

Kings and Prophets 16-01-14

This is Thursday, the 14th of January, 2016. We continue our study of Kings and Prophets. We're looking at the book of Habakkuk.

As you may remember, Habakkuk and Nahum and Zephaniah were all contemporaries toward the closing years of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And Nahum, of course, concentrates primarily on the destruction of Nineveh. Zephaniah has a similar message from a different point of view.

And so we're, we just sort of arbitrarily have taken Habakkuk to begin with because it is so pertinent to our situation and the state of our country and our place in it as we find it in the current headlines and so on. Let's go to the Lord in prayer and we'll pick up our study in Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 5. Father, we're grateful for your provision for us, your watch care over us, your blessings upon us, and your presence in our midst. We thank you for the opportunity to spend this time together in fellowship and in the study of your word.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will superintend both the delivery and the reception of the material that we look at tonight from this wonderful book. We pray that it will be an encouragement and a blessing, a source of challenge and a source of strength to each one of us in the days ahead. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. The theme verse for this book, if you think back sometime in the future and say, what was that Habakkuk all about? Two things to remember, two things that are pretty easy to remember, I think, are first of all, what Habakkuk's name means, which is embrace, a hug. It's comfort, solace, and encouragement from our Father in heaven in difficult times when we have questions about the seeming delay of justice and of judgment and of vindication and of salvation.

God gives us a hug. Secondly, the theme verse of this book would, by almost any account, be chapter two, verse four, which is, and the latter half of that verse, the just shall live by his faith. There are three quotations of that verse in the New Testament.

So it is an important thematic element, and it does sort of summarize and distill the essence of this message. We're getting details. We saw the details in chapter one.

We are seeing them in chapter two, and we will see a praise song in chapter three. But all of it revolves around this idea that if you are faithful and if you are seeking and pursuing and valuing righteousness, you have nothing to fear. God is in his heaven, his faithfulness, his faith toward the faithful.

There is faith on each end. There's God's faithfulness in heaven. There's our faithfulness down here.

That is the rock on which we stand. The focus and object of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ. His work is untouchable in its perfection, in its completeness, in its fullness, in its acceptability to the father.

When you talk about atonement and you talk about being accepted, you go all the way back to Cain. If you do well, will you not be accepted? Well, the doing well has been fulfilled and consummated in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are in him and he is in us. So.

As the hymn says, be not dismayed, what error be tied, God will take care of you. That could be a hymn to sing for almost any study of Habakkuk. And we rest in that promise.

We rest in that assurance. And when it is tested, when it is challenged, we have to make a choice. What is our reality? What is your reality? Is the word and promise of God real enough to calm us and give us peace when we have actual, near at hand, in some cases, physical opposition? There are real opponents.

There are real circumstances. There are real deficits. There can be real violence.

There can be real people directly and meaningfully opposed to us in our workplace, sometimes within our household and under our own roof. And when the challenge is there. We make a choice, don't we? Do I believe what I hear? Do I believe what I see? Do I believe the reports around me? Or do I believe what the word of God tells me? What is my reality? What defines me? Am I defined by my circumstances or am I defined by my faith? The just, the righteous one will live, will produce righteousness, will be fruitful in, by and through his faith.

We saw that equation of righteousness and life and bearing fruit as recently as this past Sunday. The just, that's tzedek, tzadik, the righteous, righteousness, that is life and that is fruitfulness. Is your life going to count? Any old body can fall apart.

Any old body can panic. God doesn't need believers claiming the name of Jesus Christ to becoming unglued and unraveling and throwing sweat grenades and, you know, stirring up all kinds of defugalties when the chips are down. What God in effect searches the earth to find is someone like you, someone who clings and sticks and perseveres by faith in the face of those things.

That's the narrow road. That's the straight gate. It is righteousness by faith.

The righteous, the just will live, will produce fruit. That's how it works. So it really sort of sums up the theme.

As I've mentioned, a way to look at Habakkuk and we're going to see in our next prophet study that this threefold structure is going to be mirrored very interestingly. If you flip back just one page and look at Nahum, how many chapters do we have in Habakkuk? Knock, knock, knock. Anybody home? How many chapters in Habakkuk? Three.

