

**The Prophet's Perplexity**

Scripture: Habakkuk 1:12-2:20

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**1969**

If you have your Bibles you might turn with me to the Habakkuk and we're going to continue our study in Habakkuk. This is a thrilling book and I just really am excited about what I'm learning in my preparation and my study for this. It just thrilled my heart to begin to kind of work with this prophet on some of the problems that bothered him. If you remember last time we started our discussion of the book of Habakkuk, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and so forth in case you need a location point. We talked about the fact that there were two problems that really were facing Habakkuk: one was that Israel was living in sin and Habakkuk couldn't understand why God let them live on like that. The second problem was when God answered his prayer God told him that the Chaldeans were going to come down and crush Israel, in fact it wasn't going to get better, it was going to get worse. He couldn't understand that either.

Now when we come to verse 12 of Chapter 1, and tonight we're going to deal with verses 12 through verse 20 of Chapter 2, and we'll skip through a lot of it, just highlighting it. We come to basically the same issues again from a little different angle.

Now we said, by way of review also, that the problem we're dealing with is the problem of history. We said that in the last century and into part of this century the big problem for Christianity to face, or the big issues, was the issue of science. The critics of Christianity were always saying that the Bible couldn't square with science. Now when it came to the relationship of Scripture to science Scripture had to take a back seat. But that problem was fairly well erased and you don't hear anybody today attacking the Bible from a scientific view.

What you do hear today is this kind of criticism: if God is really like He's portrayed in the Bible why does He let this world get in such a mess? If God is really a good, kind, loving, God why does He allow all the suffering and disease, and murder and war and all of the horror that's going on around the world? Or how do you reconcile the God of the Bible with the history of the world?

And so the problem in the book of Habakkuk is just that. How does God fit in with what's happening in the world? And when we come to our second message in this series we come to verse 12, and we see some really exciting things beginning to develop in Habakkuk's mind. He's been pondering this problem for a long time. And then he began to articulate in verses 1 through 11, and in verse 12 he

starts arriving at some kind of semblance of an answer.

Now I believe that it's very important for the Christian to not only read the newspapers and to know what's going on in the world, but beyond that to be able to understand how to interpret what's going on. It's one thing to just sit there rather blandly and read what's happening; it's another thing to be able to read it and interpret it in the light of God's scheme of things. And what we have to be very careful about is being too hasty in dealing with history. We have to be careful that we're not guilty of speculating about what we think God ought to do and not letting Him do what He wants to do in connection with His plan.

And so we again are faced with Habakkuk's problem, let's jump in and join in. And I want to divide the section into two parts, very simple, the question and the answer, the question and the answer.

Now there's a two-fold question on Habakkuk's mind. The first one we hit last week and we're going to hit it again tonight. It is this: why does God let sin go unjudged? Why does He allow, verse 2 of Chapter 1, "O Lord, how long shall I cry and Thou wilt not hear, even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save?" Habakkuk's first problem is why does God not immediately judge sin. Well he has an interesting approach to this. Now he's going to attack the problem in verse 12.

Now what's he going to do? Well he's completely stymied with this problem. He's really up against it. He hasn't got any solid footing. He's standing in a swamp. He's standing, if you please, on very thin ice and he's trying to reckon with the problem while it's staring him right in the face and he can't do it, so he does a very smart thing. He backs away from the problem. He backs off from the swamp and gets on solid ground. That is the key to what he does. He does this: instead of fooling around with what he doesn't know, he backs up to what he does know and starts there. And in his mind he is saying, "Now maybe if I start with what I do know about God, I can come to some conclusion about what I don't know." Pretty good thinking! And so he backs up, and that's what we find him doing in verse 12 as the question is posed.

Now watch him backing up to where he knows he's on solid ground. Here it comes. First of all he wants to establish what he knows about God so he starts out in verse 12, "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die." You hear the absoluteness of that statement? "We shall not die, O Lord, Thou hast ordained them," that is the Chaldeans, the ones who were going to come in and wipe out Israel, "Thou hast ordained them for judgment and O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction." I'll tell you, you never heard a more positive statement than that.

