taken.⁹ In all of this, God was inviting His prophet to lift his eyes beyond the present moment and to live with eternity in view. What looks powerful now is passing; what God has decreed will stand.

Faith Lives with Integrity, Not False Security

After exposing the outward greed of the proud, God now turns to the inward motive that drives it—the false belief that security can be built apart from righteousness.

Woe to him who builds 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.
Habakkuk 2:9-11

The haunting image of stones crying out for justice echoes an earlier moment in Scripture. After Cain murdered his brother Abel, the Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10).¹⁰ Here again, creation itself becomes a witness against human violence. Even when people remain silent, injustice leaves a testimony

⁸ Carl E. Armerding, [“Habakkuk,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 514.

⁹ Carl E. Armerding, [“Habakkuk,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 517.

¹⁰ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 201.

that cannot be buried. If the walls of Babylon could speak, would they not cry out as Habakkuk once did—bearing witness to oppression, bloodshed, and cruelty?¹¹ Babylon believed that by building higher walls, stronger fortresses, and grander palaces, it could secure its future.¹² Wealth and power became their refuge. But what they trusted for protection became the very evidence of their guilt.

Ironically, the structures raised through injustice would stand as witnesses against them. Though Babylon believed itself untouchable, God would turn the nations they had conquered into instruments of judgment. What looked like unshakable security would collapse under the weight of divine justice. Here faith confronts a timeless temptation—the urge to secure tomorrow by compromising today. True faith chooses obedience over advantage, righteousness over safety, and trust over control. It rests not in walls of stone, but in the steadfast faithfulness of God.

Faith Lives for God’s Glory, Not Human Power

After exposing the emptiness of building for self-preservation, God now reveals the futility of building for self-glory—and sets His eternal purpose against human power.

“Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed
and establishes a town by injustice!
Has not the LORD Almighty determined
that the people’s labor 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.
Habakkuk 2:12-14

¹¹ John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 72.

¹² John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 72.

Tyrants may build their kingdoms on violence, oppression, deception, and fear, but no amount of power can overturn the purposes of God.¹³ Empires forged through bloodshed and injustice carry within themselves the seeds of their own collapse. The labor that once fueled their rise will ultimately be consumed like firewood, because God has already determined their end.

In contrast to human ambition stands God's unshakable promise: the earth will not be filled with the glory of empires, but with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD. History is not moving toward the triumph of human power, but toward the universal recognition of God's sovereignty. Faith, then, aligns itself not with what appears impressive in the present, but with what God is accomplishing for eternity. While such faith may not yield immediate earthly reward, it leads to something far greater: lives marked by obedience, worship, and joyful submission. For nothing is more valuable than knowing and honoring the Lord, the Savior and King over all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16).

Faith Lives Soberly, Rejecting Moral Corruption

Waiting faith is never passive, and living faith is never careless—because faith that truly trusts God also rejects the corruption that offends Him.

Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors,
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.
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.
Habakkuk 2:15-17

¹³ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [*Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 201–202.

Habakkuk had cried out, asking how a holy God—whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil—could remain silent while the wicked swallowed up those more righteous than themselves. God now answers clearly: the use of Babylon as an instrument of discipline against Judah did not mean Babylon’s greater wickedness had gone unnoticed.¹⁴ The Lord invites Habakkuk to see what is coming. The very nation that intoxicated others with power, violence, and moral corruption would soon be forced to drink from the cup of God’s own wrath. Their gods of strength, conquest, and self-glory would not save them. Shame, exposure, and judgment would replace their boasting.

This is a sobering reminder for God’s people. Have you ever endured hardship as God’s loving discipline? Scripture tells us that such correction is not a sign of rejection but of sonship. As the writer of Hebrews teaches, “the Lord disciplines the one he loves” (Hebrews 12:5–11). God corrects not to destroy, but to restore. True faith, then, does not numb itself with compromise or excuse sin under the banner of grace. True faith walks soberly, submitting to God’s sovereign right to rule. It walks by the Spirit, not the flesh (Galatians 5:16), and rests securely in the truth that believers are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). Because we belong to Him, our lives are called to reflect His holiness in a corrupt world.

Faith Lives in Reverent Silence Before the Living God

Having exposed the emptiness of human power and moral corruption, God now calls His people to stop speaking, stop striving, and stand in silence before the only living God.

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;

¹⁴ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [*Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 203.

let all the earth be silent before Him.

Habakkuk 2:18-20

The weight of God’s response presses every heart to a point of decision. Babylon chose to trust in its own strength—and beyond that, in a religious system built on divination, spiritism, demonism,¹⁵ and idols shaped by human hands. What they trusted in was not merely false; it was empty. Their confidence rested in objects without breath, authority, or life—manufactured gods born from a fallen imagination.

Such trust is vanity of the highest order, for the LORD alone is sovereign. Apart from Him, all false worship leaves humanity in a dreadful vacuum¹⁶—cut off from truth, meaning, and life—spiraling toward self-inflicted ruin. But in stark contrast, those who place their faith in the living God are not undone by the rise of evil or the delay of justice. God still reigns. His temple still stands. His glory still fills all things. And now, Habakkuk is invited—not to speak, not to question—but to see. In reverent silence, he beholds with spiritual eyes the holiness, righteousness, and certainty of God’s justice, trusting that what God has declared will come to pass—in His time.

Conclusion

Habakkuk began this journey crying out with questions that echo in every generation: How long, O LORD? Why do You seem silent? Why does injustice appear to prevail? He climbed the watchtower looking for answers, and what God gave him was not a timetable, not an explanation for every mystery, but something far more sustaining—a call to live by faith.

In Habakkuk 2, the Lord teaches us that faith is not merely what we believe when life makes sense; it is how we live when it does not. Faith lives by God’s revealed Word even when His promises seem delayed. Faith trusts God’s righteousness rather than leaning on pride or human strength. Faith refuses to compromise in a corrupt world, choosing integrity over advantage and obedience over security. Faith rejects intoxication with power, pleasure, and self-glory, walking soberly by the Spirit instead. And finally, faith learns when to stop speaking—to lay down its arguments, questions, and fears—and stand in reverent silence before the living God.

The world around us may still feel chaotic. Injustice may still appear unchecked. Evil may still seem loud and powerful. But Habakkuk reminds us that appearances are never the final word. The LORD is still in His holy temple. He is not absent. He is not threatened. He is not late.

¹⁵ James Montgomery Boice, [*The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 414.

¹⁶ James Montgomery Boice, [*The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 415.

His justice is sure, His glory is advancing, and His purposes will not fail. So the question before us is not whether God will be faithful—He has already settled that. The question is whether we will live by faith while we wait. Will we trust His Word when we cannot trace His ways? Will we walk humbly when pride seems rewarded? Will we remain holy when compromise feels easier? And will we learn to be still when God has already spoken?

May we, like Habakkuk, come down from the watchtower changed—not because all our questions have been answered, but because our hearts have been anchored. For the righteous shall live by faith—not just someday, not just in eternity, but here and now, until the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

So let all the earth keep silence before Him—and let the righteous live by faith.