

In the world of nursing and medicine, we have these unfortunate things called root cause analysis meetings. These happen because a patient might have gotten really hurt or died due to various reasons. Members from various disciplines that were part of this patient's care meet for several hours and go over what happened and how it could've been prevented. Now it would be really easy to assume that these events are a healthcare witch hunt to find out who has the bloody hands. But more often than not, something called the Swiss cheese effect happens.

If you have 25 pieces of Swiss cheese put together, I wouldn't be able to stick a pencil through the first hole and it successfully come out the other side. But if I manipulated each piece of cheese and lined up a hole from each piece, I would be able to see from one side to the other. This is what usually happens in events like these. We are looking at every aspect of this patient's care that led to this bad event happening, and how we can then prevent something like this from happening again.

Today's passage in Habakkuk is sort of a root cause analysis of the rise and fall of both Babylon and the people of Judah. We are going to examine the root cause analysis of what it looks like to live by faith, as well as the root cause analysis of not living by faith.

You see sometimes the Bible will tell us how to live in the positive sense, wanting to exhort us to live in a godly manner. But other times God makes it explicitly clear how we ought not to live, because even though we often know how we ought to live, sometime we need to be told, explicitly at times, the dangers and pitfalls that are all around us if we choose to find our true happiness outside of God himself.

Our text today is going to detail 5 woes that are primarily addressed to the Babylonians. But as we look at the text today, we are going to see that Judah and her people are implicated in these woes as well. For as we saw last week, and we'll see again today, the righteous are those who live by their faith.

In other words, the people of Israel were to live by faith. The blessed and happy life is not found in taking the life we desire by force, instead, it is found in God Himself, and in faith in Him.

This will be our main proposition this morning: Happy are the righteous, who live by faith.

But before we get to the woe oracles, we are going to lay the ground work and establish how God's people ought to live: Living by faith.

Last week, we saw Habakkuk's two complaints to God and that the answer to the tension of trusting God while knowing the world around us is not right is living by faith. This week we are going to see that not only are we to live by faith when circumstances around us are difficult and unjust, but also that living by faith leads to a happy and blessed life rather than a life that leads to destruction and judgement.

Let's read verses 4-5 again together. If you'll do a little Bible study with me, and look at the structure of these two verses, you'll see that there is a statement in the first half of verse 4, "Behold, his soul is

puffed up; it is not upright within him,” and then you have an explanation or further unpacking in verse 5. In other words, the Babylonians’ souls are puffed up and their souls are not upright within them.

Why is this the case? Well verse 5 explains it. It says they are full of wine (your Bibles also might have a footnote saying that his could also mean wealth). So, they are full of wine, and wealth, they are arrogant and never at rest. Their greed is as wide as the grave or as Sheol, and he never has enough, like death. He conquers and kills all nations and all peoples.

The people of God are surrounded by people that are described here. This is further shown in the literary sandwich that you see in verses 4-5. The righteous are juxtaposed against the unrighteous. The righteous are to be humble and live by faith.

As we saw last week, the righteous are to wait on the Lord’s deliverance and his timing. When the injustice around them makes no sense and the wicked are prospering, they are to wait on the Lord and His justice.

Our world today is not so dissimilar. You don’t come to be rich, powerful, and famous without running people over. Several years ago, ESPN put out a really good documentary called *The Last Dance*, that focused on Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls. Michael Jordan is hailed as the greatest basketball player of all time. He won 6 NBA championships over his career. Yet many people were extremely surprised at how poorly Michael Jordan was portrayed in this documentary.

This wasn’t because the producers were trying to cast him in a negative light, instead it was the product of a man who, despite his unprecedented success, was a man that could be described in Habakkuk 2. He had an insatiable drive to win and was greedy for glory. This led to his 6 NBA championships and his title as the greatest of all time. But at what cost did this come? Jordan lost friends, family, and teammates for his pursuit of greatness. Yet, we will continue to praise and celebrate Jordan, in spite of his brutal means that he used to get there.

But this is the exact opposite of what is being exhorted to us in verse 4. The righteous shall live by his faith. We are to live by faith in the one who is deserving of all honor and glory. Charles Spurgeon describes it this way while commenting on this verse, he said, “This is what living by faith meant—a faith that does without anything—a faith that can take nothing and be content with it because it finds everything in God—faith under the worst conceivable conditions. This is how the just are to live.”

In other words, truly living by faith doesn’t always look like faith + earthly riches and success. Living by faith might look like losing everything around you, yet, boasting and praising in the Lord because he is our only hope and salvation.