Now Habakkuk had enough of this problem. He's had enough of standing on thin ice so he backs up to where he knows he's got solid ground. And he starts establishing something that he knows. If you have a problem to do in mathematics and all you have are five unknowns you can't really do the

problem. But if you back up and take four things that you do know you can figure out what the unknown one is. So this is his method. He starts by saying this: First of all I know God is eternal. That's the first thing I know. Verse 12, "Art Thou not from everlasting?" This he knows. His God is different than the Chaldeans so-called gods.

You back up into verse 11 and he's been thinking about the Chaldean god. You know the Chaldeans were going to come down and wipe out Israel and Habakkuk was told by God that when they did it they would think their own god enabled them to do it and they'd start praising their own god. Verse 11 says at the end, that they will impute the power unto their own god. They'll say that their own god did it and all of a sudden he thinks about that in verse 11, and he jumps to verse 12 and he says, "Wait a minute. Their god, what is their god? What is he? Why my God is eternal, from everlasting, that I know." He's not like the god of the Chaldeans. He's not like the god of any man or any nation. He is God from eternity to eternity. That much I know. You can feel the ground getting more solid as he says it.

I'll tell you there's nothing more reassuring, there's nothing more consoling, there's nothing more helpful than in the midst of a time of oppression when confused by what's going on in the world, when your mind is boggled by the happenings in the world today, there's nothing more wonderful than to stand back on solid ground and say, "One thing I know that my God is eternal." What do you mean? My God is outside the flux of history. My God was around before history started, and my God will be around after it is gone. Tremendous truth! Habakkuk is saying in essence my God came before history. My God is over history. In fact my God created it. He is the eternal One. His throne, His realm, His rule is outside time all together. He reigns in eternity; the eternal God. He's not subject to history. He creates history.

I don't know about you but I feel a lot better already. I mean I'm standing on what I know. I know my God is eternal. I look around me at the world and I see all the mess in Vietnam and all the confusion in wars and trying to figure out where it's going to lead and where it's going to go and I could get pretty well fouled up in the problem, but you know what I do? I've learned from Habakkuk. I just step back and say, "This I know, my God was there before it started, He'll be there when it's over; He created it."

And Habakkuk already feels a little better. But he's not done. Look what else he said. "Art Thou not from everlasting." Listen to this: O Lord my God? Second thing he says is not only is God eternal, but God is self-existent. He says, "I remember that too." You say, "How do you get that?" Because he used for Lord, the word Yahweh, which is transliterated Jehovah. And Jehovah was the name of God that meant the I Am, the eternally existing One. And Habakkuk is saying is the second thing I know about my God He is self-existent. He always was and He always will be and nobody made Him because he always was. God is the self-existing I Am. He says that by the very fact that he says Jehovah.

You remember that God said, "Go and tell them," to Moses. He said, "Moses go and tell your people that I Am hath sent you." The four consonants that make up the word I Am are Yahweh and that was God's name and Yahweh is the verb in the Hebrew, the word to be. Yahweh translated means I Am. I Am period. And that God took for His name. The name I Am that I Am means I Am the absolute self-existing one. I do not depend on anything for My existence.

And here's the second vital fact that Habakkuk comes to because he says, "God isn't in any sense dependent on what happens in the world." He is totally self-existent and self-determining. And I can just feel Habakkuk's reassurance gather. He feels like now he's found the solid ground. God is not only eternal He's self-existent and the problem already is beginning to fade.

But he's not through. He knows something else about his God. He says, "Art Thou not from everlasting O Lord, my God, mine what, Holy One. My Holy One! He says, "I know something else about my God, my God is Holy." That's important. That's an absolute. He's sure not only of God's eternal existence, he's sure not only of God's self-determined existence, but he's sure that God is utterly, absolutely, perfectly righteous and holy.

