

May 10th, 2020

# Two Ways to Live and Die

Habakkuk 2:4-20

Last time we were together, Habakkuk took his stand in his watchtower and resolved to be wait on the LORD. He couldn't understand why God would use the wicked Babylonians against His own people. Habbakuk came to the end of his own wisdom. He taught us a vital lesson—*how* to wait on the LORD. This morning the LORD gives his full answer to Habakkuk.

## Two ways to live and die

Let's begin with the big picture first. Remember that the LORD called this a vision (v.2-3). It is not a vision *merely* of Babylon's demise. The OT is *not* a collection of irrelevant stories. **Romans 15:4** says "...whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction." Habakkuk was written to give us in the modern world instruction. It's true that God is directing this vision at the Babylonians, but it contains a universal principle that all applies to all humanity. The LORD is showing us there are only two ways to live and die: a life of unbelief which leads to woe *or* a life of faith which leads to life. Your life is either based on faith or it is not.<sup>1</sup> This is *the* watershed that divides all of humanity.

## A watershed moment

The late Francis Schaeffer helps us to understand what a watershed is:

"...in Switzerland [there] is a high ridge of rock with a valley on both sides. One time I was there when there was snow on the ground along that ridge. The snow was lying there unbroken, a seeming unity. However, that unity was an illusion, for it lay along a great divide; it lay along a watershed. One

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<sup>1</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *From Fear to Faith: Rejoicing in the Lord in Turbulent Times*, (Nottingham, England,; IVP, 1997), pg. 48

portion of the snow when it melted would flow into one valley. The snow which lay close beside would flow into another valley when it melted. Now it just so happens on that particular ridge that the melting snow which flows down one side of that ridge...and then down into the Rhine River...the water ends up in the cold waters of the North Sea. The water from the snow...on the other side of the ridge...drops off sharply down the ridge into the Rhone Valley. This water flows into...Lake Geneva — and then...into the Rhone River...and [finally] into the warm waters of the Mediterranean. The snow [on the ridge] lies along that watershed, unbroken, as a seeming unity. But when it melts, where it ends in its destinations is literally a thousand miles apart. That is a watershed. That is what a watershed is. A watershed divides. A clear line can be drawn between what seems at first to be the same or at least very close, but in reality ends in very different situations.”<sup>2</sup>

Humanity is like the snow on the top of that ridge. We look the same on the outside. We are warmed by the same sun; the same storms afflict us. But the only question that matters is this: what side of the line are you on? Do you belong to that snow whose destiny is the cold waters of the North Sea or the warm waters of the Mediterranean? There’s no escaping this question. The LORD gives us a picture of only two ways to live and die: unbelief that leads to woe and sorrow and ruin *or* faith that leads to everlasting life.

### *The Big Idea...*

There are only two ways to live: unbelief that leads to death *or* faith that leads to life

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.bible-researcher.com/schaeffer1.html> Accessed May 9, 2020

- ☆The Life and Death of Unbelief
- ☆The Unending Life of Faith
- ☆The Death That Gives Us Life

## I. The Life and Death of Unbelief

There are three elements of unbelief that the LORD makes plain here: **1)** The deadly disease of unbelief; **2)** The dark description of unbelief; and **3)** The dreadful damnation of unbelief.

### 1. The deadly disease of unbelief

Please look with me at v.4 “Behold<sup>3</sup>, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him.” Notice the problem of unbelief is rooted in the soul. This is not a problem rooted in skin color or geography or economic class—it is a problem that is found in the inner most part of a person—his soul. The LORD describes his soul as being *puffed up*. It means that he has become swollen, or irregular. He has an engorged soul, he has an inordinate conceit of his own excellence. When the author of Hebrews cites this verse in **Hebrews 10:38**, he describes this soul as the one who “shrinks back.” That is he withdraws himself. Withdraws himself from what? From the Living God. Who did the Babylonians worship? Themselves. Look at the end of **1:11**. “[they are] guilty men, whose own might is their god!”