How many chapters in Nahum? Three. If you look at the structure, you can see a superscript there on Nahum chapter 3 where it says, in your New King James anyway, the woe of Nineveh. Flip the page back to chapter 2 here in Habakkuk and as we resume our study in chapter 2, we have in verse 6, woe to him.

We're going to have a total of five woes here. Verse 9, woe. Verse 12, woe.

Verse 15, woe. So our centerpiece here is sitting on the foundation of chapter 1 and chapter 3 is chapter 2 and it's a woe song. It's a pronouncement of woe and this is God's answer to Habakkuk's second question.

You remember there is a question that Habakkuk asks in chapter 1. Oh Lord, how long will I cry out in prayer about injustice and about the prospering of the wicked and not get an answer? God says, you sit still and watch. Be patient. The answer is coming.

Justice is coming. I'm raising up the cow of the ends, bitter and hasty nation. But, and here's the thing, this is the key to Habakkuk.

Pay close attention here because if you get this, the whole book falls open like one of these little puzzle boxes when you do the last slide and everything comes apart and you get all the goodies inside. There are two layers in Habakkuk. There is a nation layer and there is an individual layer.

There is a national message and there's an individual message. The individual message speaks to the people of Judah. There are wicked people in Judah who ought not to be wicked, but they are.

They ought not to be faithless and selfish and gluttonous and perverse and hedonistic and selfish and trampling on others, but they are above that and parallel to it. And in this book, woven together with both the problem and the solution is the national side. The Babylonians are proud and hedonistic and arrogant and power seekers willing to roll up what is weaker and easy prey to them to satisfy their own desires.

So God is going to interleave the answer to two questions. One is on a personal level, on an individual level. Oh Lord, there is injustice to us as individuals.

We're trying to be righteous. We're trying to be faithful and we're getting a bloody nose and we're getting short shrift and we are getting injustice in this life. God says the people that are doing that are going to be judged.

And the other side of that same idea is our nation has already been threatened and the northern half of our people have been taken out by the Assyrians. Now a new threat, the Babylonians are coming. What about our nation that is supposed to be righteous, but isn't just like the people within it are supposed to be righteous and aren't.

And God says, yes, I am going to judge the nation with these Chaldeans, but the Chaldeans, it's

it's a they are compared and they are linked to the selfish people in Judah. And it's an indictment. It is a it's an elegant put down of the people who have abandoned their covenant relationship with God in Judah to say, you're no different than the Babylonians.

You're all in a dither about the rise of the Neo Babylonian empire and about their impending. They've already taken a lot of other nations and they're heading your way and you're getting all nervous about that. You're just like them.

And so there's an irony when God says for the genuinely righteous, there is going to be preservation and there is going to be deliverance and there is going to be justice. The just will live by his faith. He will bear fruit.

He will be declared righteous in God's eyes, regardless of what happens circumstantially. He's got this get out of judgment free card because he's faithful and because he's pursuing righteousness. That would be the case for the nation.

If the nation was just and living by faith and being faithful, that same deliverance would be fulfilled in covenant promise to Judah. But Judah isn't like the just who lives by his faith. The people in Judah are largely like the Babylonians that God is going to use to judge the nation.

You're going to be judged by the very thing that you've chosen. It's Romans chapter two. What you have substituted when you see the glory of God, you exchange it for something else.

Although they knew him as God, remember Romans last half of one when they knew him as God, they did not glorify him as God. Neither were they thankful, but they became empty, vain, futile, fruitless in their imagination and their foolish, unfaithful heart is darkened and exchanging the glory of God for the glory of wood and stone and four footed beasts. They burned themselves up in lust toward one another and said, you remember the whole rest of that.

And then he says in chapter two of Romans, and you, oh man, as you point your crooked finger at these people who are idolatrous and perverse and godless and faithless, you've got three fingers pointing back at you because you are doing the very same thing. This is an old Testament version of Romans last half of one and chapter two. And God says, yes, the just will live by his faith.

The problem with you, oh nation of Judah, is you're not just and you're not faithful. And so when I promise that this scourge nation that's coming in is going to be judged by the very things that it has chosen, they are proud of their strength. They worship their nets.

They do all of these heinous things and they are going to be judged. Those of you who are faithful can take that as a comfort. Those of you that are not faithful can take it as a warning because what I'm going to do to the Babylonians, I'm going to do to you.

It's such an elegant way to couch the message in a very short form. So it faces us with a choice.