And if you'd like it another way it goes like this: God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. Habakkuk must have thought can that kind of a God, so holy, ever do anything wrong? Absolutely impossible! So he is determined that his God is eternal, that He is self-existent, and that he is holy.

And he's not done yet. He's got something else he knows about his God. Skipping the center phrase we come to this: "O Lord Thou hast ordained them for judgment and O mighty God Thou hast established them for correction." The fourth thing he knows about his God is that his God is almighty. God is absolutely the all powerful; God is sovereignty in action. Not one single thing happens in this world outside the sovereign will of God. God is the absolute personification of power itself. You want the theological term? God is omnipotent, El Shaddai the almighty one. That's God. God who created the world out of nothing, the God who stood one day and said, "Let there be and there was," "That God," says Habakkuk, "Has absolute power." My God is in control, He is sovereign, not one thing could happen that He couldn't stop and nothing happens that He didn't allow to start. He is the almighty one. He is mightier than the Chaldeans; He is mightier than anything."

And so he's standing on solid ground. Then he knows something else about his God and he says it with a tremendous amount of courage. In the middle of the verse he says, "We shall not die." Now he may have been trying to convince himself, but I think beyond that he's stating a fact that he knows God. You say, "Well how can he stand there and say we shall not die?" because he knew a fifth thing about God. Not only did he know that God was eternal, not only did he know that God was self-existent, not only did he know that God was holy, not only did he know that God was all mighty, but he knew this: God is faithful. He knew that. He knew it and he said, "We shall not die."

What do you mean faithful? Well you see God is a God of promise isn't He? And God made a promise with Habakkuk's people that He would never destroy them, but that he would make of them a great nation that would number as the sands of the sea. God had a promise an unconditional covenant with Israel, and so Habakkuk remembers, wait a minute, we're not going to die, my God is a faithful God. He's not about to let the Chaldeans wipe us off the face of the earth. He's got a promise to keep with us and he's on solid ground. He's remembering the Abrahamic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant given to Abraham confirmed with Isaac, confirmed with Jacob, confirmed with David. God said it again and again and again and he remembers that God is faithful.

The prophet couldn't forget that God said, "I will be their God and they will be my people." And so he stands on firm ground. While believing in God those saintly prophets of the Old Testament might have sort of been chilled by the fact that God was sort of far away. They had no indwelling Spirit, they had no New Testament for that wasn't even in the mind of the prophets. Christ was in a prophetic way, but nothing of the instruction and the guidance of the inward man that's found in the New Testament. And they might have come to the conclusion that God was way off; that God was oblivious to them. But they didn't and do you know why? There was one thing that constantly linked them with God. Do you know what it was? It was God's covenant with them. This was the constant link that bound the hearts of God's people to God. And they thrived on the truth that God was a faithful covenant-keeping God. And God would never break His word, so Habakkuk reminds himself that God's not about to wipe out Israel because God is a faithful God.

Wasn't it interesting how Habakkuk tackles the problem? You see he reached his answer for the moment by stepping away from the problem and thinking about what he really knew was true, and having established that he could move to that which he did not know in the light of what he did know. I'll tell you something, folks, you'll never read anywhere in all your life in any psychology book, in any psychiatric book, you'll never lie on anybody's couch and hear any better advise than what Habakkuk just gave you. There's only one way to tackle problems in this world. You know what it is? Back off and stop and think about the God that you know, and when you run into a stone wall and you can't figure out what's going on, you just stop and back up and say, "Wait a minute, God is eternal. He was here before this problem; he's going to be here when it's over." He's self-existent; there's no problem at all that's too big for Him. He doesn't depend on any of the vicissitudes of life. He's independent of those. Not only that He's almighty. Nothing happens but what He allows to happen. Not only that but He's absolutely holy. He'll never do anything wrong. Not only that but He's faithful, always faithful and if you want a little New Testament thing to hand on there, "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be, what, tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." God is faithful.