But this is not just true of the Babylonians, it is true of everyone who doesn’t believe God’s Word. Unbelief doesn’t mean that you don’t believe in any god at all. No. It just means that you don’t believe in the true God. Everyone believes in some god, some expert, some type of worldly wisdom, some type of worldly strength that they think will deliver them. It is impossible *not* to live for something. It is impossible not to stake your life on something. Unbelief is

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<sup>3</sup> “Behold! The term introduces the substance of the vision itself.” O. Palmer Robertson, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), pg. 174

puffed up, because it puts its confidence *ultimately* in what this world offers. Pharaoh was *puffed up* and thought that his army and his wealth and his power could withstand the God who said “Let my people go.” King Sennacherib was *puffed up* when he told Hezekiah “no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand...how much less will your God deliver you out of my hand!” (2 Chronicles 32:15). You see being *puffed up* is self-exaltation. It means that you think you have the resources in yourself, or that you can secure the resources needed in order to deliver yourself.

That’s why v.4 continues by saying “it is not *upright* within him.” His soul is not upright, meaning that *it is not righteous*. Unbelief can never be righteous, precisely because it cuts off “the possibility of finding a righteousness outside of himself.”<sup>4</sup> The unbeliever has defined himself as the standard. There’s nothing he needs outside of himself. Instead of trusting in the LORD with all his heart, he leans on his own understanding.<sup>5</sup> That is the deadly disease of unbelief.

## 2. The dark description of unbelief

Please look at v.5 “Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest.” Here the LORD really focuses on Babylon itself. He compares it to a drunkard. What is the comparison? A drunkard is never satisfied with one drink, he needs more.<sup>6</sup> This is problem with unbelief—no matter what they attain in this life, they are never satisfied with what they have. That’s what the whole book of Ecclesiastes is about—the person without God—his eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor his ear with hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8).

Secondly, He compares Babylon to the grave. He says “His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough.” What is the comparison? No

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, pg. 175

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 3:5

<sup>6</sup> “The ‘handwriting on the wall’ for the Babylonian kingdom, it may be remembered, came in the midst of Belshazzar’s feast. The book of Daniel pointedly notes that while the king was drinking his wine, he sent for the gold and silver goblets which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jerusalem. As he, his nobles, wives, and concubines drank and praised their gods of gold and silver, the hand appeared, writing a sentence of doom on the wall (Daniel 5:1ff). In the midst of their prideful celebration, the divine decree of destruction was revealed.” Robertson, pg. 184

matter how many graves are filled, more graves must be dug. Death is always greedy and thirsty for more death.

Finally, God applies it directly to Babylon's case in the final part of the verse: "He gathers *for himself* all nations and collects as *his own* all peoples." Babylon pretended to be an owner. She pretended that the nations were at her disposal, that they existed for her. This poison runs through all unbelief. Unbelief says "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul."<sup>7</sup> Unbelief uses people and things as if they belonged to him. This is blasphemy at its purest form, because it is taking the place of God. Only God has this prerogative. **Psalm 24:1** says "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and [all] those who dwell therein." **Psalm 100:3** "Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his..."<sup>8</sup> Anyone who lives for themselves, for their own kingdom is at war with God. This is why unbelief is evil *mainly*. Unbelief has committed the worse crimes in history. The atheistic regime of Stalin murdered over 42 million; Mao Zedong over 37 million, Hitler 21 million.<sup>9</sup> However this is only the fruit. The root sin is putting yourself in the place of God. This is the dark description of unbelief. Now Habakkuk understood this about the Babylonians. This is why he was perplexed. Why would God use this nation as an instrument against His own people? And now God shows Habakkuk their end.

### 3. The dreadful damnation of unbelief

The sentence carried out against unbelief is *very public*. Look at the first part of v.6 "Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him..." All the nations that Babylon tormented will *publicly* taunt her

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<sup>7</sup> Invictus by William Ernest Henley, Source: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51642/invictus> Accessed May 9, 2020

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 4:39 "...know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other."