We either pursue righteousness by faith in which we live and partake of eternity or we slough it off.

We get involved, we get distracted, we get occupied with the things of this life and we end up being like the faithless in Judah and like the Babylonians. Doesn't matter if you're a victim or a perpetrator. Are you a victim in Judah or are you a perpetrator in Babylon? If you're faithless, your fate is the same.

You say, well, I'd rather be on the strong side. I'd rather be on the winning side. I'd rather be a Babylonian than a Judean about to be overrun.

Not if you're faithless because the same fate is going to happen to you both. There is no advantage, in other words, in getting ahead in the world if the world is going to be judged by God. What does it matter if you are successful, if you are victorious, if you overcome, if you take to yourself all kinds of booty and pleasure and selfish satisfaction and enjoyment, if you ultimately are going to be hammered into pulp by God's judgment? You might as well have been a poor Judean who is still going to get hammered into pulp by God's judgment because you're faithless.

So there's only one wise path, and that is to recognize God in His glory and to choose that and to pursue it and to enter into the rest and the promises of God. So with that as a background now, start in Habakkuk 2, beginning at verse 4. Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith. And I told you that the first half of this verse is a bit troubled.

The word that is translated proud there seems to be related to a verb that has to do with being puffy or puffed up. And they get the idea that pride puffs up, love builds up and that sort of thing. And so they've sort of interpreted this to be pride.

It's interesting to see what the Net Bible translates this verse as. The NET, the New English Translation that you can get online and so on. This is their rendition of verse 4. Look, that's the behold, the one whose desires are not upright.

That's the upright soul part. Look, the one whose desires are not upright will faint from exhaustion. That's how they translate this unattested verb, *afal*.

Remember we talked about pride goeth before, *afal*, A-P-H-A-L. Well, being puffed up or whatever, this has the idea of air escaping. This would be somebody panting with exhaustion in the view of this translation.

And what commends this, and you get this out of the note in the NET, is the parallelism to the last half of the verse. As you know, Hebrew is very parallel prone. And so you have the one whose desires are not upright.

That's in contrast to the person of integrity, the just, the righteous. So you have somebody who's not upright and someone who is. Someone who is pursuing selfish satisfaction and

gratification instead of righteousness.

And the living by faithfulness is contrasted with fainting from exhaustion. So it's a contrasting distich. And it kind of makes sense in that regard.

There are several, in Habakkuk, there are several otherwise unattested words. They're hapaks. They're virtually unknown.

Nobody can quite figure out what they mean. We're not going to concern ourselves with them. Because we don't really have the time.

But the person of integrity is definitely on the upside of this comparison. So that is verse four. And now you'll see in your New King James in verse five, it says, indeed, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man.

And this is a more established word for proud, pride and restlessness. He's restless. He doesn't stay at home.

And these things go together. If you are seeking this stimulation, you don't have peace. And because you don't have peace, you are looking for it elsewhere.

You're looking for it in substances and you're looking for it in experiences. So you got to leave home. You got to get out and about.

Got to see where's the party. Something's going on. I'm there's a neediness implied here to the person who thinks they've got the answers.

The pride here is a pride of self-determination rather than looking to God for purpose and meaning and definition. I'll make my own way. Well, what you discover is you can't abide your own company.

You can't really sit still. You've got to be plugged into something. You've got to be tuned into something.

You've got to be reading something or watching something or listening to something or out there. There's just a restlessness associated with. The pursuit of something to fill the void, there is, as we used to say, and I've said from time to time, there is a God shaped vacuum in our souls and because it's God shaped, only God can fill it.

And if God is not in that space, people will shovel everything, including the kitchen sink into it. Experience, relationship, stimulation, just a constant addiction to information flow. There it is in contrast to versus like you find in the Psalm, be still and know that I am God.

And, you know, if you can sit quietly in your own company for extended periods of time and enjoy your relationship with God, the father review in your mind, the multifaceted expressions of his grace and his faithfulness, not as some sort of religious hair shirt that you wear, but

because it's genuinely fun, it's enjoyable in the same way that think of someone you love and you love to spend time in their company and you think, you know, if you get a chance to be trapped in a car with him for several hours, you look forward to it, that this is going to be great, free of distractions. We can talk, we can laugh, we can, you know, do things together. We, there's, there is a, uh, an enjoyment of the company of a person that we love.