So you're standing where you know. You got some problems? Do you? Why don't you try them like this? You'll get so blessed by what you know about God you'll forget your problems. Whenever I get a

big problem I just kind of start thinking about the Lord.

I always think of the story of the old Indian used to come to church and sit in the front row and he'd always come a half an hour early and finally people became a little concerned about why he was always there early so somebody went over to him and said, "Tonto," or whatever his name was, "why do you always come early?" And he said this, I liked it, he said, "Me come early, me sit down," listen to this one, "Me think Jesus." Don't you like that? You see if you can step back from the problem and start to think about what you know about God and Christ you've got the answer in your hand.

That's what Habakkuk did. But even in doing that another problem pops into his mind in verse 13. The first thing that he couldn't quite understand was why God let sin go unjudged. And you might wonder that today. Why does God let the church get liberal? Why does God let these wicked people make money? Why does God let the world go like its going? We pray for revival and it doesn't come. Why, why, why, well stand back on what you know about God. Start from there.

But Habakkuk's got another question. He says, "Now God I'm alright on that first one. I know that it's going to come." Just like we talked about this morning, you break the moral order and what falls? The wrath of God. It's going to happen. It's going to come. God in your time, you're running it. I'm alright on that, God. But he says, "I've got one other problem, God, and I need a little help on." And he says it's this: "Why do you use those Chaldeans? If you think we're bad God, have you been noticing them? They're an awful lot worse than we are." And you know something? He was right. He was right. And so the second question that's in his mind when he write verse 13 is, "Why are you using the Chaldeans?" I mean how could God think that they were fit to be somebody's judge? How could God possibly think, and then the question comes up how could a holy God use an unholy instrument? You know I've been confronted with that. People say, Well how could God use an unholy nation to judge His nation? How could a holy God use an unholy instrument? I don't know how He does, but He does it all the time. Did you know that? You know that every time He uses me or you He's using an unholy instrument? I mean if all he had to work with was holy instruments He'd be extremely restricted. That really isn't a big problem, but it is something to think about why God would use the Chaldeans. And in Habakkuk's brain he can't figure out why they deserve to be better off than the Israelites. Why should God let them be the judge and the Israelites suffer the consequences? You know what Habakkuk does for this problem? Same thing he did for the last one. He steps back from the problem and he comes to verse 13, and he says, "Now I'm going to get back to where I know it's solid ground."

Here it comes. He says this: "Thou art," and you might preface this verse by these words, "I am sure of this God, Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst look upon iniquity. Why lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devour the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fish of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the hook, they catch them in their net and gather them in their drag; therefore, they rejoice and are glad. Therefore, they sacrifice unto their net,

and burn incense unto their drag because by them their portion is fat, and their food plenteous. Shall they, therefore, empty their net and not spare continually to slay the nations?"

Now that's kind of a tangled up passage, but what it means is this: Habakkuk says, "God there's one thing I do know about you, I know this that you're a holy God and I know one thing, You hate sin and You can't do evil." He says, "God I'm standing on firm ground on that one. I don't know why You're using the Chaldeans, I don't know why you want to use them, I don't know why they deserve to get off the hook and we not, but I do know one thing, God, You hate sin and you don't ever do anything wrong." Now he's on firm ground. And the illustration he uses here is very interesting. He says, "But after all God these Chaldeans are like fishermen. I mean they're just scooping up, they're just going out and scooping up all kinds of people." And you know what they're doing? Their god is their power. If you look at it in verse 16, they're worshipping the net that the catch the fish with. Isn't that interesting? That's like the fisherman who worships his hook. You see they made a God out of their own might and they were so proud of their own ability to scoop nations and scoop up peoples and hook them and net them and drag them in, they were so proud and it bothered Habakkuk because there was such wholesale carnage on the part of the Chaldeans and yet God decided to use them as Israel's judge.

