

11.5.25 pm: The Righteous shall live by faith

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Date: 11 May 2025

Preacher: Scott Macleod

[0 : 00] Good evening. Hopefully the mics are okay. We were a bother with the mics, so hopefully you can hear me okay at the back. A warm welcome to everyone, a warm welcome to visitors, a warm welcome to those online.

We pray that as we come to God's word, we would know his blessing over us as we gather in his name. A couple of intimations just to highlight. I think we've been on the screen. Kirk session meets tomorrow night, 6pm.

And just a further notice for the men's Bible study on Thursday night. I missed out an important email to send the details to, so it's my fault.

It's going to be Luke chapter 20 that we'll be studying this week, Thursday night. All gents are welcome. If you like to speak or if you don't like it, you just want to listen, you're more than welcome just to come along. So be encouraged to come to that.

So let us join together in our worship of God by singing in Gaelic first. Gaelic's Psalm 119 from the beginning of that psalm.

[1 : 13] We'll sing the first two verses of that psalm and I'll read them in English. So this song.

The singing is in Gaelic. We'll remain seated for this singing. And after this singing, we'll be led in Gaelic by John McSween Gaelic prayer.

So we'll remain seated for this singing. The singing is in Gaelic. The singing is in Gaelic.

The singing is in Gaelic. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

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[6 : 33] What were seniors? What seniors were seniors? What seniors were seniors?

- And the Lord, So we'll stand to sing,
Come to the Lord, God's warm.
My soul is awake, my hope is in His word.
- [26 : 23] For the day that our morning watch, my soul is for the Lord.
I say, Lord, I live up to watch, the morning light to see.
Let Israel open the door, for with mercy's peace.
And plenty of redemption is never found within.
And from all His iniquities, He Israel shall redeem.
- [28 : 02] When we turn back to that passage that we read in Prophecy of Habakkuk, Habakkuk, we'll consider the passage that we read, but really want to hang our thoughts on chapter 2, verse 4, second half, verse 4.
Where we have great words there, but the righteous shall live by his faith. So let us pray as we come to this passage.
Dear Father in heaven, we pray that you would help us as we open up your word. We pray that you would open our eyes and ears to hear your voice speaking to us.
As we call upon your Spirit to help us and aid us. Give us ears to hear, Lord, what you shall speak to us. May your truth come for us and speak that we know it is the voice of God.
Lord, we pray, asking for your help. And asking also for your protection from the evil one.
- [29 : 20] That he will not distract us nor detract from the words that we have read. But that you would fully teach us yourself from it. And that we may understand what you shall speak to our souls.
So be with us in the time that we gather. In your name we ask. In Jesus' name. Amen. So last week we began looking at this prophecy of Habakkuk.
A small book, three chapters. And just want to recap. I'm aware that not everyone was here last week. Just to recap where we are and what we saw in the first week.
This man Habakkuk brought a complaint to God. And we really said that's a prayer that he made to God. Because his nation had forgotten about God.
And he was a great witness to King Josiah. Who led Israel on great reformation. Turned them back to God. But he was a prophet at the latter part of King Josiah's reign.
- [30 : 27] And the people fell away in that time. So he saw a great nation worshipping God. His heart was broken. We emphasize how Christians feel. That emotion.
Witnessing people turning away from God. It's something that hurts the Christian. And so we have this prophet Habakkuk. Witnessing people turning away from God. And he comes with this prayer.
His first complaint in chapter 1. To God asking why these things are happening. And it seems like God's voice is just silent in it all. But God responded to that prayer.
God responded by saying. The Chaldeans are coming. The Babylonians are coming. A nation. An enemy nation that will come. And exercise punishment over Israel.
Because they've turned away from God. That was the prophet's message. And although Habakkuk. When we read through Habakkuk.
- [31 : 28] He doesn't actually. We're not told of any announcement that he makes to the people. Like all other prophets did. Prophets had to go out with a message to the people.

