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## FAITH

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### Part 1 of Habakkuk

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Habakkuk 2:4 | February 16, 2003

Last week we finished the Book of Ephesians. When we get into the new building in March – mid March, around the 16th, we'll get into Ecclesiastes. So to fill the middle, we're gonna do Habakkuk. So if you would get a Bible and find Habakkuk. And it's gonna take you a while because a lot of you have never been there (Laughter). So I'll give you some time to find Habakkuk. It truly is in there. It's a great book, and we'll knock it out in the course of about four weeks.

How many of you have never read Habakkuk, never seen Habakkuk? Good. This will be good for you guys. Do something different. I like the little guys in the Old Testament. Nobody ever works on these guys, but they got a lot to say. Haggai and Zechariah and Malachi and Nahum and Habakkuk. So I'll pray. Welcome to church, and we'll get to work. God, thank you for a chance to study your Word. Father, we ask that the same Spirit that you sent to inspire these Scriptures would also come to illuminate our understanding of them.

And, Father, we pray that as a result of his work, that we would love Christ and be reconciled to you by grace. And, God, just thank you for the season that we're in as a church. We pray for a lot of wisdom and your provision so that we can walk into this next season prepared. And, God, we look forward to the day when we can get together as one, larger, extended church family very soon. In the meantime, please keep us walking in holiness by grace, and please give us faith to see what it is that you have done for us and what you have called us to. We love you, and we come to you in Christ's good name. Amen.

Habakkuk. This week I'm gonna give you an overview, and then next week we'll just start our journey through the book verse by verse, chapter by chapter. When we're dealing with this great book, I need to set sort of the backdrop for you. Habakkuk ministers, writes, teaches at about the same time as another prophet named Jeremiah. They're contemporaries. In all likelihood, they're probably friends. Habakkuk is working in a very, very sick and sinful day in the history of God's people. Previous to his work was a king named Josiah, one of my son's favorite kings in the Old Testament because Josiah became king when he was a young boy.

And as he had been king for a season, the Scriptures were rediscovered. They cut his heart. He fell in love with God. He was convicted of his sin. He trusted God. And as a result of this explosion of love for God in his own life, there was a reformation and a renewal and a revival amidst the whole country. People just flocked to be in relationship with God. God did a wonderful and amazing thing. And through Josiah's reign, in large part because of his love for God and his faithfulness to God's Word, God was very, very exceedingly gracious to them.

They had a wonderful season of prosperity and blessing, but as soon as Josiah died, peoples' hearts became hardened and cold. There's a downward turn towards sin and death, and subsequently the nation is in disrepair and disrepute. This is the season that Habakkuk and Jeremiah are raised up to speak, and that's usually how the prophets work. They speak against the sin of God's people, calling them to repentance and faith. Jeremiah is the weeping prophet. He is very, very sad. God tells him not to get married, go to parties, have any fun because he needed to feel like God felt. Very, very sad. And his contemporary, Habakkuk, has a different ministry, and his book is less about proclaiming forth to the nation, and it's more like reading a journal entry between one man and his relationship with God.

And so the Book of Habakkuk is intensely personal, it's intensely practical, and it's a very insightful understanding of God's relationship with individual people. And so as we get into Habakkuk, you're gonna start reading the book. And I want ya to be reading it over the next few weeks so you can familiarize yourself with it. And it's laid out in a very simple way. It starts with Habakkuk sort of whining to God. Some of you may relate to this. He's sort of whining to God that he doesn't like the way things are, and so he wants God to do something. God then responds to him and tells him basically, "Shut up and trust me. I've got a plan." And so then Habakkuk whines again and says, "But, God, I really don't know if I like the plan, and I really don't know if I like what you're going to do. And so what are you gonna say now?" And then God responds and says, "Didn't I already tell ya once, shut up and trust me?"

And then Habakkuk comes up with this genius idea in Habakkuk 3, and he basically says, "Hey, I'm gonna shut up and trust God." And that's the whole Book of Habakkuk (Laughter). "What are you doing?" "Hey, look. I know what I'm doing." "Are you sure you know what you're doing?" "I'm sure I know what I'm doing." "Hey. You know what you're doing." "Yeah. No kidding. I'm God. You know, good conclusion (Laughter)." That's the Book of Habakkuk. That's how it's all laid out. And so it's a series of conversations between Habakkuk and God. And the curious thing in this as well is Habakkuk asks God, he says, "God, what's the plan?"

