THE RIGHTEOUS WILL LIVE BY FAITH

Habakkuk 2:1-20

Key verse 2:4

"See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright- but the righteous will live by his faith.”

We learned from the first lesson Habakkuk’s questions to God. How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? God answered Habakkuk with his surprising and unbelievable plan. It was to raise the Babylonians to judge the people of Judah. Regarding this, Habakkuk asked a second question. ‘Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?

Today's passage is God's answers to Habakkuk's second question. There is a wonderful revelation of God in this answer. The revelation contains not only the fall of Judah and Babylon, but also the end of the wicked and the righteousness, the end of the kingdom of this world. Today's passage reveals what we should seek and how we should live.

Look at verse 2:1. I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint. Habakkuk stood at the watch and waited for God’s answer. What is God's answer? Look at verse2. Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. God commanded him to plainly write down on tablets the revelation that God was going to tell him. Write down the revelation plainly on the tablets! This tells us that the revelation of God is immutable and irreversible. It is significantly important that the herald must rush to proclaim it to the people.

God tells Habakkuk about this revelation. Look at verse 3. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. God did not give him a specific date/time when the appointed time was, but he said the revelation awaits an appointed time. And, although it is not clear what ‘the end’ means, the revelation speaks of ‘the end.’ It will not prove false. And, it will certainly come.

So what is the revelation of God? In this text it is a revelation of the fall of Babylon by God’s punishment. However, the author of the book of Hebrews referred to ‘the revelation’ as ‘He who is coming’ by quoting Habakkuk 2:3. Look at Heb10:37. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. This means that God's 'revelation' is ‘Christ Jesus’ who will come again as the Judge and the Saviour. So we can read verse 3: He awaits his appointed time. He speaks of the end, does not prove false, and He will certainly come and will not delay. Jesus promised his disciples that he would come again. Also, the Bible ends with the promise of Jesus in the book of Revelation. Rev 22:12,13, 12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Then what does God reveal through Christ Jesus, the revelation?

First, he reveals the righteousness from God. Look at verse 4. See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright- but the righteous will live by his faith. Here who is 'the righteous' referring to? From a human point of view, we think we can categorize someone into some groups: more righteous person or a less righteous person, and wicked person, or a less wicked person. Habakkuk also said in his second question that Judah was more righteous than the Babylonians. However, when looking at God's standard of righteousness, it’s totally different. All of the people have sinned, so they are all unrighteous beings who have no choice but to be judged. All human beings, whether Jews or Babylonians, whether Ukrainian or Russian, whether Chinese or American, are unrighteous and cannot attain the righteousness from God. According to God's standard of righteousness, there is no one righteous or no good person. No one can be saved from God's judgment. All, without exception, are under God's imminent judgment. However, God’s righteousness has been revealed and given to us through Christ Jesus. Romans 1:17 says about the revelation of God’s righteousness. In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." This righteousness from God only comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference. Anyone who believes in Jesus, the “righteousness of God,” who received God’s judgment on our behalf receive his righteousness, because Christ Jesus paid the price for all our sins with his own life for us. Therefore Jesus is our righteousness from God revealed to us. This revelation is powerful, unchanging and unfathomable. So God wants anyone to seek His righteousness.

Second, ‘the revelation’ reveals God’s judgment. For a little while, the kingdom of this world like Babylon tries to trample and destroy the righteous with her wickedness, but God's final judgment against the kingdom of the world comes without delay. Satan, the ruler of the kingdom of the Air, will tempt and persecute the righteous, but Jesus will come soon as the Judge. That appointed time means the end of the Babylon, the kingdom of this world, the end of the wicked, the end of Satan, the judgment of all things.

Verses 5-19 declare five woes of Babylon's sins. 1) the sin of arrogance and greed(5-8). Look at verses 5-8. 5 indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples. 6 "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying," 'Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?' 7 Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim. 8 Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. Their arrogance is endless, and their greed is never satisfied. They take captive all the peoples to make themselves wealthy. 'Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion!

2) the sin of taking unjust gains (9-11). Look at verse 9. "Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin! 10You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life. 11The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it. They committed the sin of taking unjust gains in order to create and defend a magnificent worldly kingdom.

3) the sin of bloodshed and crime(12-13). Look at verses 12-13. 12 "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by crime! 13 Has not the Lord Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing? Babylon's third sin was the sin of shedding the blood of innocent people. They were ruthless in their violence and harshness.