We don't see Habakkuk announcing anything. We have Habakkuk here in this private conversation. And dialogue with God. His prayer. And God's response to his prayer.

He's complaining. The way the nation are. God responds. Babylon are coming. They're going to exercise punishment. Over Israel.

For turning away from God. But he said there. In verse 5. He said he was doing a work. That he would not believe. Even. If God had told him.

What he was doing. That was a gem of a verse. In the midst of chapter 1. In the midst of that situation. A promise for him to hold on to.

[32 : 25] And it was a promise. For each of us to hold on to. And take with us. Because it wasn't just a word spoken. Directly to Habakkuk. It was a word spoken to all the righteous people in this day.

And it's a word spoken. To every believer. That although in the circumstances that we face in this world. God is doing a work. That maybe we wouldn't believe. Even if it was revealed to us.

And as we come to this next section. Which records Habakkuk's response. Which is the second complaint. The second prayer. We then have God's response.

To that prayer also. God's second reply. And equally. In this passage. A lot of things that aren't favorable.

Aren't nice for Israel. But there's a gem of a verse. Hiding in it all. That's what we read there. The latter half of chapter 4. But the righteous.

[33 : 24] Shall live. By his faith. And this is the verse I want to take with us tonight. But I want. Now this verse could be preached on its own. But I want to take this verse in the context of Habakkuk's story.

Habakkuk's situation. And as we do that. I just want to follow the structure that we have here. Two points. Habakkuk's second prayer. God's second response.

Just two simple points. That follow the passage. That make it simple for us to remember what's going on. And follow the passage of Habakkuk as a whole.

So what is Habakkuk's second prayer? Habakkuk's second complaint? Well it's a reaction to what God said. God said Babylon's going to come. This great nation.

This evil nation. They're going to come and destroy you. And Habakkuk's response is really. Well. You are God.

[34 : 25] Why are you going to use these evil people to destroy us? It's as if Habakkuk's saying. Babylon's so evil. What association do you.

As God have. With them. And these people. And this is Habakkuk's complaint. He's really picking out God's character.

And complaining that. Why are you using this evil nation? And as he goes through his complaint. Here. Beginning at verse 12.

It takes us down into. Chapter 2. Just the first verse. Chapter 2. We can go through it. And. We can see that he speaks about God's character.

He says. The first line. He's an everlasting God. He says. He says. Then he's a holy God. He says. You're a God that has ordained all things.

[35 : 26] He goes on to say about God. That you're a rock. He says. Then. That God. You are. Your eyes are pure. You're a God that cannot look on evil.

This is who you are. This is your character. So why. Lord. Are you sending this nation. Who are so ungodly.

So selfish. Why are you using them. To destroy us. It's almost like. If we were to say it. In our own terms.

Just to understand. It's out of character. It's as if. You had a policeman. That was going out. To plan a robbery. That's. That's not. The character of the policeman. It's completely out of character.

For who he is. And. Habakkuk. Habakkuk. It's almost complaining. It's saying like. God. You're so holy. You're so pure. Why are you using this evil nation.

[36 : 23] He's questioning God. His character. And the prayer. And the. Habakkuk. Wrestling with God. And prayer. Wrestling with God's providence.

For this nation. As we said. Prayer isn't always easy. We said that last week. But he keeps on praying. He keeps on coming back to God. And the uncertainties.

And the unknowns. And the questions that he has. And as he picks out. Who God is. It's almost as if he's. Digging into the scriptures.

In his mind. Digging into the promises. That had been made. Through the people of Israel. And he says there. In verse 12.

We shall not die. That's a promise. That comes from. Deuteronomy chapter 4. Verse 29 and 30. And that describes. A situation where.

[37 : 18] The people are under threat. The people are under. Great tribulation. And God promises. In that. Chapter. Not to destroy. Israel. Not to destroy.