And many of you, as we get into this book, you'll have this problem. You'll want to know. You'll want to know. "God, just tell me what you're

doing.” And I’m telling ya this: You don’t want to know. Habakkuk was informed by God what the plan was, and he wished he would have never heard it. Habakkuk says, “The world’s a terrible place. What are you gonna do?” And God says, “No problem. I have a plan. I’m gonna kill everybody.” Habakkuk says, “Well, that’s – I didn’t want to hear that. That’s sad, and that’s not what I was looking for (Laughter).” God’s like “Well, that’s the plan. You asked. That’s the plan. You asked. If you don’t want to know the plan, don’t ask (Laughter).” All right?

And it’s this interesting interplay between Habakkuk and God. Very personal. Very practical. The theme that we get into in the Book of Habakkuk is namely faith. That’s the great theme of the book. And God’s asking Habakkuk “Do you trust me?” Because Habakkuk’s asking God “What about the world, God, and what are you gonna do?” And God says, “Now, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Don’t ask me about the world and don’t ask me about me. I’m gonna ask you about you.” God says, “It’s not about me and the world, Habakkuk. It’s about you trusting me and my work in the world. Do you trust me? Do you trust me?” And God reverses the question on Habakkuk.

It’s kind of the same situation that Job had where Job had a lot of questions for God and God didn’t have any answers for Job, mainly just a question like “Which one of us is God? And are you gonna go with me? And even if you don’t like it, what are you gonna do?” All right (Laughter)? You know, like “You’re sort of stuck with me. I’m the one true God. So take it or leave it, you know. It’s not your way right away. It’s my way all the time, and that’s the way it’s gonna be.” And Habakkuk has to learn to trust God. And that’s the theme of the book, faith. Trust God when he doesn’t like what God’s doing, when he doesn’t understand what God’s doing, when he struggle with his own life and with the life of those around him. And that’s the great theme of Habakkuk. It’s the great theme of faith.

So we – before we get into this section today, I’m gonna do an overview. I’m gonna do one verse of Habakkuk. I’m gonna do Habakkuk 2:4, which is the theme of the book. But before I do, I needed to define faith for you. The reformers and the puritans define faith as three things that were interrelated, and I need to explain those to me. The first, they said, was knowledge, that faith needed an object and that object was defined by knowledge. You need true knowledge. You need the truth. People today will say, “Well, there’s many gods or there’s one God or there’s no God or there’s no life after death or everybody goes to heaven or only some people go to heaven”, all kinds of opinions, conjectures, speculation. You need to know what’s the truth. What’s the truth.

And once you receive the truth, and the truth is the Scriptures and it is Jesus, he’s the point of the Scriptures, he tells us “I’m the way, the truth and the life.” He says he’s the truth. And he says in John 17 “Father, sanctify them by the truth. Your Word is true.” So Jesus tells us “I am the truth and the Scriptures are the truth.” That’s knowledge. We understand that. Then the next aspect is accepting it. Not fighting it, not resisting it, not combating against it, but actually receiving it as the truth. Here’s one God, his name is Jesus, and the Scriptures are truth. Receiving it. And then lastly, it’s trusting. It’s trusting in Jesus as revealed in Scripture, and it’s putting our trust and our faith in him and then living as if he were God and living as if his Word is true because it is.

And if your faith doesn’t work itself down to the place where it implicates your life, right, your sexuality, your diet, your budget, your friendships, your mouth, if it doesn’t get to that point, you’re not walking in faith because faith is intensely practical. It’s day-to-day trusting God and God’s Word knowing that even if you don’t see it or understand it, he’s wise and he’s good and he’s right and we trust him. And this is important because, first of all, you need to get good information. The amount of information on planet earth is doubling every three years. The amount of information is overwhelming. Much of it is contradictory when it comes to the spiritual.

Once you have true information about God, Jesus, then you have to guard your heart because your first temptation will be to resist the truth. And unrighteousness is what Romans Chapter 1 says, that the truth comes and we say, “Ugh, I don’t like that.” Usually our resistance to God is not academic in nature; it is moral, meaning we do what we want, we’re our own gods, we live as we please, sort of rule and reign and call it as we see it. And then if we have to accept the fact that there’s another God and that it’s not us and that he tells us what to do, we don’t tell him what to do and that he’s in charge and we’re not in charge and that he’s smarter than we are and he’s better than we are, we struggle with that because it means that we’re going to have to get off the throne, or at least the perceived throne that we believe that we’ve been sitting on, and we have to trust him.