The Israelites in Judah would soon experience this. In the not-too-distant future, the greed as wide as Sheol of Babylon would come to Judah’s front door and take them far away. They would lose Jerusalem, their holy city, their homes, their wealth, and their possessions. What would they hold on to? Or a better question is *who* would they hold on to?

When everything is taken from you: Your family, your job, your possessions, your status, your reputation. What will you hold on to? Because if you’re holding on to anything except God Himself, then you are not living by faith. If you’re here this morning and you’ve never heard the good news of the Gospel, then I am so glad you are here. Because this is at the heart of the gospel.

The righteous, those that are seen by God as right, are not those that have built up a bunch of good works to present to him. The righteous are those that live by his faith, those that have put their trust in the work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Kiddos from my class on Tuesday nights, does this sound familiar to you? Remember we were talking about the righteousness credited to Abraham? Abraham believed that God was going to keep his promises, and righteousness was credited to him. We now get to respond in faith that God kept his promises through his Son, Jesus. This is what it means that the righteous shall live by his faith.

Now that we've examined what living by faith looks like, we are going to look at 5 ways to not be happy. Like I mentioned earlier, sometimes the Bible tells us how to live, but in passages such as this, you get both the how to live, and how you ought not to live.

Woe is an interesting word that is not used in culture or in English much anymore. So, every time you read the word 'woe,' I want you to hear 'how terrible for.' In other words, we are going to see 5 ways that people thought they could ensure their happiness, but ended up getting judgment instead.

As we begin to go through these woes, I want you to notice a structure in each of them as well. They will begin with an indictment of the crime, and then be followed by the punishment for that crime. God is not simply picking on Babylon because he doesn't like them. He is clearly communicating that their sins and their treachery deserve the punishment that's coming. Yet we can't just read this section and think, 'this is just for the Babylonians.' Or in our time, 'this is just for people outside the church.'

Instead, we have to read these woes with sober eyes. Eyes that see ourselves in these woes as well. We've been in the Old Testament long enough in our Bible reading plan for you to realize that all of Israel was not good and righteous. Sometimes, Israel acted worse than the nations outside of them. Both Babylon and Israel acted in ways that showed that they thought they could live life by force instead of by faith.

Therefore, there is for sure an outward focus here to the Babylonians, but don't miss the self-examination imbedded in the rest of the chapter. For that reason, I'm going to use the language that most of the commentators use too, and refer to the subject of the woes as 'oppressors' because sometimes it's really hard to differentiate if it's specifically talking about the Babylonians or Judah herself.

Let's start with reading verses 6-8, and see the first way to not be happy: get rich quick.

The indictment on the oppressors in the first woe are guilty of taking and plundering what was not theirs. It's clear from the text that the oppressors murdered, destroyed cities and all who lived in them, and even were cruel to the earth and creation around them.

What's the punishment? I love the poetry here. It basically says that the oppressors (which is most likely Babylon), even though they have plundered other peoples and nations, have incurred a debt themselves. It's a debt they could never afford to pay back. Therefore, the plunderer shall become the plunder. One day soon, Babylon would be plundered for all of its riches and wealth. This would come to fruition in 539 BC when Persia defeated the Babylonians.

I think most of us in this room have no experience plundering another nation, so I think it's safe to think what does this have to do with me? Let's take it a little deeper and ask the question, what are the oppressors after when they plunder their neighbor or another nation? They are after possessions and wealth that they think will make them happy, and they are willing to stop at nothing to get it. In other words, they were trying to get rich quick by taking what wasn't theirs.

In 2011, the Los Angeles Times came out with a report that said when Muammar Gaddafi died, he died with a net worth of 200 billion dollars. In 2011, that was worth more than the 3 richest men on earth, combined. If you're not familiar with Muammar Gaddafi, he was the dictator of Libya from 1969 to 2011, and right before Gaddafi came into power, Libya discovered an immense oil reserve.

Instead of putting their national wealth back into its own infrastructure, like schools, roads, and its own people, Gaddafi essentially invested the money for his own gain. Libya's money became Gaddafi's money. Gaddafi got richer, and the Libyan people became poorer. And eventually, Gaddafi was forcefully taken out of power by his own people and executed.

Gaddafi and the oppressors in this text both found ways to get rich quick. They took wealth from those around them and even their own people. This led to what we see in verse 7, The debtors suddenly arose, and the oppressors became spoil for those they wronged.