His covenant people. And Habakkuk's. Hanging on to that promise. We shall not die. We shall not be destroyed. Because we are your people. And then he says.

He's a rock. At the end of chapter 12. He calls out. O rock. That's a reference to. Deuteronomy 32. Verse 4. And it's interesting.

Considering. When you go back. Into the chapter. Last chapter. And it was all about. God's work. Understanding God's work. God says. I'm doing a work. When it speaks.

About the rock. In Deuteronomy. It says. Whose work. Is perfect. All his ways. Are justice. A God of faithfulness.

[38 : 18] Without iniquity. Just and upright. Is he. Habakkuk's. Hanging on to that. Promise. That he has been made. That has been made. About God.

The rock. A perfect work. A just work. And he's trying to reason. All this together. With what has been promised. And the message.

That the prophet. The message. That God has given him. For the people. That the Babylonians. Are coming. How is this perfect? How is this just?

How is this right? That this evil nation. Are just going to come in. And destroy us. It's a thing. That has been established. In verse 12.

As well. It's been established. For a. For reproof. For a punishment. But in verse 13.

[39 : 14] He complains. That. God. You're. You're silent. You remain silent. When the wicked. Swallows up the man. More righteous.

Than he. He. It's as if. He's. Saying again. God. You're doing nothing. Here. For us. He. Continues.

His complaint. Against God. Verse 14. He says. Have you made us. To be like. Animals. Like the fish. Of the sea. Like crawling. Things.

Animals. That go through. The motions. Animals. That are. Eaten up. And destroyed. By other. Animals. Have you made us. To be like that? He presents. The image. Of a fisherman.

Babylon. Coming. To catch. Fish. And really. When it speaks. About a net. And a drag net. I think. If we use. The image. Of a trawler. Just. Dragging.

[40 : 11] Its net. And sweeping. Up all the. Fish. In its path. Trapping. Them. In their net. And the fisherman. Rejoices. When they lift it. And they see.

The hole. That they have. This is like. Babylon. Coming into. Israel. And flattening. The cities. And towns. And. Taking all the plunder. And rejoicing.

For everything. That they've got. All the slaves. That they've. Gained. Babylon. Lives. In comfort. Because this is. The way they live.

If many riches. Verse 16. Tells us. That they've got. Much food. They live in luxury. And they make offerings.

To the net. It's a nation. That defies God. Because they think. They're strong. In themselves. They're worshipping.

[41 : 07] Their own strength. And he complains there. In verse 17. Is this. Trawler. As it were.

They're going to. Just keep. Coming. Mercilessly. Killing nations. Forever. Last week. It was described. As a wind. So I would come through.

The town. It's almost like a tornado. Sweeping through the nation. Is this. Wind going to stop. Or is it just going to keep going. And destroy the whole of Israel. Surely this is not right.

Habakkuk said. As he complains to God. Surely this isn't right. You almost feel his pain. When you picture it all. And you put it all together. But his prayer.

Concludes. With a word of confidence. In chapter 2. Verse 1. I will take my stand. At my watch post. And station myself. On the tower.

[42 : 10] And look out. To see. What he will say to me. And what I will answer. Concerning my complaint. He has confidence. In God.

God will answer. For me. I don't know. What's going on. I don't know. Why you're doing this. I don't see. How the character of God. Fits with this evil nation.

But God. I'm going to confidently. Wait for an answer. I'm going to stand. And wait. So he has.

And he describes it. As this image of a watchman. Positioning himself. On the watchtower. He would be the one.

That would look out. For the people. He's the one. That's going to wait. And see. What God's. Message is going to be. I wonder how long he waited.

[43 : 10] It doesn't say. But he was faithful to wait. Because the Lord gave him an answer. And he was.

Seemingly a person that was constantly in prayer. Even though he was wrestling in prayer. He's waiting for God to respond.

The watchman walls. As you can simply imagine. These cities that they built. They built. Fortresses with high walls around the city.