And at that point there’s a desire upon us, Romans 1 says, to resist that because we want to keep sinning and do as we please. So once we’ve worked through the intellectual barrier and we’ve worked through the emotional barrier, then there is just the practical matter of trusting, trusting in Jesus. And this is important because information in and of itself will not save you and put you in relationship with God. Okay? James says that “Even demons believe there is one God and they shudder.” Demons know who God is, but they don’t love him. Okay? The same thing happens with the temptation of Jesus in Luke 4 and Matthew 4 where Satan comes and he says, you know, “If you’re the Son of God, meaning you’re the Son of God, then do this.” Satan knows that Jesus is the Son of God, but he doesn’t love him, he doesn’t trust him, he doesn’t obey him as a result of his love and his trust.

And so some of you may have lots of information, but until it is practiced as faith, you lack transformation. God’s truth hasn’t changed you. I had a college professor I’ve told you about before. He memorized every single word of the New Testament and was a vehement atheist. It hadn’t got – he had the information, but he hadn’t received and he hadn’t trusted Jesus. Information in and of itself is neutral. It depends upon whether or not you receive it and live in light of it. And so when we’re talking about faith, we’re talking about who is Jesus, have you allowed yourself to receive the truth about him, and have you put your trust in him as if he were your God? Because he is. Okay? When we’re talking faith, that’s what we’re talking about. And that’s our great, great theme.

So we’ll go to Habakkuk 2:4 and we’ll talk about this matter of faith. That’ll be our great theme for tonight. And it’s curious because throughout the course of human history, God has lit a wick to some certain Scriptures that have exploded. And Habakkuk 2:4 is one of the, I would submit to you, most important verses in your Bible. It underlays the foundation of the theology of the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Apostle Paul and Martin Luther and the Reformation. One little verse from a guy most of you never heard of. Habakkuk 2:4. He’s – here is God speaking. And now, this will be

my final statement before we jump in, that God here speaks to Habakkuk. Very interesting.

The section that we're looking at is not Habakkuk speculating about God. It's God revealing himself to Habakkuk. God shows up and God says something. Every single time you and I pick up the Scriptures, we're in the exact same position as Habakkuk. God has come to speak to us, he's come to say something. And he wants us to hear and he wants us to believe and subsequently he wants us to obey. And within that, the beauty of this verse is that we don't need to guess what God wants or what God desires. God tells us plainly. That's the beauty of it. We know who he is. We know what he says.

So we pick it up in Habakkuk 2:4. He says, God says, "See, he is puffed up", talking about the proud individual. "His desires are not upright, but the righteous will live by his faith." Simple word. Simple verse. Two people Habakkuk is spoken to about here by God. God says, "There's two kinds of people: People who trust me and people who trust themselves. That's it. That's it." If you want to clear all the clutter, you want to clear all the junk, you want to clear all the religions, you want to clear all the philosophies, you want to clear all the "isms" and you want to get it down to the basic fundamental of it all, God says, "There's two kinds of people: People that trust me and people who trust in themselves. That's it. That's it."

And I'll submit this to you: He says, "People who trust themselves they're proud. They're puffed up. They're full of themselves. They think they're smarter than they are. They think they're better than they are. They think they're wiser than they are. They think they're more informed than they are. They think they're more insightful than they are. They think they're more enlightened than they are. And they're wrong. And they're wrong." And this is God's hard word to us all, that God is smarter than we are and God is better than we are. And that for those of us who trust in ourselves rather than him, we're being quite silly.

I mean, some of you will say, "Well, I don't trust God. I'm an atheist." Well, if you're an atheist, you are a person of tremendous and exceeding faith. You trust in things you cannot prove like life after death in the absence of God. And you trust in the three pounds of meat between your ears. And you can't even prove the three pounds of meat between your ears is functioning appropriately without using the three pounds of meat between your ears. So your whole faith comes down to the fact that I trust my mind and I can't prove that. I live in faith in the three pounds of meat in my own head. All right?

Some will say, "No, I'm very scientific, very rational, very empirical. I trust in science." You trust in the scientific method, which says that you are objective, which you're not because even the experiments that you conduct are motivated emotionally for some particular reason. And so from the beginning, you're very subjective. In addition, the scientific method assumes that your mind works, that it corresponds with reality, that what your eyes see and your hands touch actually corresponds with reality. You can't prove that. It's faith, and you're trusting that.