And if you have that with the Lord God, then you are never going to be this restless, uh, needy soul that requires some kind of stimulation to get along. It's, you know, distract me from the vacuum in my soul and the presence of wine betrays this proud, restless person. Can't stay at home.

He enlarges his desire as Sheol. Sheol is viewed in the old Testament as a limitless place. You can't fill Sheol.

However many people go there, however much stuff gets shoveled into it, it is never full. And several places in scripture, Sheol is, is this appetite that is never satisfied. There are people that they have figured out that a lot of people that, that are sort of compulsive overeaters, in fact, pets that are compulsive overeaters, uh, have an actual physiological condition where the little signal that says I'm full doesn't go off when it should.

And you are full, but you don't think you're full. Your appetite is still saying, feed me. And so you're, you know, another sandwich, another helping another table full.

And, and you actually suffer for it later because you, you are over full and you do have a painful bloating and indigestion, all the rest of the things that come from overeating. But you, you don't ever get a sense that you're full when you should and how you should. And some people have to have to sort of cultivate this.

You have to change your eating habits. I read about a lady that eats all her meals with a pickle fork. One of those little tiny things are just three times to slow down the, the intake of food and give that feeling time to kick in.

Well, this notion that desire just keeps growing and it is never satisfied. It reminds you of what they tell you about drug addiction, the hard drugs, uh, cocaine and heroin and that, uh, somebody may be sated on a particular amount at first, but pretty soon it doesn't do it anymore. People that get addicted to almost anything that pretty soon the, the previous amounts are not enough and they need more.

And it's just never satisfied. It is a desire like show all. And instead of us consuming the manna from heaven and living on the bounty of God, the world consumes us.

We are eaten by the stuff around us. We are eaten up by other people. We are eaten up by desires.

We are eaten up and controlled by the things that the fruitful living believer sits over and above

and is in control of and can easily do without. Paul says, I've learned in whatever state I find myself to be content. I can commune with God in the Mamertine dungeon, or I can commune with God when I spend three years away and go to Mount Sinai and learn from the Lord Jesus himself, wherever I am in God's plan.

I am content because I don't have these insatiable, unsatisfiable appetites. We choose who would choose that. You know, you ask a drug, a drug addict that, that loses everything, job, family, home, livelihood, fortune, and ends up on the scrap heap of humanity.

Why would you choose that? Well, I didn't really set out to end up on the scrap heap of humanity, but a series of decisions, one by one by one, I just couldn't put a stop to this desire. I couldn't find the power to calm and the power to quit. Power's not there.

God has that power. God gives to us that power in the person of his spirit, in the power of his word, in his presence within us, God's presence fills any void. He's bigger than any appetite we may have.

And if we choose, that's why verse four is the theme verse of this book. The just, the one who's looking for righteousness and that's their priority. They will live.

They will prosper. They will be satisfied through faithfulness in faith. You cannot get this across to somebody that has not done it or is unwilling to choose it.

It sounds like gobbledygook. My favorite example, I think I used it even again within the last couple of days. Uh, imagine somebody blind from birth and you're trying to describe the color green.

The two of you are sitting on a hillside. They can smell the fresh grass. They can feel the breeze and the warmth of the sun.

You're looking over a tremendous meadow with wonderful spring growth, roses, a vista of beautiful green foliage that just little babbling brook down to the bottom. It's just gorgeous. There are a lot of things that a blind person can experience, but when you try to tell them it's not blue, it's not red, it's green.

The wind waving across, uh, this, this field, it's, it's green. It's just the prettiest spring green. That person, they're not going to look at you in confusion.

They're, they're going to listen to you in confusion and say, I don't know what you're talking about. I can feel that there's, you know, foliage and stuff around us. I can smell things.

I can hear things, but you're telling me about this color green. I just don't get it. What, what's the pleasure? What's, what's the notion of it? Blind from birth, people who refuse to enter into the life of God and into faith in God just think it doesn't exist.

Well, you say, but that's just you. That's subjective. That's your subjective truth.

Maybe you're needy. You, you're sort of a pathetic creature and you need emotional comfort and you need faith like a crutch. And of course, that's a very convenient belief on their part that you're the weak one and you're the limited one and you're the ignorant one and you're the backward one.