<sup>9</sup> Source: R.J. Rummel, "Death by Government"

at her fall.<sup>10</sup> And this taunting comes in the form of *five woes* in v.6, v.9, v.12, v.15, and v.19. Each section begins with the phrase “*Woe to him.*” Here it is used as the worst possible curse that can be uttered. It means grief, sorrow, misery, ruin, doom. ‘Ruin to him, misery to him, unending grief to him, doom to him.’ Allow me to quickly summarize at these five woes.

**Woe #1:** (v.6-8)

‘Woe to the plunderer *for* he will himself be plundered.’

**Woe #2:** (v.9-11)

‘Woe to the destroyer of houses *for* he will have his own house destroyed.’

**Woe #3:** (v.12-14)

‘Woe to the builder of worldly kingdoms *for* he will be buried by God’s kingdom.’

**Woe #4:** (v.15-17)

‘Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink wrath, *for* he will drink the cup of God’s wrath.’

**Woe #5:** (v.18-20)

‘Woe to the worshiper of silent idols, *for* he will himself be put to silence.’

What is the truth underlying these five woes? That all unbelief will be punished most certainly and most dreadfully. This isn’t merely about the Babylonians, it is a universal principle that governs all humanity. God is the judge of every nation under the sun, and a Day is coming when He will open the books and pronounce judgment on all unbelief. **Revelation 20** says “Then I saw a great

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<sup>10</sup> **Isaiah 14:4-11** gives another picture of this taunting. A sampling: “...you will take up this taunt against...Babylon “How the oppressor has ceased...the LORD has broken the staff of the wicked....Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come...maggots are laid as a bed beneath you, and worms are your covers.”

white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done...and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

### **The terror of that day**

Can you imagine that day with me for a moment? How terrifying will that last day will be? Can you see the men and women having the sentence passed on them? Can you hear the weeping and gnashing of teeth? Ponder the endless grief and doom that await them. There is nothing that fills the soul with more terror than the final and irrevocable judgment of God. The LORD certainly wants us to ponder this fate. These are His Words: "Woe to him...woe to him." This is the Day when He will no longer show pity. In this age, God the Holy Spirit labors with unbelief. **John 16:8** says that he convicts "the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." In this age, the Son of God tenderly invites men and women and children "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."<sup>11</sup> But on that day, all invitations stop. All pity comes to an end. The great watershed event of all human history will begin, and there will only be two words every human being will hear: We will either hear "Enter into the joy of your master" or "Depart from me I never knew you."

### **Experimental unbelief**

Now perhaps you are listening this morning, and you are still in unbelief, but you are comforting yourself by saying "I don't believe, but I'm not like those murdering, raping Babylonians, so I'll be ok no matter how this plays out." Here's my answer to that. *Merely* being moral is not safe. God gave 5 woes to these immoral Babylonians. But Jesus gave 7 woes to the 'moral' scribes and

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 11:28

Pharisees in Matthew 23. It's true that the moral Pharisees didn't look anything like the immoral Babylonians on the surface. But the truth is, they were non-identical twins *because* they both shared the same root sin: unbelief. They both lived life on their own terms, according to their own wisdom. Here's the question I have for you dear unbelieving friend: "What is the controlling principle of your life?"<sup>12</sup> What are you trusting in? What are you betting your life on? If it is anything other than the Word of God, it doesn't matter how *moral* you are. Morality will not save you. A woe is declared against all who reject the LORD. Just as God has set limits for the Babylonians and they were destroyed, so He has set a limit for your life when He will say "enough." Oh don't wait for that Day, for it will be too late. There is a way for your soul to find life. And now the LORD will show us what that way is.

## II. The Unending Life of Faith

### **The heart of the Christian Gospel**

The LORD says in v.4 "...but the righteous shall *live* by his faith." This is the heart of the Christian gospel. It is the most concise statement of the entire Bible, and the most significant message for all of humanity today. What did we just see? That God will not only bring Babylon under his judgment, but all nations and peoples under His judgment. It will be the most terrible of days "... *but* the righteous *shall live* by his faith." They will never die. Come plague, come pestilence, come war, come holocaust, they will survive the end of all things. So it's *vital* that we understand exactly what the LORD is saying here.