Some say, "Well, I don't believe there's life after death." You've never been there. You have faith in the hope that there is nothing. Where I believe that everyone gets to see God and be his friend, you have no evidence for that. That is hope and that is faith and that is wish, but that is not fact. What I'm saying is very simply this: At the bottom of each of our lives is a faith decision. "I'm going to hold to this religion because I trust this teacher. I'm going to hold to this philosophy because I trust this philosophy. I will hold to this scientific inquiry because I trust the scientific method in my mind." And my question to you is this: Who is more trustworthy than Jesus?

If you want to boil it all down, there's Jesus and everybody else. And the question is very simply this: Why would you trust someone more than Jesus? Jesus said he was God. Jesus lived without sin. Jesus never told a lie. Jesus told ya he would live, he told ya he would die, he told ya he would rise, and he did. He has made himself the most trustworthy person who has ever lived. And what God is saying to Habakkuk here is he says, "The righteous live by faith. They trust me because I'm trustworthy." And he says, "Proud people they trust themselves, which is silly" because we're not as smart as Jesus, we're not as good as Jesus, we're not as honest as Jesus, we're not as consistent as Jesus, and we're not as humble and selfless as Jesus. He's trustworthy. And that's the great theme that comes to Habakkuk. God says, "You can trust you or you can trust me, and everything else is details."

If you're here tonight and you're a non-Christian, I just want to boil it down to that very simple practical place for you. You trust you or you trust Jesus. And the question is do you think you're more trustworthy than he? If you bring it down to that simple place, it becomes very obvious what the answer is. Now, from this place in Habakkuk 2:4, 600 years later this great truth that God spoke to Habakkuk penetrates a guy named Saul. Okay? I'm gonna jump all the way forward to the New Testament, it's on the back of your notes, because of this. Paul quotes three or four times in the New Testament this great concept that God espouses in Habakkuk 2:4. He actually quotes this verse. Habakkuk 2:4 becomes one of the most often quoted verses in your New Testament.

This guy named Saul he had an interesting situation. He trusted in himself though he would have said that he was trusting in God. He was a legalist. What that means is he was a guy who thought that he could please God through his own efforts, he could be – and here's how it works out in our life. People in our life that are like Saul tend to focus on morality and spirituality. That's what they go for. That's what Paul was committed to, being moral and being spiritual. "I'm gonna be a good person and a religious person, a very devout moral and spiritual person." He was assuming God's moral and God's spiritual, so if I'm moral and I'm spiritual, then I'll be on God's team. God will like me. God will love me.

And here's the interesting thing. He says in Philippians 3 that he was unparalleled in his zeal. No one could have went at it harder than me. Yet, as well, he tells us later after he met Jesus that he was the chief of sinners. He changes his name to Paul. It's very interesting because the most committed, moral, zealous, spiritual person was the most wicked man. Very, very, very curious. I don't know how many of you like Saul. I'm a guy like Saul. I was till I met Jesus. Up until age 19, I believed that you needed to believe in God and be a good person and then you would be okay with God. That was it. I took that very seriously. I wasn't nearly as good at it as Saul was, but I took it very seriously.

And I've told many of you my testimony, and it was very simply this: I decided I was gonna be a moral person who believed in God. And so I never drank, never did drugs, never smoked, most likely to succeed, student body president, four-year letterman, captain of the baseball team, edited the

campus newspaper, helped push an agenda through the legislature to get millions of dollars of funding to renovate our school, did some writing for secular papers, did some work under one of the King County councilmen as his assistant. I was a good guy. A great guy. At least I thought.