Because if that's not true, guess who is weak and ignorant and powerless against appetites and powerless against the pool of sin and the drag of the world and the inevitability of corruption. Guess who's the weak one. If it's not us, it's them.

And the biblical truth is it is them. And the only way they can combat that is to say, Oh no, not me. It's you, you're weak and you can't, you can't transfer your, your experience, your sight of it.

This is like a man who comes from New York city and cabs and airplanes and radio and cell phones and goes to the deepest targets jungle somewhere and is talking to a bunch of Aborigines who have seen nothing but the jungle and loincloths and stick fires. And you're trying to explain, Oh no, we make tubes that fly and we get inside them and we go from place to place and people talk hundreds of miles away and we hear them instantly. We talk back to them and they're just looking at you like, what have you been smoking? You know, we got some weed out here that gives us weird ideas too, but you know, you must be on it because that's just nuts and nonsense, no experience of it.

And so refusal to believe it and attributing some sort of weakness or madness to the person who does believe because they have seen and they do know, well, it's a choice and the evidence is available. So that's what Habakkuk is talking about here. And he says, look, this choice, you can either be this puffed one whose soul is not upright within him or you can be the just who lives by his faith and it's, it's worlds apart.

So he says, notice how it starts out on the individual level. Nations don't drink wine. Individuals drink wine, right? So he, this individual transgresses by wine.

He's a proud man, does not stay at home. He enlarges his appetites, his desire as Sheol and he is like death and cannot be satisfied. No matter how many people die, there's always more death.

No matter how many animals die, there's always more death. No matter how many plants die, there's always more death. Death is inevitable.

You got to die and make room for everything that's being born and coming into existence. Notice the last part though, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples. Now he's morphed and transitioned into the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, the Neo Babylonian empire.

When they look over the border at what's happening in the national scene, here's this individual with the un upright soul and the insatiable appetite, writ large as a nation. It's the individual is

now a whole nation that does this and represents this. Will not all these take up a proverb against him and a taunting riddle against him and say, there's a real riddle within the verse itself.

He says they're going to take up a riddle. The verse itself is a riddle. All you people that know English and have studied it, you know what an antecedent is for a, for a word like these and those, right? It says all these will take up a proverb and say all these who all these nations and peoples in verse five, all these insatiable appetite types.

That can't be right because these are the ones who take up a proverb and ask a riddle and say, woe to him who increases and to him who loads himself with many pledges will not your credit that this these, these, this goes all the way back to verse four. Verse four is an individual and yet for six starts with a plural. He doesn't say, well not, well not the righteous take up or will not the faithful man take up.

It's well not these and this is the weaving. There is individual and there is group. There are the individuals who have this insatiable appetite and there are the neo Babylonians with their empire and their military and they're rolling up all of the nations.

There are the individual people in the Southern kingdom who are self centered and are availing themselves of every pleasure at the expense of others. And there are those plural who are living by faith. The interesting thing is that in verse four it doesn't say the just ones shall live by their faith.

It says the just one shall live by his faith. Why? Why would that be? How wide is the road and how broad is the gate of those who are insatiable? How many Babylonians are there? How many narrow road straight gate people are there? You can look at them one by one by one. That just one, he will live by his faith.

That just one, he will live by his faith. That just one, he will live by his faith. They are so few and so scattered that scripture presents them to our eye individually.

That one there out of that crowd of appetite types, that one there out of that crowd of the non upright. It speaks of very limited numbers, but they take up, they, the faithful will take up a proverb and a taunting riddle saying, woe to him who increases what is not his. How long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges.

You know what this is? This is woe to the one who accumulates. And I like the, I'm kind of going along with the net translation because as I worked through this and looked at the Hebrew, I really liked the way they've done this. I think they've really done justice to the, to the text here.

The net Bible says the one, and they say the nations will someday taunt him and they missed it. It's not the nations there. If they're going by, the antecedents got to be the near the nearest plural noun and that's nations and peoples.

Well, it's just wrong that people, the nations aren't going to taunt themselves and they're not going to riddle themselves. This goes back to the ones who are in a different category, but here's the proverb, the one who accumulates what does not belong to him. He who gets rich on credit, accumulating many pledges.

This is, I've got my car, I've got my washing machine, I've got my house, I've got my computer, I've got my, you know, \$900 phone, I've got my clothes, I've got my gadgets, I've got whatever it is. It's all on my credit card. I've got, you know, what, what is the average credit card balance now for per household in the United States is some outrageous 40 grand or something like that.