So the people within the city couldn't see it. The walls were great. The walls were thick. So they needed eyes and ears. So they would position watchmen.

Probably at corners. I don't know exactly where. But there would be watchmen positioned around the city. To keep an eye out. To look for messengers that would come.

[44 : 10] Or to look out for threats. That would come against their town. Because the people inside just wouldn't know. They were. The watchmen were important men.

They were their eyes and ears. But the watchman is often described as a prophet in the Bible. I believe Ezekiel, Hosea, Jeremiah are described as watchmen.

And it's quite fitting because they're spiritual watchmen. They're watchmen that would receive God's message and warn the people. Danger is coming.

God's judgment is near. Turn from the ways that you are living. Place your faith in the Lord God.

The watchman, the prophet, was the man that received the message. That saw the message of God to him. And then he would announce it to the people.

[45 : 17] And we saw that in the very first verse of chapter 1. The oracle was a burdensome thing. And the watchman was a burdensome job in a way, as we'll see.

He received the message from God. And it was his duty, regardless of what it was. Usually it wasn't a pat on the back, as we said.

It was usually something that would condemn them. His job was to say it. To tell the people. Regardless of what it was. He had to tell the people.

He was almost like a middleman. He received the message. But he had to pass it on. It was a burden of the prophet to tell the people.

And if you go to Ezekiel 33, that really highlights the responsibility of the watchman. God says to Ezekiel that you must tell the people my message.

[46 : 26] You must warn them. You must tell them. You're the watchman. You're the prophet. If you don't tell them.

Well, he says first, you tell them. And if they don't listen, then their blood is on their own heads. But God says to him, if the watchman is silent, if he hears God's message, if he hears God's voice, and he does not warn the people, their blood is on the watchman's head.

Their blood will be on the head of the one that stays silent. Even having known the warning was there. The responsibility becomes hers.

There are maybe not any other more sobering passages than that for those who preach the gospel.

And if you're called to preach the gospel, you must preach the gospel. You cannot be silent if God is calling you to it. But you can imagine the watchman on the city announcing the warning.

[47 : 52] And you can imagine the people in the city hearing the warning too. And surely, it was their duty as well and responsibility to tell their friends, to tell their families if they heard the message of the watchman.

Yes, it is the preacher's duty to preach the gospel. But surely there is a responsibility on us all who have heard the gospel to go out and share it with those who we know.

Our families, our friends, those who live near by us. But pray for your watchman. Pray for your minister.

Pray that there will be men that wait on God for an answer, for direction. But that we would all be waiting on God.

Prayerfully and expectantly. Waiting for the Lord to guide us in our situations. When it seems like his voice is silent.

[49 : 10] Habakkuk here is a faithful example for us. To wait on God. To trust in him in the most confusing, doubtful, questionable situations.

Where we question God. We question God's character. Yet he waits. Just like Psalm 130. I wait for God.

My soul doth wait. My hope is in his word. More than that for morning watch. My soul waits for the Lord. So we have this watchman.

In the midst of confusion. Bringing his prayer, his complaint, his agony to God. This is his complaint.

But God does respond. We have a response from him here. From verse 2 in chapter 2 through to the end. We won't have time to walk through it all.

[50 : 14] And firstly, we can notice that this response of God is told. What does he say first? Chapter 2. The Lord answered me. Write the vision. Make it plain on tablets.

So he may run who reads it. He may run who reads it. Now, looking at different commentaries on this phrase, why he would run, there's different opinions, there's different understandings.

There's a bit of uncertainty. It could be that they read it and then it provokes them to flee, to run away. It could also mean that if they read it, they would go and herald it and run with the message and go out across the nation and tell everyone.

But it could also mean that when they heard this message, this prophecy, that they would run on in faith, that they would keep going in faithful living according to this word, that they may run on.

