

**WRITE THIS DOWN****Habakkuk 2:2-20****(Read Habakkuk 2:2-20)**

**Intro:** If you're a George Strait fan, you're probably thinking of his song with the same title of this talk. George is realizing he's been neglectful and his girl has one foot out the door. So he implores her to:

*. . . write this down*

*Take a little note to remind you in case you didn't know*

*Tell yourself I love you and I don't want you to go*

**Write this down**

*Take my words and read 'em every day, keep 'em close by*

*Don't you let 'em fade away*

*So you'll remember what I forgot to say*

**Write this down**

*You can find a chisel, I can find a stone*

*Folks will be reading these words*

*Long after we're gone*

God was saying much the same to Habakkuk after the prophet has called into question the judgement Judah would experience from an evil invader. Having prayed, the prophet expected an answer and looked for it. When it came, there would be no mistaking it. You seem until we see eye to eye, we must live by simple faith in God. God even tells him that . . . *the righteous shall live by his faith.* (v. 4b)

So Habakkuk is instructed by God to **WRITE THIS DOWN!** Etch it in stone. You will see powerful things, because what I say – will happen! And we're the folks reading this the better part of 3,000 years later. We are indeed reading these words long after Habakkuk was gone. So let's look at these words and learn.

Borrowing a computer term, where the term rebooting refers to the restarting of a computer or similar device when it is not functioning well or at all, we've been talking about how God reboots his people when we're not functioning properly.

This is our third talk from the prophet Habakkuk and we will see how his rebooting gets underway when he quits talking, stops making assumptions that he knows what God is thinking and/or should be doing, and actually listens to what God was saying. And God is saying *If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.* (v. 3b). You just watch, things will happen. Rest assured . . .

**Evil does not go unpunished**

- Evil is self-destructive. Man chooses to sin, and sin brings evil. Judah had chosen that path, and they would experience judgment. The oppressor, in this case the Chaldeans, but it's true of every oppressor, is puffed up – they are anything but upright, and they too, will surely be judged. They will not escape. They are merely tools in the hands of Almighty God.
- In verse 5 God says that *wine is a traitor*, which literally means wine is a treacherous dealer. He may be referring to the drunkenness of the oppressors, the Chaldeans, and how strong drink contributes to the breaking down of one's character and ability and judgment. But it can also refer to the fact that arrogance is never satisfied. So, like a drunk who cannot get enough wine, the arrogant oppressor will never be satisfied and it will be his end. It is also a comparison of the drunk's addiction to wine and the Chaldeans addiction to conquest. The drunk can never drink enough wine because his desire for drink is unquenchable. Likewise, the Chaldeans can never conquer enough land; their desire for power and possessions is unappeasable. And it will certainly be their downfall. You just watch.
- In the meantime, what about the righteous person? Why should he suffer? God did not say why. Instead, he said that the righteous sufferer would live by faith. The spiritually corrupt will die and the spiritually righteous will live. God was killing two birds with one stone. Judah would be punished – that was certain, but what was equally certain was the Chaldeans would get what was coming to them as well.
- The only lasting element in an unstable, wicked world is character. Tyranny, greed, and pride are all doomed and only integrity prevails. Faith = moral steadfastness. The upright man will survive by his integrity.

- The word here, translated as “faith”, is more accurately rendered, “faithfulness”. And what Habakkuk needs to etch into stone is that the people of God need to remain faithful even if it seems as if the world around them is collapsing.
- As God does his thing, learn from . . .