Average per household. It's ridiculous. Everybody's living on credit and the, the, the woe song here and all of this taunting riddle and, and proverb that these, this is the lyrics to the woe song.

All of you people who are gratifying yourself on credit, how long is that going to last? And that's what it says. How long? It's interjected right into the middle. You're doing this.

How long, how long have you been doing it? How long do you think you can keep doing it? And you look at the severe, deep cracks in the dam that is holding back the destruction of our economy. And you see the tremors. We're having the, we're having the pre-shocks.

We're getting the little high waves just before the tsunami hits. Uh, you see it in China. You see it in credit default swaps and all this other financial stuff.

I don't fully understand what I do understand is it is about to go very, very wrong and very, very bad. How long can you keep printing money? That's got nothing behind it. How long can you keep spending what you don't have? How long can you keep acting like everything is good and telling anybody that doesn't believe it, that they're peddling fiction when in fact we are so far over the cliff.

This is like somebody that has fallen off a 50 story building and as they pass vertically the 15th floor, they say, see, told you there wasn't anything wrong just because you've managed to travel 35 stories through the air and haven't hit the ground yet doesn't mean that it isn't coming. How long can it continue? Every hockey stick graph known to man has us in the bad part of the hockey. How long? If you load yourself with many pledges, this is doing everything on credit.

Notice the next verse. Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? They haven't come yet, but do you not think they're going to show up at the door one day and it's going to be a surprise? You thought they were asleep. You thought they weren't paying attention.

You thought everything would keep going. And it doesn't. It's put in terms of the individual and his self aggrandizement and self gratification on credit and the creditors are going to come.

But notice in verse eight, it's that we've the, the ribbon flips over now because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people you shall plunder you because of men's blood and the violence of land in the city and those who dwell in it. Those who, those who prosper by wine is the individuals at the top. What is going on when the Babylonian empire finally goes under and is taken over by the Medes and the Persians.

Do you remember a little story about many, many take a little Farson what's going on when God's hand writes on the wall, what is happening in that room? It's a giant drunken orgy. Belshazzar. Remember that? And God is weaving together the eventual judgment and national fate of Babylon with the individuals who in their small world do the very same thing.

Babylon is going to be a victim of its own hedonism and its own insatiable appetites and its failure to make good choices. So that's the beginning of woes. Look at verse nine, woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of disaster.

I don't need the peace and the stability and the security and the promises of God. I've got my own tower. I'm going to crawl into, I've got my own thing figured out and what I've got.

See, is this, is this tower of stone supported by beams? I've got this thing built. I've got it all figured out. God can send another flood.

I've got the tower of Babel. That's essentially, it harks back. Remember Babel, plain of Shinar, Babel.

What was the deal? We'll build a tower to the heavens. Next time this God sends a flood, why we'll just go to the top and I'll be delivered from the power of disaster. Verse nine, I've got an insurance policy here.

You give shameful counsel to your house, cutting off many people's. This cutting off is actually a word used for a weaver cutting off threads. And what it means is the, the very things that anchor and stabilize a thing, you're cutting them.

You think you're doing a good thing, like, but you're kind of like the guy sawing the limb and you're on the wrong side of the saw. You cut off many people's and sin against your soul. You do this at other people's expense.

You say, I'm going to get mine. I mean, this is like cutting people off in traffic. This is like cutting in line the cutting.

You know, I'm going to get my cut. I'm going to cut in. I'm going to, I'm going to cut whatever it takes to get, get ahead.

But notice the stone will cry out from the wall and the beam from the timbers will answer it. God can give life to the stones and to the timbers. And the very things you're relying on are

going to be the agents and the implements of your destruction.

What you thought was safety and security is what is going to collapse and bury you. Do you hear about these a teacher took some students and they went to a ski slope and we're skiing in an area that had been roped off. And they said, whatever you do, don't ski here.

Danger of avalanche. Well, they had an avalanche and a two students and a skier were killed. And so now the teacher's in jail for ignoring the sign and taking the students where they had manifestly said, don't go here.

This is the hubris and the arrogance of people who say, don't tell me what to do. It's fashionable and cool to color outside the lines. I'm a free spirit.