And so in verse 17 he says, "Are you going to keep on allowing this, God, You going to let these people just run wild, are they just going to be able to trample on anybody they want to and You're never going to intervene? That's the second thing that bothered him. It's a good question. You look around the world today and you say, "How in the world did the Communists get to be the world's judge? Why should a Communist nation be able to go and overrun Poland and Czechoslovakia? Why should the Communist nation be able to go here and go there and do this? Why should Red China be able to come in and the Red Chinese government take over China and oppress and kill and slaughter and martyr 30,000 Christians? Why should they be the Christian's judge. Why should those Communists be able to dictate to what's going to happen? God aren't you on the throne? I mean You're going to let those godless atheistic people run this world? Good question, good question.

And he backs up and says, "Wait a minute God. I do know this. You don't do anything wrong. So it's got to be right, God, but I don't understand it. How can they get away with this? Well God's got a good answer for him, an excellent answer. It goes something like this. Don't worry, Habakkuk. They're not going to get away with it. God cannot handle evil with complacency. God can't tolerate sin. There's no toleration on the part of God regarding sin. He's absolutely totally intolerant of it. As we said this morning, sin and God are opposites. So he's a little worried about this and he says, "Boy if the Israelites need judging what about those Chaldeans?" God gives him an answer in Chapter 2. But you know as I think about his question I think about a lot of people, you know. They say, "All right, I admit I'm not the best guy in the world, but so and so is a lot worse than me and look at the job he's got, look at the money he's making. Look at this guy over here. He's a terrible guy, beats his wife, doesn't go to church, doesn't love God, making money like crazy. Here am I Lord, I love you, want to

serve you, I'd give it all to the church if You'd just give it to me. Why God, why do the wicked prosper, you know?" It's an old question.

God here we are in Grace Community Church. We're really trying to build this church. We need a Sunday school building, Lord; we need a sanctuary. There's money all over the place, Lord, why don't we don't we have some of it over here? God why do all those people get it all?

Now in one way or the other we've all kind of quizzed ourselves on that, but in this particular paragraph the prophet gets no answer, but at least in Chapter 1, he doesn't. But I want you to see something exciting. He's still comforted because he's on solid ground, right? He hasn't gotten a direct answer, but he's really standing in a place that's a happy place to be. He said, "Boy, I don't understand all the problems, Lord, but I understand You. I don't understand how it's all going to come out, but I know one thing, Lord, You don't make any mistakes and You don't do anything wrong, and Lord, it that's all I get for now that's all right." But then I want you to see Chapter 2 verse 1 and I want you to see one of the most interesting things you'll ever read.

This is the second great principle in solving problems. Number one: step back and stand on the ground you know you can stand on. The second thing to do is very simple, here it comes: wait. You like that? No you don't like that. The second thing you do is wait. You just stand back there on that solid ground and say, "Okay, I'm waiting."

Now watch verse 1. "I will stand upon my watch," and that's not a reference to his wristwatch, because they didn't have them in those days, "I will stand upon my watch and set myself upon the tower and will watch to see what He will say unto me." Isn't that good? I'll tell you that's how you solve the problem. You just back off and stand around until God answers. You know the problem with us isn't that we really, it's not that we don't get answers from God, it's that we don't get them when we think we have to have them. So Habakkuk backs up and he says, "I'm going to stand here, God, and I'm going to set myself on a tower and I'm going wait until I see the answer." And that last part of the verse just blesses my heart, and then he says this, "And after you've answered me I'm just going to wait to see what I answer when I am reproved."

Did that hit you like it hit me? I tell you I read that and I started laughing. That's a funny, funny statement. You know what he's saying? He's saying, "God, I'm going to stand here and I'm going to wait for your answer and then God, I'm going to try to think of something to say when You tell me how dumb I was not to trust You. See, as it to say, "God I've tried, pardon me, I'm going to stand here and if you've got to spank me, spank me. I'm going to get reproved, God, I know it." You see how much faith he had? He doesn't know the answer, but he knows God has the answer and he says, "God pardon me for my faithlessness. I'm going to stand here and when it comes, Lord, You can do anything You want to me, I deserve it. Go ahead and reprove me and I'll figure out something to say back."