Maybe you've been tempted to take the shortcut at work to make more money, or to gain greater notoriety for yourself. College students: As you consider your future careers, have you thought about the ways in which your job might influence others? For instance, maybe there's an awesome business opportunity that will make a lot of money. But in doing so, you will take advantage of others directly or indirectly.

While I don't expect many of you in this room to become future dictators of a country, we should still make sure we heed the warnings of the Bible. Wealth gained at the expense of others is not only wrong, but will be punished.

This leads us to our second way to not be happy: building a house of cards. Let's read verses 9-11.

The text tells us that the second crime here is the oppressors thinking that they could amass great wealth and riches in order to protect himself from enemies around him. They did this at the cost of cutting off many peoples.

We live in Montana, so this text is probably easier for us to imagine because of the vast amounts of eagles and large birds that live in this area. Eagle nests are never low where you can reach them. They're usually high up in a large strong tree. They do this so that they can stay away from us, and so that they have a better vantage point to spot enemies or intruders.

This is exactly what the oppressors are indicted for doing. They think that their wealth and their riches will protect them from enemies around them. There are reports that the Babylonians built huge walls and gates around their cities. But this is going much further than just their walls and gates. The oppressors think that if they have enough money and riches that it will save them.

How prone are we to do the exact same thing? We try to pad our savings accounts, or emergency funds, which is not inherently bad, but are we hoping in these to save us and satisfy us? We think money is going to save us from hurt and pain and tragedy, but we don't even know if we're guaranteed tomorrow!

Jesus addresses this exact thing in Matthew 6. Jesus says <sup>19</sup> "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Now I want to be clear that I'm not saying that if you're rich that you're somehow an oppressor. That's not what this passage is after. This passage is referring to two things: 1) gaining wealth in an evil and perverse way, and 2) trusting in your wealth to save you from the pains of this world or to save you when you die.

In other words, we, who are to live by faith, are not to sinfully accumulate wealth, which will rot and waste away. We are to store up treasures in heaven, and trust in Him for our salvation, not our money and treasures. The passage says that by accumulating evil gain and trying to save their lives, they will now forfeit their lives. The irony!

But not only that, did you catch verse 11? It says that the stones and the beams will cry out the guiltiness of those that try to gain their lives by storing up treasures. How many times has a rich person died, and then all of the skeletons come out of the closet? The truth about all that they did to accumulate such wealth spews out, just like the stones and beams.

So, brothers and sisters, let us not build a house of cards that will fall at the slightest wind and trust not in our wealth to make us happy and save us. Instead, let us live by faith, where neither moth nor rust can destroy.

This leads us to how to not be happy number 3: building with blood, sweat, and sin, let's read verses 12-14.

The charge against the oppressors in this woe is due to cities and towns being built with blood and violence. It would be safe to assume that the Babylonians and even the Israelites had constructed cities and structures using the forced labor of other peoples. It is clear in this passage that blood and violence were used as the fuel for building.

There was a documentary that came out a couple years ago during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. I don't know if many of you watched the World Cup or not, but the stadiums they built for it were amazing pieces of architecture. This small country was able to pull off an awesome venue for the world to see.

Yet, this documentary highlighted the inhumane conditions that existed for many of the foreign workers that came to Qatar to help build these soccer stadiums. Yes, the games were a success, but at what cost? These workers were working in triple digit heat, stuffed into apartments like sardines, and literally worked to death. Their families were given no answers except that they died of natural causes.

All of this was for the glory of soccer, and more importantly for the glory of Qatar. Did you notice the punishment for this in Habakkuk? Verse 13 says that the oppressors would labor merely for fire, and

nations would weary themselves for nothing. The pursuit of glory would be for nothing. Did you also notice the other thing in this woe that was not present in the other two?

This woe begins a shift in the rest of the chapter. If you noticed before, God was not mentioned a single time in the first two woes. However, here in this third woe we begin to see that what was implicit in the first two has now become explicit. In other words, God is assumed as the one who will bring about the plundering of Babylon and the one who will cause the forfeiting of life in the second. But He is never explicitly mentioned.

But here in the third woe, God is mentioned as the Lord of hosts or literally Yahweh of hosts. It first appears in the Bible in the books of Samuel. It's used 3 times surrounding Samuel's initiation as the last judge of Israel, then again during the transition from King Saul to King David, and then finally as David establishes his kingdom in Jerusalem. It's used nowhere else in the books of Samuel.

This example is most easily seen in 1 Sam 17 when David says to Goliath, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup>This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head."