4) the sin of seduction, adultery, and violence (15-17). Look at verses 15-17. 15"Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies. 16You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed ! The cup from the Lord 's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory. 17The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. They committed the sins of making the neighbors drunk, exploiting them, committing adultery and making them a spectacle.

5) the sin of idolatry(18-19). See verses 18-19. 18 "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak. 19 Woe to him who says to wood, 'Come to life!' Or to lifeless stone, 'Wake up!' Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it.

The five sins mentioned above are the sins of the kingdom of this world represented by Babylon. The book of Revelation chapter 17-18 describes very well the sin of Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and her fall. The revelation mentions three woes of the same sins. *'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!' 'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!. In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!' 'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!*

Christ Jesus will certainly come and will judge the kingdom of this world established by violence, injustice and greed against God. Christ will judge their sins. He will not delay.

Third, ‘the revelation’ reveals how the righteous should live. The righteous must wait for his coming. Habakkuk would often go up to the ramparts and wait for God’s answers. He thought that it would be better for God to quickly destroy the wicked and for the kingdom of God to come immediately. But God tells him to wait for it, because he awaits the appointed time and he will surely come. Many of the ancestors of faith in the Bible waited for Christ. The apostle John waited so long for the Lord to come again. All fell asleep while waiting. I pray that we may patiently wait for the Lord's coming.

And the righteous will live by his faith. Look at 2:4 again. See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright- but the righteous will live by his faith. The proud and the dishonest will not believe even if the revelation is preached. They will live according to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of this life. Then they will face the day of the final Judgment.

But God says that the righteous will live by his faith. As it mentioned earlier, the righteous are not the people without any sin, but those who believe and depend on the righteousness from God through faith in Jesus, and those who seek God’s righteousness. Like Habakkuk, the righteous will live by his faith, even when the oppression and the terrible judgment are soon to come. Although it seems that he lingers, the righteous will live by his faith in his coming as the Judge and the Saviour.

The righteous will live by faith in waiting for their bridegroom Jesus as pure bride. They don’t live according to the pattern of this world. The righteous will live by faith in the coming of the kingdom of God. He will live by faith in obedience to the word of God and by faith participate in the remaining sufferings of Christ. The righteous will preach the word of salvation and judgement by faith rather than blaming others or difficult times.

After all, God gave the answers to Habakkuk, who is suffering and complaining about the sins of the age. His situation has not changed and will not change at all. Soon God’s judgment against Judah and then against Babylon will come. And the righteous will go through difficult times in captivity. But when Habakkuk received the word of God's revelation and tried to live by his faith to the end, he found great joy and strength from God his Saviour and the Sovereign Lord alone. The word ‘the righteous will live by his faith gave him the strength and inner joy to wait for Him patiently and to live by faith to the end. The apostle Paul was also greatly influenced and encouraged by this word. Paul quoted Habakkuk's words in Romans 1:17. In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith. In addition, the author of Hebrews also found great comfort and spiritual direction through the word of revelation from God. It also influenced first-century Jewish Christians. At that time, the believers went through difficult times. The author of Hebrews gave these words of God to them. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. 38 But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved. (Hebrews 10:36-38).

Fourth, he reveals the glory of God and His Kingdom. What will happen in the Last day of Judgment? Look at verse 14. For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. At the time of Lord's final judgment, the knowledge of God's glory will fill the whole earth. And his kingdom will come. Isaiah chapter 19 well described this messianic kingdom. Isaiah 11:9 says that they will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Look at verse 20. But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him." Here God’s holy temple is not the temple in Jerusalem, but the holy city in heaven, the new Jerusalem. What does it mean that God is in his holy temple? It says that God is the Sovereign LORD in heaven and on earth. This God will surely judge and save in the appointed time. And after that, he in his holy temple with his people will rule forever and ever.

21:1-5 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Therefore, the whole earth must be silent before God. We must humbly fear God and live by our faith. Then God in his holy temple will give us the strength and joy to live a holy life by faith even in a sinful world as we patiently look forward to the day of His Second Coming.

We learned from today's passage that Christ Jesus will certainly come and judge the sins of the world. At the same time, we also learned that God gave us his righteousness which is the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. We also learned that the righteous should wait for his second coming and should not fall into temptation because of the sinful world, and that the righteous must live by faith from first to last. Then we will be saved through our faith. And we will see the glory of God and live with Him in his holy temple forever.