He does a fantastic thing. He backs away from the problem, he stands on firm ground, he waits, and then the third thing he does he commits the problem to God. What a principle. Commit thy way unto whom? And He'll do what? He'll bring it to pass. Just wait, commit it to Him, He's in the business of solving problems.

Now there's only a single approach to any problem. Start with a God you know, trust Him and set up a watch until you get the answer. That's practical stuff. That's the way to tackle the problem. And you know what happens? In verse 2, the answer comes. And all the way through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chapter we have the answer. I just want to pick up the two dimensions of the answer very quickly.

It's a two-fold answer. The first part is an answer of judgment and the second part is an answer of salvation. He had a two-fold question. He asked why do you let sin go unjudged and he asked why the Chaldeans get off the hook? And now in the answer God gives him a two-fold answer. He says there's going to be judgment and there's going to be salvation.

Now again all through the Bible you'll find these two connected. All through the Bible when God meets out judgment it's always followed by grace or salvation, always, and here you have the two-fold answer of God.

Now first of all there's going to be judgment. Look at verse 2. "And the Lord answered me and said, 'Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.'" Now that verse has been translated and if you've got any different version there's no telling what you have. I feel that the best Hebrew rendering is "Write it so that people can read it easily and then run and tell others." Now some people translate it that it should be, should mean "Write it so big that people running down the street will be able to read it." But that's a little hard with the construction. I feel it's better rendered "Write it on tables so people can read it and run to tell others about it."

Now here's the vision that the people are going to tell. "For the vision is yet," here it comes, "an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it because it will surely come. It will not tarry." Now what is He saying? On the rest of the Chapter we know what the vision is. God is saying, "Habakkuk, the Chaldeans are going to be judged. They are only doing what they're doing for an appointed time and just like Israel was judged they're going to be judged for their sin. Only, you want to know something, Habakkuk, it's going to be infinitely worse because they're going to be totally completely wiped off the face of the earth." That's exactly what happened. So God says there's coming judgment on the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans whom I'm going to raise up, as he said in Chapter 1, to punish Israel will themselves be destroyed utterly and completely. The greatness of the Chaldeans will be very short lived. It won't last very long at all. God's got a time schedule, it's going to end very, very soon.

Certainly this was the answer that Habakkuk wanted to hear. He wanted to know that God was still a righteous God, that God wasn't about to let those Chaldeans get away with anything they wanted to do. God told him, "Don't you worry. It's not a matter of whether I will judge, it's a matter of when I will judge." Again that brings us to the concept we talked about this morning of the wrath of God. And so God says, "I'm going to judge the Chaldeans, but not only that, not only does this whole Chapter talk about judgment on the Chaldeans but it talks about the fact that God is going to judge sin no matter whose involved. And in effect God is saying this: "My moral judgment will fall whether it's on Israel or Chaldeans or anybody else that sins. It doesn't matter who." God always punishes sin, as we saw this morning, God has a moral order going on in the world. You break the moral order and judgment and wrath fall just that simple.

And so we see then that God punishes sin no matter who. The only issue is when He does it and how He does it. And then through the Chapter God lists the sins of the Chaldeans, for which He's going to punish them. And there all so typical sins of Israel and there all so typical sins of people today. We'll just highlight them. In verse 5, you have the sin of pride, very definitely. "He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home who enlargeth his desire as hell." That a very interesting statement. In other words the picture of hell or sheol as the Old Testament word is was that it was unlimited space. In other words there's no concept like when you just get so many people hell is filled up and there's no more room for anybody else. It's not that at all. The concept of sheol or hell is that it is completely unlimited and He's saying here that proud people have no limit to their self-gratification. It's as unlimited as hell. They keep stuffing it and stuffing it and it's got just as much room as before they stuffed it. And you see it says, "And is as death and cannot be," what, "satisfied." You see there's no filling it. It's like hell, it can't be filled.