So why is this important to the book of Habakkuk? We saw last week in Habakkuk's complaints that he is questioning why things are the way they are. Why is justice dwindling and wickedness prevailing? God is showing us that despite what the circumstances around us look and feel like, there is a deeper and greater reality at play here.

God is showing himself to be the covenant God, the one who keeps all of his promises, who will deliver David and Israel from the hands of the Philistines. This same covenant keeping God is showing his faithfulness here in our text too. He could've used any other name of his, yet he chose to use his covenant and faithful name. Therefore, as bad as the oppressors might seem, as bad as life seems at the moment, the Lord of hosts cannot and will not be thwarted. But how do we know this? Read verse 14 again with me.

We have hope because despite the towns and cities being built with violence and blood, they are toiling in vain. For one day, one day, "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Now this verse is actually a mash-up of sorts.

In Numbers 14, the Lord says to Moses that the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, which was in response to the people rebelling against God in the wilderness. Then in Isaiah 11 when Isaiah is describing the coming Messiah he ends with "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

So here in verse 14, we have the ultimate mashup. How would the earth be filled with the glory of the Lord? Through the knowledge of the Lord! And the knowledge of the glory of the Lord has come in the form of Jesus Christ himself! Who condescended to us, lived the life we couldn't live, and died for our sins on the cross.

And now we get to participate in verse 14. I can't help but hear the great commission in Matthew 28 ringing in my ears when I read verse 14 in Habakkuk. For the great commission is the *how* verse 14 will come about.

Jesus says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Therefore, the way that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth is through making disciples of all nations! And how does Jesus put his guarantee that this will happen? By promising that he will be with us always as we do this!

Some of us participated in a small event for the persecuted church a couple weeks ago and learned more about the church in North Korea. I think most of you would be surprised to hear that there is a church in North Korea. But God is working among those people. He is working in the hardest places to reach in the world.

When we doubt God's goodness because injustice is all around us. When we doubt because it seems like Jesus is the punch line to a joke rather than the name that will be praised in eternity. When we doubt that these unreached places in the world will ever be reached with the gospel, let us come back and rest in verse 14. He is working and keeping his promise now, and one day, it will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea.

Let's read verses 15-17 and see how to not be happy number 4: kicking people while they're down.

From the text, we can see that the crime surrounding the oppressors is in relation to them shaming the weak. The oppressors not only conquered their enemies, but they have now taken it a step further and are now shaming them. There are examples in Isaiah and Zephaniah of the shame that was brought to Israel through the Babylonians. Even Jeremiah 51 describes Babylon this way, it says "Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD's hand, making all the earth drunken; the nations drank of her wine; therefore, the nations went mad."

Babylon is to be indicted for their treatment of other nations. But what about Judah? Were the Israelites better off? In Ezekiel 22, God is describing the atrocities done by Judah and Israel themselves. <sup>6</sup> "Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. <sup>7</sup> Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you."

This is ultimately why Israel was punished so severely in all of their deportations. The people of Israel were told to love God and love their neighbor. It's been clear they could never stay faithful to God, and they not only forgot the orphans and widows, but they wronged and exploited them.

The punishment is clear here. The one who does this will be given the same cup that he gave to others. This cup will come from the right hand of God himself and will separate God's righteous remnant and the uncircumcised around them. Look at verse 16 again. "Drink yourself, and show your uncircumcision!" Remember that circumcision was given to God's people to literally draw the line between them and the gentiles. But God is saying that the people of Israel are showing themselves to be no more circumcised than the gentiles around them.

Dear church, let us heed these words from Habakkuk. Are we living in ways inconsistent with God's people? Do we take comfort in being a member at this church, showing up Sunday after Sunday, but inside we're dead? Are we taking advantage of people and shaming them because we think they deserve it at work?

Let us take a sober look at our hearts and respond in repentance. Because this passage is very clear and holds nothing back. Those that take advantage of the weak and shame others in their weakness will drink the same cup you are handing out.

Brothers and sisters, happiness is not found putting others down, overlooking the weak, and shaming the defeated. It's found in Jesus who was put down for us, was overlooked and mocked, and was crucified on the cross for us. His apparent defeat is our eternal victory. Find your happiness in Jesus.

This leads us to our last way to not be happy: worshipping counterfeit gods, let's read verse 18-20.

The crime is upfront: idolatry. The oppressors are worshipping idols that are made by human hands. They are metal images, wooden things and stones. What do all of these have in common? They are silent and speechless. Yet, verse 18 says that they are teachers of lies. How can they be teachers, if they're silent? Even though they are silent, they lie and say that they will satisfy and fulfill, but in the end, they are just that, idols made by hands.