And then I was thinking about it. I said, which one is it? And I thought, well, I can't remember which commentator said, but because God is speaking about living by faith, he was saying, well, it's got to be the one run on in faith, keep running.

[51 : 50] But I don't know. I couldn't say. And then I thought, well, why not all three? Is that not what the word of God is for us?

We read the Bible. We have this written word for us that has been written down for the people as it is here in this passage. But it's a written word that when we read it, we flee from sin.

When we read it, we proclaim it to others. When we read it, it encourages us to run on in faith. Why not all three?

It is a message from God for the people. We have a message for God in the Bible for us. Turn from our sins, proclaim the good news, run on in perseverance.

As we said last week, Habakkuk was questioning God's work.

[52 : 55] God said, I'm doing our work in your day. He didn't understand it. He may not believe it. But God says, with further encouragement of that work, that it will happen.

It will come. You see in verse three, he says, the vision awaits its appointed time. It's going to happen. It may seem slow.

Wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay. And in fact, when it comes, it is going to be exactly at the right time. My work will come at the right time.

What I am doing will be perfectly time. The Babylonians will come. And he speaks about the Babylonians in verse four. Behold, his soul is puffed up.

It is not upright within himself. That upright is really just crooked. These people are crooked, twisted generation, selfish, proud.

[53 : 59] But he makes a comparison with the righteous. The righteous shall live by faith. Two different people. Huge difference.

The crooked, the righteous. But that's a difference that God will make, that Jesus will make.

That's a difference that will last for all eternity. Between those that are righteous and those that have lived their lives in selfishness, worshipping what they have done like the Babylonians, trusting in themselves.

God goes on to reply by speaking more about the Babylonians. He says they're greedy. He says they're never at rest. He says they're gathering, they're collecting all this spoil.

Everything of the human heart desires as if it were. What does it say about them? In verse 5, they are never at rest.

[55 : 11] Never at rest. Never satisfied. We had that this morning. Jesus is the one that satisfies us. These Babylonians have got everything they want. They're never satisfied.

They keep on going. Now this response from God, it comes in two sections. We have this initial part and then we have woes about Babylon.

It's largely about Babylon. It's quite fascinating that he responds in such a way. And with only this little bit of encouragement really in chapter 4.

But just, I'm not going to look at the woes. We just don't have time to do it. But just briefly, I want you to notice the way God writes, announces these woes.

The first thing he announces about the woes is that it's a, it's a, he addresses the personal behaviour of the people. In chapter 6, the greed, they're mounting up as much as they want for themselves.

[56 : 20] Personal desire. The second woe is that he speaks of his household, almost his family. You have that in verse 9.

Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, his household. Thirdly, the woe is that God addresses the towns that they have built.

In verse 12, he builds a town with blood and cities on iniquity. The fourth woe is that God speaks about how they treat their neighbour, the abuse of drink, probably sexual sins as well.

But lastly, and probably most importantly, the woe is about who they worship in verse 19. Who creates their own God.

They overlay it with gold. There's no breath in it. He's starting in the heart and he's working his way in the family, the house, the city, the neighbours and their gods.

[57 : 29] And the whole nation is just corrupt, as it were, in his sight. God says at the end, I am in my temple.

Let all the earth keep silent before me. So, as if to say, God is just saying, punishment will come in good time.

I am still in my temple. I am in control. Worship and honour me. be silent before me.

And as we said, this whole response that God makes to Habakkuk's complaint, it's largely about Babylon. Sinfulness, a coming judgment, but we have this gem, but the righteous shall live by faith.

And in context, that's important because Habakkuk feared for his life. Habakkuk saw this threat coming. He knew this threat was coming.

[58 : 39] He knew that the righteous were being abused. He knew that they were wiping everything off the face of the nation. He questioned God's promises. But God responds according to promise by agreeing with him, by saying, yes, you're right, you shall not die, as he began his complaint.