### **But how is a person made righteous?**

The phrase "...but the righteous shall live by his faith" is a little awkward to me, because of the way it is constructed. It doesn't tell us *how* a person is made righteous, rather it states that a righteous person shall live-by-faith. Do

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<sup>12</sup> Lloyd-Jones, pg. 51

you feel the awkwardness? It explains how the righteous receive this gift of living—namely through faith—*but* it doesn't explicitly say how a person is made righteous to begin with. So it has to be asked "How is a person made righteous?"

### **Ethical righteousness**

But first we have to know what type of *righteousness* He means. Because there is an *ethical* type of righteousness, that is a righteousness *that we do*. Jesus said in **Matthew 6:1** "Beware of *practicing your righteousness* before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven." Jesus is speaking talking about a performance of certain moral actions—feeding the poor, rescuing the orphan, etc. This is ethical righteousness.

### **Judicial righteousness**

But there is also a judicial type of righteousness. Judicial righteousness is a sentence that is passed, a declaration of righteousness that is imputed. It is a legal righteousness. Please turn with me to **Isaiah 5:20**. Like Habakkuk 2, God is here declaring woes against the wicked. He says "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil..." These wicked people are not actually making evil actions *ethically* good, rather they are declaring them good. Look at v.23, He pronounces a *woe* against those "...who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right!" Again the wicked here are not making the guilty *ethically righteous*, rather they are declaring them righteous *judicially*. Conversely, these wicked judges are *declaring* the innocent to be in the wrong. They are not affecting the actual personal purity of either party, rather they are passing a legal

decision.<sup>13</sup> So then the question is: what does the LORD have in mind in Habakkuk 2:4? Ethical or judicial righteousness? Let's turn back to our text.

### Two clues that this is judicial righteousness

There are two clues that the LORD is speaking about judicial righteousness here. The **first clue** is the logic of the phrase *itself*. It says "but the righteous *shall live by his faith*." How will the righteous continue to live? Only by faith alone. Ask yourself, which is the bigger part: righteousness or life itself? Life itself. Therefore if God gives the bigger part, namely life-through-faith, then He also gives the smaller part namely, *righteousness itself* through the same faith.<sup>14</sup> If I inherit \$1,000 dollars as a gift, I would have no grounds to take \$100 out of that gift and say I earned it by my performance. Therefore this can't be ethical righteousness, it must be a judicial righteousness.

The **second clue** that God is talking about judicial righteousness is found in the very words He used. If it was an ethical righteousness that God had in mind, He could have easily rendered v.4 to say 'But the righteous shall live *by* his own righteousness, or by his good deeds.' Now if you are reading out of an NIV or an NLT, it will say something like "...but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness." That is a bad translation of this verse. It's not that the Hebrew word can't mean faithfulness, it can.<sup>15</sup> But it would contradict the LORD's description about the man who is puffed up. He is not puffed up precisely because he's trusting in himself, in what he can do (cf. 1:11). That's why he is not upright.

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<sup>13</sup> "The same situation is evident in the judicial framework of interchanges between God and Job. The patriarchal figure has set in order his cause and is confident that he will be declared righteous (Job 13:18). Ultimately the Lord responds to Job's insistence that a divine judicial decision be rendered to uphold his cause: "Will you disannul my judgment? Will you declare me wicked so that you can be declared righteous?" (Job 40:8) Job is not represented as attempting to pollute God's personal morality. The entire framework for the interchange centers on the contrasting judicial standing." Robertson, pg. 176

<sup>14</sup> As O. Palmer Robertson says here: "If continuing life is a gift received by faith, then the righteousness that is the basis of life must [also be by faith]." *ibid*, pg. 178

<sup>15</sup> The context must determine the meaning of the word! See Robertson pg. 180 and fn. 8

## Abraham's righteousness

Therefore this righteousness is the same judicial righteousness that Abraham received by faith. **Genesis 15:6** "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." Abraham believed God, and on that basis, God judicially declared Him to be righteous, apart from works, apart from anything he did.