I recently watched a documentary on the church in Southeast Asia, and there was a section that showed the producers interacting with these idol makers. They were carving images literally out of stone, and these idols would later sit somewhere in these villages outside of Buddhist temples. The producer asked the man, "if you pray to the statue, does it help?" The man answers, "yes it helps, when we pray to the statue, it becomes reality...like 70% of the time it works."

While this might seem comical, as most of us in the West did not come from a culture or practice that physically prays to idols, we cannot whole sale throw this woe out the window. John Calvin famously said that our hearts are "idol factories." Listen to the way Martin Luther put it 500 years ago.

The wicked say and confess . . . "I am a monk. I serve God with vows and ceremonies. Because of this he will give me eternal life." But who tells you that you thus are worshipping the true God, when he has not commanded these things? Therefore you have made up for yourself some god who wants these things, although there is no true God who requires this or who wants to give eternal life because of this. What then are you worshipping except an idol of your own heart, whom you think the righteousness of your works pleases?

How are we manufacturing ways that we think will please God? Do we confess with our mouths that we are saved by grace through faith, but our heart is functionally living as if we believe that it's salvation by grace through faith plus works. Are we resting in the finished work of Christ or the unfinished work of yourself? Or are we worshipping God on Sunday here in this building and then Monday through Saturday we are worshipping the little gods of relationships, hobbies, money, careers, sex, and sports?

Did you notice that there wasn't a clear punishment to this crime? But if you look a little closer, you'll find not only the answer to this crime, but also the answer to idolatry. Look at verse 20 one more time.

Idols are empty and speechless, and they ultimately try to deny the existence of reality. The true reality is this: there is a God, he is the creator God, who exists in 3 persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our world and the idols in it want to deny his existence and the judgement to come. Idols want to make us believe that he's not coming back, that justice is not coming.

Therefore, go ahead and believe in this little thing to make you happy. Sleep around, it's ok; watch ESPN more than you read your Bible; work your fingers down to the bone to earn enough money to retire early, but forsake your family while you're at it. These are all lies that the enemy uses through idols to deny the reality that our God is in his holy temple. He is not some silent stone or metal image.

But to go a little further into our introspection of our hearts, I want you to ask yourself: why do we worship idols? If we look at verse 19 again, we see why. <sup>19</sup>“Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise!” The answer is much simpler than you think. We want to worship silent idols that cannot talk back because they are silent and they don't talk back! In other words, it's easier to worship idols that don't correct or guide you back to the truth.

We are so content to give our lives to our jobs when our culture commends us for our dedication and hard work. We are so content to give our lives to our children's success and perceived happiness when our world commends us for doing everything we can for our kids.

But when it comes to worshipping the living God, the one who is ruling and reigning and speaks into our lives, we lose all desire to worship that God. For this God shows us the right way to live, the way that leads to true flourishing and joy. Yet this way rages against our flesh, so we decide to worship lesser idols that seem to demand less of us. But in actuality, these lesser idols enslave us and steal our lives.

Our God is the one who sets us free from our bondage to sin and gives us abundant life in Himself, and He is coming back for his people and for his church. He is coming soon, and with his return, he will bring sweeping justice on all the wicked. No amount of works can save you from justice. Only living by faith, faith in Jesus, the Son of God, and in his righteousness.

To close, I want to circle back to verse 6 and point out something that you might've missed. It's kind of an odd verse so bear with me.

Now it's clear from verse 2 that this is the Lord speaking from the beginning of chapter 2. Yet there's verse 6 and it kind of sticks out like a sore thumb. God tells Habakkuk to right down everything that he says, and then goes on to say that Babylon's soul is puffed up, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

Everything that follows, everything we've looked at today is an outflowing of verse 6. It says “shall not all these.” Who are the all these? He's speaking about all nations and all peoples that have been oppressed by the oppressors, including God's people. Therefore, all of these people shall say these words as a taunt against the oppressors with scoffing and riddles for him. Therefore, God is telling Habakkuk, these are my words, but they are going to be your words.

Therefore, these are our words. We can have such confidence in our God, in our Jesus, that these words will be true. Did you notice that there wasn't a single “Thus says the Lord” in what we read today? It's because it's God's words in our mouths.

We can say these words to our oppressors, and KNOW that they will not be in vain. For this is the battle hymn of God's people: our God will one day make all things right. Justice will prevail, not evil. One day, all the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, for the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him. May that day come soon for all those that live by faith.