You shall not die because the righteous will live by faith. The key to life, the key to living, is living a life of faith.

And you might think you've maybe heard this verse before. And you might think, well, I've not read Habakkuk that much, and you're probably right in thinking that because this verse, this part of this verse is quoted three times in the New Testament.

It's in Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. And every time this passage is mentioned, it's encouraging the believer to keep going in faith, trusting in God's word, trusting in God's work.

That's what they're told to do here. Write down my word, believe in my work that will come. That's what we place our faith in.

[60 : 05] That's where our faith is, in his word, in his work, what he will do, what he has done for us. This is the source of our life, having faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ. This will mark the difference of verse four, between the unrighteous and the righteous man. The one who listens, the one who disobeys.

The one who believes in God, the one who believes in themselves. The one who trusts in their own strength, the one who clings to God for strength.

not a faith in feelings, but a faith in what is written, a faith in what work has been done for them, a faith in what work will be done for them.

Has it changed today that we believe in a word, that we believe in a work? No, we are still called to live lives of faith.

[61 : 17] And if we live lives of faith, the reward is life. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter into the joy of your rest. Do you have faith in God's word that has been written down for us this evening? Do you have faith in the Bible?

Do you have faith in the work of Jesus Christ when he died on the cross for you? They are all written down so that we might believe them. Here are the words of eternal life.

Believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall live. This is what the gospel heralds today. This is what the watchman announces today.

it means putting all our pride and self confidence away. We can do nothing to live.

[62 : 23] We cling to Jesus Christ and his righteousness that we receive if we believe in him. Faith is what is asked of us.

to believe, to hold fast in the midst of being tossed to and fro, circumstances that we cannot understand.

In the midst of doubts and certainties, deceitful words of the devil trying to tempt us away, the Word of God tells us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

You shall live and not die. There are two ways to live before God. Which side are you on tonight?

The Bible tells us that we'll be judged. It will surely come. You may think it's a long way off.

[63 : 29] You may doubt it will ever happen. That can be an honest feeling for us. We wrestle with doubts at times, even as believers.

But the Word of God tells us it is sure. It will happen. It could be tonight. It could be tomorrow.

You may not be back here next week. A day has been appointed. that we will be judged for how we have lived.

We will all face God. The devil and the world will tell you it will never come. He will tell you it will. He will tell you to put it off.

He will tell you not to put your faith in God. Don't believe in Jesus. He will tell you to gather your own riches. Follow the desires of your heart, your flesh.

[64 : 31] Where will it leave you? Same as the Babylonians. Absolutely restless. Unsatisfied. So in conclusion, we have Habakkuk the prophet, the second complaint, constant in prayer, writing God's Word, faithful to God, waiting for an answer, announcing that judgment is coming.

Tonight, the watchman is shouting, Christ is coming. Christ is coming. And it means two things.

It carries two reactions. Probably even in this building. It's joy or fear. Peace or worry.

Christ is coming, the watchman says. You're in danger if you do not put your faith in God. Your life is on the line. You need Christ.

His righteousness will be ours if we believe in him. The watchman is calling you to put your trust in him tonight, to believe in what Christ has done for you at the cross at Calvary.

[66 : 12] And if you do, and you confess your sins, his righteousness will be yours. And you shall live forever and ever.

We pray these thoughts be blessed to us. We'll conclude by singing in the Mission Praise 975.

Before the throne. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea, a great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on his hands, my name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart. No tongue can bid me thence depart.

We'll stand to sing these words in conclusion. Chant ■■■■ Chant ■■■■ Amen. Amen.

[68 : 13] Amen. Amen.

I conclude with prayer.

Father in heaven, we pray that we would respond to the words of your watchman. We pray that we would hear it and act. We pray that we would trust in it each and every day, that we would herald it and that we would flee from sin.

Be with us, Lord, we pray in all things. Guide us in every step that we take in the uncertainties of life, which over us we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.