No, I'm, you know, I don't believe then this has been going on for 40, 50 years now, you know, the man, the establishment, the fuzz, you know, all of that is bad. And, uh, me doing what I want to do and going to Woodstock and making hay while the sun shines and taking whatever. That's the answer.

Well, the thing you choose, I'm going to have fun on ski slopes is going to avalanche and bury you. That's essentially what this says. Your high tower is going to collapse and kill you.

And the timber and the stone is going to conspire and say, let's kill this guy. He's an annoyance. That's the woe.

What do him who builds a town with bloodshed, who establishes a city by iniquity. Remember Abraham, who said, I'm going to dwell in tents. I'm going to wait for the city.

Who's founder builder is God. That's a long wait. How many thousand years ago was Abraham 4,000 years ago, by the way, I'm already working on, on our next series and, and our sort of Bible difficulties.

And, uh, the first one is a doozy. I got so enraptured with it. I almost stopped our study and did it tonight.

It's a, it's a whopper. If you, if you think you've been surprised before and I'll probably, this'll probably be number one in the new, because it surprised me. It will surprise you.

It's, it's really a, I can hardly stop from thinking about it. Woe to him who builds a town by bloodshed, a city by iniquity. It is not of the Lord of hosts that the people labor to feed the fire and nations weary themselves in vain.

You see again, this weaving together, the individuals and the nation, God's macroscopic world with the galaxies and things orbiting black holes and all that is like his microscopic world with the atoms and the subatomic particles and all of that. And, and God is consistent all the way through what he does with nations. He does with individuals.

What he does with individuals, he does with nations. Jacob have I loved Esau have I hated. That's a national statement.

When he says Esau have I hated, he's not talking about the individual Esau. I hated that man. He's talking about Edom and the Edomites and that whole, uh, national descendency, Jacob, Israel, the nation he has loved, but it's enfolded in and wrapped in those individuals.

It's not either or it's both end. And that's what you have here. Well, we're out of time for tonight.

And we didn't get to finish all of our woes. And the next one, as you, as you leave on a high note here, he intersperses encouragement through these woes. The first encouragement is, uh, back in chapter one, when Habakkuk says, Lord, all of this injustice, God says in verse five, look, I am at work.

Be patient. It's all going to come right. Then he says, okay, I've, I've heard your answer.

I'm going to, I'm going to get in the tower and watch. And there's people that are thrust through with their own arrows. And the heads of villages come out like whirlwinds and scatter.

They are rejoicing is like feasting on the poor in secret. Uh, but God is on the sea with his horses through the heap of great waters. You know, God operates horses on the sea.

That's how powerful he is, uh, in, in, uh, chapter three, but we haven't got there yet. Uh, but he says, behold, the proud, his soul is not upright in him. The just will live by his faith.

That's God's promise. That's an encouragement in verse 14 here. As we conclude tonight, after looking at all of these woes, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

That's I got one sea passage ahead of myself here, but the glory of the Lord will cover the earth like water covers the sea. That's what you can take to the bank. That's what you can rely on.

That's what you can count on. In the face of rampant departure, rampant self-centeredness, rampant self-gratification, a society and a culture that is literally going to hell in a handbasket. This is what we are to think about what we are to be and do in this situation.

Yes, God is working at the national level and this nation may well be destroyed. And that's why it doesn't seem to show up in prophecy. And by the way, prophecy may be much closer toward its fulfillment than any of us thought.

Um, more about that when we start our new study, but it is also individual. It is the same. We make a choice.

You make a choice. I make a choice every single day. Are you investing your life and your time and your soul in the things that count so that you can be blessed so that you can live so that

you can bear fruit and so that you expand exponentially into the kingdoms that are to come? Or do you throw it away? The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

The glory of the Lord is going to cover the earth like the sea. Which sea are you going to choose? You're going to be the sea full of mire and dirt. There is no peace saith my God to the wicked.

The just will live. The just will enjoy the vista of the glory of the Lord covering the earth one great day. It's a daily choice.

It's an hourly choice. It's a incident by incident choice that we make. Who are we? Why are we here? It's important.

And Habakkuk puts this in chapter two as the capstone of his presentation. The answer from God, the contrast is it couldn't be more clearly laid out. Well, let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully it challenges us, convicts us, and at the same time offers us deliverance and hope and opportunity. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will impress it on each heart.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.