## The book of Romans

This one phrase in **Habakkuk 2:4** is the entire foundation of the book of Romans. It is the foundation upon which Paul lays the house of our salvation. He says in **Romans 1:16-17** "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, *as it is written*, "The righteous shall live by faith."<sup>16</sup>

## Martin Luther

It was this one verse that set Martin Luther's soul free and started the whole Protestant Reformation. Luther wrote this "Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the [righteousness] of God and the statement that "the [righteous] shall live by his faith." Then I grasped that the [righteousness] of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise."<sup>17</sup>

## Faith destines us for paradise

Loved ones, this is what the LORD is promising in this verse: paradise. Life *itself*. Not *merely* biological life. When Habakkuk heard these words, he

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<sup>16</sup> Paul takes 8 chapters to explain this one phrase. In chapters 1-5 he shows that the gift of our justification comes through faith, and then in chapters 6-8 he shows that the gift of our sanctification also comes through faith. Robertson, pg. 182

<sup>17</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*, (New York, NY.,: Penguin Books, 1955), pg. 49-50

didn't think God meant that his *biological life* would never come to an end. The Babylonians were coming. If he didn't die from them, he knew death was coming. "It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment" (**Hebrews 9:27**). No. Habakkuk knew that though his biological life would come to an end, he already possessed everlasting life. He knew *even though* the world was collapsing around him, *even though* the Babylonians were bringing death and destruction, that he was destined for paradise. Why? Because the righteous *shall live* by faith.

### **The dividing line between life and death**

This is the watershed: the dividing line between everlasting life and everlasting ruin is faith. "He who believes...has everlasting life; and he who does not believe...shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."<sup>18</sup> *Though* the Babylonians—and all who reject God—may enjoy this life; *though* they may feel like they are on top of the world; *though* they may feel like all is well; *though* they may feel out of the reach of danger; when their soul is required of them—it will be all woe, all ruin.

On the other hand, for all you who believe, regardless of how much pain you have endured in this life; regardless of what you have suffered; regardless of any chastisement you may have received from the Lord; when you close your eyes for the last time, you will wake up in the paradise of God. You will live! Then you will *truly* live. And the life you lived here will feel like a dark shadow compared to the life that brightness of glory in God's presence. You will feel like they have never really lived at all. This life will seem like a gloomy mist, like a bad dream compared to the true life God has prepared for those who believe. "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forever more" (**Psalms 16:11**). We will see his face, and his name will be on our foreheads. Night will be no more. We will need no light of lamp or sun, for the LORD God will be our light, and we will reign forever and ever.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John 3:36 KJV Note: I only left off "in the Son" here in order to emphasize it in the next point.

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 22:4-5

## Faith gives us eyes to see the Invisible World

Do you see beloved? Do you see how vital faith is? It is the most important thing. Compared to it, there is nothing else.<sup>20</sup> The reason *why* the righteous shall live *by faith*—is not only because through faith we have been declared righteous with God—but also because through faith we have assurance of Another World. **Hebrews 11:1** says “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” What did Habakkuk need when his visible world was collapsing? What will you need when you are on your death bed? What will you need when some great tragedy strikes? What will you need when a child dies? You will need to see Invisible World. You will need to be assured of things hoped for, you will need to be convicted of things not seen. That’s what faith does. It is *through faith* that you can remember that you have peace with God (**Romans 5:1**), when all around you there is no peace. It is *through faith* that you can know that though you lose everything on that last day, you have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us (**1 Peter 1:4-5**). It is *through faith* that you can know that even though your outward man perishes, that you have already passed from death to life. That’s our **second point**: the unending life of faith.