And then my girlfriend, now my wife, gave me this Bible, and I started reading it. And I thought it was very interesting and curious. And the thing that struck me most is it kept talking – at least Paul kept talking about sin. And I always thought sin was when you do something awful and terrible, you kill someone, you steal from someone, you lie, you know, you're Canadian, you have a mullet, you drive a Camaro (Laughter), you're in a bowling league, something just deplorable. And I thought "Well, of course. Those kinds of people need God. Look at them. They need God. They're in dire straits. They're in terrible circumstances, and those people need God. Me, I don't 'cause I don't have any sin. Don't have any sin at all. I'm such a great guy. It's nice that I've sort of kept Jesus from having to work for me. I've saved him some effort. These other guys they're in desperate straits. "

You guys know what a mullet is, right? (Laughter) Okay. A soccer rocker, a Tennessee mud flap, the Camaro cut, the Canadian passport, right? Ugh (Laughter). Right? It's a haircut (Laughter). The beaver paddle, the achy breaky bad mistakey. You guys know (Laughter). And so my thinking was – back to Jesus (Laughter). My thinking was – I'm this guy. So I'm reading the Bible and I'm thinking "Of course. Sinful people. Yeah. They need God. Of course they need God." And then I was really – what really sort of baffled me, I was reading the New Testament and I was trying to figure out "Okay, who are the worst guys?" And the worst guys in the New Testament are the most moral and spiritual. That was very curious to me.

Guys who didn't kill anybody, didn't commit adultery, didn't steal, these are moral, spiritual, devoted people to the degree where the Bible says, "Don't lust after a woman", so these guys are walking around looking at the ground, bumping into things, almost knocking themselves out cold just to make sure that they don't look at a woman in case she may be hot (Laughter). Per chance. Jesus even goes so far as to say, "These guys tithed out of their spice rack, you know, out of their mint and cumin." You're going "You're kidding me." These are guys who are like "Well, the Bible says 'You're supposed to give a percentage of this, all you have to God.'" So they go to literally the salt and pepper and they start taking out peppercorns. "Okay. Nine for me, one for God, nine for me, one for God. We got to give 10% of everything." And you go "Man. Could you be more devoted than that? Could you be more spiritual? Could you be more moral? Could you be more zealous? Could you be more committed?"

And then what do they end up doing? Killing God. The worst guys in the Bible are the most moral and the most spiritual. And that just befuddled me 'cause I'm reading – I – seriously, first time through the Gospels, I thought the Pharisees were the heroes 'cause I was a Pharisee. "I'm a – hey, they're moral, they're spiritual. Whoo. That's my team. There we are. There we are. Keep reading. Oh, my gosh. They killed God. My team killed God (Laughter). You know, that can't be good. That cannot be good (Laughter). My team killed God. I think I'm on the wrong team." And it struck me. It just struck – oh, my goodness. Because as I started to read, I started to realize what sin really was. What really struck me is when I understood that the worst sin is pride and out of pride comes self-righteousness. "I'm good without God."

And I started reading and I thought "Oh, my goodness. If every time the Bible says sin it means pride, I'm in serious trouble. I've never been drunk, but I think that I'm better than everyone else who has been, which would make me like Paul, the chief of sinners, because not only do I think I'm better than everyone else, I look down and judge them, I'm pretending that I'm God, which is the worst of all." And Augustine, one of the great church fathers, he says that "The root of all sin is pride. Worshiping me rather than God." And that just – that really shook me up. And then what did it for me was a drunk frat guy closed the deal for me. I was in a frat for about a week before I kinda got asked to leave and kinda left on my own accord.

And we were at a frat party and this drunk guy comes up, drunk frat guy. Imagine that (Laughter). Comes up, and he hands me a big, fat, stinky beer, you know, like some generic beer, and he says, "Here you go. Here's your beer." He's really drunk. And I said, "Well, I don't drink." He says, "Why don't you drink?" I said, "'Cause I'm a good person." That's exactly what I thought. I know it's a shock to many of you that I lived under the illusion that I was a decent guy, but I actually did (Laughter). And I said, "Well, I'm a good guy. I don't drink. I'm a moral person." He says, "You don't drink?" I said, "No." I said, "I've never drank." Never drank. Made it through high school. I made it through my 21st birthday. Made it through everything without drinking. I went to WSU. Okay (Laughter)? I didn't have a drink. At WSU you're either a Christian or an alcoholic (Laughter), and that's where I got saved.

It was just unbelievable. This guy hands me the beer. And I remember when it came out of my mouth, I thought "Man, that sounds like such a self-righteous jerk." Well, I basically said, you know, in so many words "I'm better than you, so I don't drink because I have self-control." And I really loved the fact that I had self-control. I never lost control of food or alcohol or drugs or anything. Maintained complete control. And he looks at me, he says, "So God wants you to be good, huh?" And I said, "Yeah. God wants you to be good."