### Some Taunting Woes

- First of all – they aren’t just for the arrogant Chaldeans or the wayward people of Judah, they are for any oppressor or sinner.
- *Woe to the one who heaps up what is not his own* (v. 6b)
  - It will end – it cannot last forever
  - The aggressor will find that those he persecutes will not take it anymore. They will turn back on him with aggression of their own. Aggressors will reap what they sow and the destroyers will be destroyed. It’s not a matter of if – it’s a matter of when.
- *Woe to the one who gets evil gain for his house* (v. 9a)
  - That is, the one who gains wealth from exploitation and extortion, and worse – from violence. They might think they’re safe on their high perch, but they’re not. Violence begets violence – in Jesus’s words . . . *all who take the sword will perish by the sword*. Matthew 26:52.
  - One of the evils practiced in Judah was the practice of ill-gotten gain (like using weighted scales, usury and other corrupt business practices) and now they were receiving judgment. But the very ones who were tools of that judgment, the Chaldeans, were doing the same.
  - So God promises that even the stolen stones will cry out from the walls of their ill-gotten houses. An economy built on injustice will not succeed.
  - This is a warning for us today. Predatory lending or preying on the misfortune of others is wrong no matter how evil it is. Any industry built on pain or violence will face terrible judgment. Evil does not fly under the radar from the one who sees everything.
- *Woe to the one who builds a town with blood* (v. 12a)
  - This is similar to the previous woe – but takes it a step further. Cruelty and violence beget cruelty and violence. Pablo Escobar was a Columbian drug lord who amassed a fortune that would be the equivalent of \$65 billion in today’s dollars by dealing in cocaine and by living a life of incredible violence and cruelty. He lived like a king in the jungles of Columbia in a palatial home complete with his own zoo. The problem with this kind of life, besides its inherent evil, is that there is no freedom – he was always looking over his shoulder. He could trust no one. The governments of any number of countries had a price on his head. His fortune was huge, but there was no satisfaction in it. In 1993 his life of violence was snuffed out as he died in a hail of bullets on a rooftop in Medellin, Columbia having been hunted down like scared rabbit. What a terrible end to a horribly misspent life.
  - What was true for the Chaldeans is still true, God will not permit evil indefinitely. If you found your city or business on evil, it will fall. History is filled with examples of the failure of evil empires. God will not stand for it for long. The promise is clear . . . *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*. Habakkuk 2:14.
  - In the meantime, let’s be faithful.
- *Woe to the one who makes his neighbors drink* (v 15)
  - This is sheer inhumanity to humankind and the animal kingdom and the pillaging of the earth. Let me unpack it.
  - First of all, the shame you bring those you oppress will come back on you. The word picture in verse 15 is the idea of getting someone drunk in order to take advantage of them. The words of the taunt indicate that the cup of wine with return as a cup of wrath from God. As we just saw, God will not allow evil to continue. To the oppressor God is saying, the shame you bring will become your shame.
  - Another part of this woe is the strong message that God cares for his creation. Yes – he created the earth and all that is in it, and the wanton and arrogant destruction of it for financial gain or by a

conquering army will face certain judgment. Yep – God is an environmentalist. The Chaldeans had swept through the forests of Lebanon and left a path of destruction to the land and the wildlife (verse 17 refers to them as beasts). Judgment will be sure *for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.* (v 17b). When God told the man and woman he had created in his own image to, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*” Genesis 1:28, he was not telling them to abuse his creation, he was **commanding** them to care for it. Humanity is the steward of creation. We forfeit our position of dominion when we abuse it for our own glory and there will be retribution for it.

- And the final woe . . .
- *What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it?* (v. 18a) *Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise!* (v. 19a)
  - Both Judah and the Chaldeans were guilty of idolatry and both would be judged harshly for it. Earlier I referred to these woes as taunts. But this one in particular has a taunting tone to it and for good reason. After all, how can we think that something of our own creation be our savior? You make it and then bow down to it? How crazy is that?!
  - We can write this off as not pertaining to 21<sup>st</sup> century people who have the world by the tail. We don’t make idols like the Israelites and the Babylonians, right? Yep we do. Just think of the idols we construct. We worship government. We worship celebrity. We worship money. We worship jobs. We worship science. We worship medicine. We worship technology. We worship relationships. And the list goes on and on and on. All these things are our own creation and let me tell you – actually, let the words of God in his interchange with Habakkuk tell you – **THESE WILL NOT DELIVER YOU!** Verse 18 refers to an idol as *a teacher of lies*. Any idol, that is, anything we put in the place of God is a lie in itself.
  - Faith in lifeless gods whether they are wooden carvings or any of my list you just heard, is the height of worthlessness and the biggest waste of time. Know why? They have eternal ramifications.
  - Here is the point: Humanity cannot trust in its own creation – we must trust in the Creator only. We are lost otherwise.
  - What idol are you trusting? What is taking God’s place in your life?

**Conclusion:** God is in control. His plan is perfect. Evil will not prevail. Righteousness will win. The conqueror will be conquered. The enemy of holiness will be vanquished.

God’s concluding words to his response to Habakkuk’s complaint about how he’s doing things is what it is to any who question him: *The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.* Habakkuk 2:20.

That’s all we need to know. Write this down! Amen.