So pride is one of the sins. Then the love of wine is mentioned very pointedly. And as we move on down we see covetousness, the desire for conquest, oppression, various sins of shedding of blood for personal gain, luring others to war, that's what He talks about in verse 15 when He talks about woe unto him that gives his neighbor drink that puts a wineskin to him and makes him drunk." That's really not talking about two individuals, that's talking about the Chaldean nation who would lure other nations to become allies and get involved in the wars.

So God says, "here are the sins that I'll punish the Chaldeans for. There are sins for which I will punish Israel and God did punish them. Malachi lists those sins. Malachi lists the seven deadly sins that destroyed Israel and here are eight deadly sins that were the destruction of the Chaldean nation. God was not going to tolerate sin whether it was Israel's sin or the sin of the Chaldeans or whether it's your sin or my sin. God did judge Israel with the Chaldeans in 586 B.C. Israel was sacked, taken away into captivity. Didn't last very long. Around 530 the Chaldeans were wiped out. The Medio-Persian Empire came along and flattened Babylon and that great world empire of Babylon, the great image in Daniel, the gold head, that great nation of Babylon was flattened and completely destroyed

by the Medio-Persians. So God judged Israel. In 586 He judged the Chaldeans. Around 530 or so, and I'll tell you something else, He's going to judge you. It's inevitable if you don't know Jesus Christ, if you do not know God's way of escape. He's not going to judge me. You say, "Why, are you better than me?" No, I'm probably worse. Why isn't He going to judge you? Because I have had someone who took my judgment, Jesus Christ.

There's no judgment to them who are in, I like that. And so God says there's judgment on the Chaldeans and there's judgment on sin. God will judge sin. But He doesn't stop at judgment. He ends up with salvation. Look at it in verse 4 and in verse 14. In the midst of all this judgment there's two parts to the answer. God says first part judgment, second part salvation. Verse 4, "Behold, his soul that is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith." Now look at verse 14, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Now in these two verses you have the two dimensions of salvation. Two fantastic thrilling exciting truths. First of all in verse 4 you have individual salvation. "Behold his soul that is lifted up is not upright." And better than lifted up is draws back. The person who draws away from God, who draws back from a life of faith, got a problem. But on the other hand that soul who lives by faith is justified for the just live by faith. You see there's only two possible attitudes in this life: faith or unbelief. Those are the only two. You either believe God or you don't believe Him. You either have faith in Him or you don't have faith in Him. Those are the only two alternatives in life. Either you view your life in terms of God and your belief in God and you draw your conclusions from God and from God's word, or your outlook is based on a rejection of God and the corresponding denials that come with it. You can either withdraw yourself, draw back from the way of faith, or you can live by faith in God. That's God's offer of salvation. He says, 'even those Chaldeans, if they want they can live by faith. Even the Israelites about to be judged, if they want they can live by faith and escape it.

As a man believes so he is, so he lives and so he dies. A man's belief will determine his conduct and his destiny. The just, the righteous shall live by faith, but the man who draws back from faith in God is unrighteous. There are only two options staring us in the face: number one either I take the bare word of God and I live by it, or number two I don't and I live by my own rules; the only two options in life. It's that simple. Faith means I take the word of God and I act upon it. Why because it's God's word and only because it's God's word. It means that I believe what God said because He said it, that's why. It means that I base my whole life on God to live by faith. It means that I trust God. And I'll tell you something; tonight I want to force the choice on you. Is there anything more foolish, more idiotic, in banking your whole world and eternity on what this world has to offer, or what it thinks it has to offer?

What's the controlling principle in your life? Is it faith in God, is it? Or is it calculation or worldly wisdom or human reason, or your own shrewd balanced worldview? What is the basis of your life? Is it the word of God? Is it God or is it not? Salvation comes to those who live by faith and the first instant you put your faith in God you receive the great eternal gift of salvation. It's just that simple.

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