Now, what he was wondering was how many beers can you have before you go to hell? So he asked me, he said, "Well, how good to do you gotta be?" All right? And I said, "What do you mean?" He's like "Well, how many beers before God hates you?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I haven't found that part. I just started reading (Laughter)." I now take him to Isaiah, it says, "\_\_\_ you who are heroes and eating meat and drinking beer." And there is a verse on that. But I said, "I don't know." He says, "Well, how good you gotta be?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Don't you think you should figure that out?" And I was like "Yeah." That's – I mean, that guy's just plumbed the depths of his drunken wisdom. That's a great question, you know (Laughter). Yeah. That's a good question. I said, "You're right. I don't know how good you got to be." I said, "You know, I'll go find out."

So I started reading the Bible trying to figure out how good you got to be to be a friend of God and go to heaven. I started reading. And then I hit – it didn't take long. I'm in Matthew. At Matthew 5 I read Jesus and he says, "Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect." And I was like "What the – that's not gonna happen. It's already too late (Laughter). I'm already in serious trouble." And then I keep going. I read James. "If you've broken one part of the law, you've broken the whole thing." And the more I read, it doesn't seem like God has a scale of really good guys, kinda good guys, not so good guys, really bad guys, really, really, really bad guys. It looks like he's got Jesus and sinners. Those are his only two categories of humanity: perfect and imperfect.

I thought "Well, goodness. I think I'm good, but I don't think I crossed the line. I don't have Jesus' résumé. I know I'm not perfect." And so I started reading and reading and reading. And then what happened for me, I started reading Romans for the second time. And I was reading Romans, my first question was what is a Christian? Romans 1:6 answered that for me. I remember sitting in my dorm room as a freshman. Actually, my roommate's here tonight. I remember reading that, sitting on my bed, and it just sort of struck me. And it says, "And you are called from among those to belong to Jesus Christ." And I thought "Oh, that's what a Christian is, somebody who belongs to Jesus." And I kept reading.

A few verses later Romans 1:17 – 16 says, "For I'm not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes first for the Jew, then for the gentile." I thought "Oh. Being a Christian means you belong to Jesus. You belong to Jesus because the Gospel is powerful and it lets you become a child of God." And I was thinking "Okay. The Gospel is the story about Jesus. I want to belong to Jesus. How do you do that?" And Romans 1:17 answers that question. He quotes Habakkuk 2:4, and he says, "The righteous will live by faith." "Oh. So all I need to do is trust Jesus and the Gospel will be powerful to me and it'll make me a Christian so that I belong to him. All I need to do – I don't need to be moral, I don't need to be spiritual, I don't need to be good, I don't need to work hard. I don't need to do anything. I just need to trust Jesus."

That's exactly where he goes in Romans 1:17, "Trust him and righteous comes as a gift." "I don't need to be a great guy. Jesus was perfect. He takes my sin, he gives me his righteousness. He takes my death, he gives me his life. He takes my distance from God, he gives me his intimacy with the Father. He takes away my condemnation, he gives me his love. I just need to trust him." And it was like everything just sort of snapped, and I realized that I had missed everything. I missed the big E on the eye chart. I was trusting in myself and I wasn't trusting in Jesus. It seems too simple in retrospect, but at the time I missed it completely. Paul understood this. He was a guy who was pursuing zealously, far more zealous than I, perfection, being a good, moral, spiritual person, came to the conclusion it was about Jesus, not about him and repented of all he was and all he had done.

He quotes that verse in Romans 1:17, as well as – you look at your notes, he quotes it twice in the Book of Galatians. Once in 2:16 and once in 3:11. He quotes Habakkuk 2:4 600 years later. We'll read the two of those. Galatians 2:16, Paul says, "Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ." That's it right there, "By faith in Jesus Christ." "So we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law because by observing the law, no one will be justified." And in Galatians 3:11 he tells us clearly "No one is justified before God by the law because the righteous will live by faith." He quotes Habakkuk.

Here's how it works. Paul says, "People don't understand the function of the Bible. That's their problem." That's why we have cults and religions and weirdoes and nutjobs and all kinds of problems is because people simply don't understand the Scriptures. And some of you will be confused because those people will be using the Scriptures. You'll say, "Well, they're using the Bible." Yes. But they're using it like Satan used it with Eve and with Jesus. They're not using it in the way that it was intended. And here's the point: When he speaks of the law, what he's speaking of is God's commands, God's decrees, God's declarations for human conduct. "Do this. Don't do this."