## III. The Death That Gives Us Life

### The way our culture thinks about belief

If you have noticed, I have avoided so far speaking about *the object* of our faith. What is it we are to have faith *in*? The text doesn’t explicitly say, does it? It just says “the righteous shall live by *his faith*.” Certainly it’s nonsense to suppose that we can just have faith without something, some object, some Person to actually believe in. But this is often often hear in the world today. If you remember that popular children’s film, The Lego Movie, there was a poster in it with a cat flying in mid air with the word “Believe” above it. It became the

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<sup>20</sup> 1 John 5:4 “...this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

whole premise of the movie. Just believing became akin to using the force in Star Wars. But there was no object of this belief. It's a reflection of how our culture thinks about belief. It doesn't matter what you believe, it only matters that you believe.

Or consider the religion of Islam. Islam requires belief in order to become a Muslim. You must believe that Allah is one true god and Muhammed is his prophet. Now of course they would say you must follow the Koran, but that is essentially what you must believe to become Muslim.

### **God must punish sin**

Here's the issue. Belief *by itself*—like our culture so highly esteems—or belief merely in a god—like Islam embraces—doesn't solve our greatest problem. You and I are sinners. And God can't declare us righteous simply *because* we believe. **Proverbs 17:15** says "He who justifies the wicked...[is] an abomination to the LORD." This is the strongest argument for why Allah is a false god. Allah allows sinners to come into heaven without a punishment for sin. He justifies the wicked. If the LORD were to do that, He would be no better than the Babylonians. He must punish sin.

### **Why Habakkuk ultimately wrote**

Now this is why Habakkuk and the rest of the prophets *ultimately* wrote: to solve this problem. **1 Peter 1:10-11** says "Concerning this salvation, *the prophets* who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ..."

In other words, within Habakkuk's own writings, no matter how shadowy it might appear, are a prediction about the suffering of Christ. Where?

### **The cup that Christ drank**

Please look with me at **v.16**. This is the 4th woe that God pronounces over the Babylonians. He says this "You will have your fill of shame instead of

glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you." Do you remember what our LORD Jesus Christ prayed when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane? **Matthew 26:39** "My Father, if it be possible, *let this cup* pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will...[v.42] My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." Beloved, Habakkuk 2 is not only describing the woes of the Babylonians, and the woes of unbelief, this chapter is predicting the woes of Jesus Christ.

Someone must bear your sin. Someone must bear mine. Natural born we are no better than the Babylonians, or the wicked Jews of their time. Neither was Habakkuk. We can only be pardoned if Someone takes our place. That Someone is the Lamb of God, slain for sinners. He had His fill of shame, instead of glory. He took that cup of God's wrath towards sin and drank it down to the dregs.

### **The object of our belief: Jesus Christ slain for sinners**

Dear congregation, that is *the object* of our belief. Saving belief is not a general confidence in God or mere assent to divine revelation. The Pharisees had that. Jesus told them "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me"<sup>21</sup> No saving faith says this "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."<sup>22</sup> This is the apostolic message.

**John 3:36** "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."

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<sup>21</sup> John 5:39

<sup>22</sup> Galatians 2:20

**1 John 4:15** “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”

**Acts 16:31** “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,”

### What does it mean to believe?

What does it mean to savingly believe in Jesus? It means to ‘come to Him; to look to Him; to less to Him as a refuge; to lay hold on Him as a helper; to confide in Him as the propitiation for your sins; to commit yourself to Him as your High Priest’<sup>23</sup> Saving faith is simply resting and receiving as He offers Himself to you in the gospel. **John 1:12** “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Beloved, you cannot conceive of better news than this. That Christ, God’s own Son and God Himself, loved you, and gave Himself up for you. Your sin is gone. By His stripes You have been healed. By His death you have been given life. What more do you need?

Take the world, but give me Jesus,  
All its joys are but a name;  
But His love abideth ever,  
Through eternal years the same

Take the world, but give me Jesus,  
Sweetest comfort of my soul;  
With my Savior watching over me,  
I can sing though billows roll

Take the world, but give me Jesus,  
Let me view His constant smile;

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<sup>23</sup> Paraphrased from Charles Hodge from his message “Faith in Christ the Source of Life”, *Princeton and the Christian Ministry Vol. 2*, Selected by James M. Garretson, (Carlisle, PA.,: Banner of Truth Trust, 2012), pg. 277

Then throughout this life's long journey  
He will lead me all the while

Take the world, but give me Jesus.  
In His cross my trust shall be,  
Till, with clearer, brighter vision,  
Face to face my Lord I see!<sup>24</sup>

## Application

### 1. What kind of a world do we live in?

The headlines that are daily bombarding us are frightening. Here are a few: “Record 20.5M jobs lost in April, unemployment soars to 14.7% as lockdowns crunch economy;” “What if you can’t get food? - 6th generation farmer warns about coming fallout from economic lockdowns;” - “National debt passes \$25 trillion less than a month after hitting \$24 trillion.”<sup>25</sup> Of course these are just headlines of the West. Go to Nigeria or China and the headlines will involve the regular persecution, imprisonment, and murder of Christians. We live in a frightening world. But Habakkuk’s world was no less frightening. We must not think that our problems are new or novel. “We are experiencing only what God’s people have experienced many a time before.”<sup>26</sup> But the message of Habakkuk is this: God is orchestrating all of history. These events have a direct bearing on the Kingdom of God. What He said regarding the Babylonians is still invincibly true this morning. “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (v.14). God will have complete victory. At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, in heaven and

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<sup>24</sup> Source: <https://sovereigngracemusic.bandcamp.com/track/give-me-jesus> Accessed May 10, 2020

<sup>25</sup> All from [disrn.com](http://disrn.com)

<sup>26</sup> Jones, pg. 46

earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father. That's the world we live in. A world with only one ultimate destiny.

## 2. What kind of a church should we want?

We should want the kind of church that trusts God to be God. The last verse of this chapter very much applies to us. “But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” What does this mean? Well I would suggest it means that we have no reason to question God regarding His ways with man, or His goodness, or holiness or love. We must simply put our hands over our mouth realizing that He is in the temple over all the universe, and He will always do what is right.

Dear congregation, why would unbelievers ask us for the reason for the hope that is within us<sup>27</sup> if we are shaken by the same things they are shaken by? Don't hear me wrong here. I don't mean that a true believer is never afraid, or that a true believer never have doubts. Of course we do. We are just like Paul—doing the things we don't want to do, and failing to do the things we want. But the difference between a Christian and everyone else, is that when we cry out “O wretched man that I am! Will will deliver me?” We have a Savior who put on flesh, who died, who was buried and who rose *for us*. We literally have nothing to fear. The world cannot say that. That's the fundamental difference. That is the watershed, the dividing line between belief and unbelief. Loved ones, if that confidence in the world to come overtakes you, it is a powerful witness. Can you say “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:6)

## 3. What kind of Savior do we have?<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 1 Peter 3:15

<sup>28</sup> These three questions are from Christopher Ash, *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross, Preaching the Word Series*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2014), pg. 17-23

Augustus Toplady, the author of the hymn Rock of Ages also wrote “From Whence This Fear and Unbelief?” it’s been updated for today’s language and it’s now called “Now Why This Fear?” The first verse says this:

Now why this fear and unbelief?  
 Has not the Father put to grief  
 His spotless Son for us?  
 And will the righteous Judge of men  
 Condemn me for that debt of sin  
 Now canceled at the cross?

Toplady understood that the secret to driving out fear was to understand what Christ accomplished on Calvary. One of the verses that we no longer sing is so powerful. He says this

If thou hast my discharge procured,  
 And freely in my room endured  
 The whole of wrath divine;  
 Payment God cannot twice demand,  
 First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,  
 And then again at mine.<sup>29</sup>

Did you hear it? God cannot demand a double payment for sin. If Jesus—our Surety—has already discharged the whole wrath of Divine wrath towards sin—there is nothing left *for us*. That’s the kind of Savior we have, one who drank the cup in the LORD’s right hand. And now He *only* has the right hand of fellowship for us, the right hand of friendship and covenant love and unending mercies. And no matter what we face in the days to come, that can never be undone.

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<sup>29</sup> Source: <http://redeemerfc.org/2015/02/25/payment-god-cannot-twice-demand/> Accessed May 10, 2020