Now, let me ask you this: Are God's commands, God's laws – are they good? They're great. Even if you don't like them, you still hope that people observe them in relationship to you, meaning I don't want to be killed, I don't want to be robbed, I don't want to be lied to. Right? I don't want my spouse being taken by someone else who's an adulterer. You know, we – just by virtue of being image bearers of God and having a conscience, we know that many of God's laws intrinsically are just good and healthy and necessary. So God's laws are all good. Do we keep them? Do we keep God's laws? We don't. But see, the law is good and we are bad. The law is good and we are bad.

Now, what happens is this: People say, "Well, okay, I'm bad, but the law is good. I'm gonna work really hard to be good, and I'm gonna work really hard to be good by doing the law." And so they make a hard run at it. "I'm gonna be a moral, spiritual person. I'm gonna do lots of things to please God so that he will love me. I'm going to basically put together my résumé of all my good works and my good deeds and my good thoughts and my good sincere efforts so that when I stand before God, I can pull out my résumé and say, 'God, this is what I did. I made progress. I'm better than I was. I pulled myself up by my bootstraps. I fixed myself. I gave it a good run, and I got further than almost anyone else. I did pretty good.'" He says, "You know what? No one gets a relationship with God in that way."

God is not just good. God is perfect. Heaven is perfect. Imperfect people are unfit for God's presence and God's kingdom because they are perfect. And you and I live under this perennial myth that if we just give it a sincere shot, that's good enough or if we get pretty close, that's good enough or if we get further along than anyone else, it's good enough. And God says, "No. Perfection and imperfection. That's all I see." And by observing the law, by being moral, by being spiritual, you will not get close to God, and I'll tell ya why. If you try to be a good, hard, moral, working, spiritual person, one of three things will happen. The first is you will do better than the rest of the people around you and you will become proud. That was me. Okay? That was me. I was better morally. And my wife will tell you that I was more moral than the Christian guys she knew. Moral.

Moral people die and go to hell because they were moral, because they were like me worshipping themselves. I thought I was too good to be identified with people who lacked self-control. And the reason I stayed out of trouble is because I felt I was better than they were and because I wanted to be in charge of everyone else and be the leader. I basically wanted to be God and have my own little kingdom with my own little service, and that was because I got further along the moral law than most of the people I knew. If you try to merit your salvation, if you try to be a good person, the odds are if you do pretty good at it, you will commit the worst sin of all, and that's arrogant, self-righteous pride. And you'll be farther from God than the drunk and the slut and the loser.

If you make a good hard run at it, your second option is going to be you will become sorely depressed because you will become frustrated. You will have this picture of God as this very mean and absentee landlord who gives you lots of things to do and when you don't do them, judges you. And you will look at a God like a displeased boss. "God tells me to do things I can't do. I do the best I can and when I fall short, he's not pleased." And you'll

become very depressed. Some of you are in that right now. You work really hard trying to be a good Christian, and you get frustrated because you don't feel like you're making any progress, that your movement is not progress, and you're just running around a cul-de-sac spiritually as fast and as hard as you can and getting nowhere.

Some people hit that place and they get very despondent and very sad. They walk away from their faith. They come forward for an altar call. Then they give up. And then they come forward for another altar call and then they give up. And it's just this brutal cycle of guilt and shame and "I'm gonna try harder to – I'm depressed. I can't do it" to guilt and shame, "I'm gonna do harder." And some people, some people after their despair they look at Jesus. All right? And that's the whole point of the law. The law is to show you how crooked, bent, wicked, evil, rebellious and dark you are so that you'll stop trying and just throw your hands in the air and just say, "God, I can't do it." And then Jesus shows up and say, "No problem. I already took care of it." And you throw your hands in the air and say, "I'm not good enough." And Jesus shows up and says, "No problem. I was perfect in your place."

And we throw our hands in the air and we say, "God. I can't please you." And Jesus shows up and says, "Everything I ever said or did to please the father, I took care of that." "God, I can't merit salvation. I can't do what you say." Jesus shows up and says, "No problem. It's a gift. I give it to people. I love ya. It's grace. You don't owe me anything." And it's when we hit that place that we just throw our hands in the air, that Jesus shows up and says, "I've got it all covered. Stop trusting yourself. Just trust me. Stop trusting in your goodness. Trust in mine. Stop trusting in your life. Start trusting in mine. Stop trusting in your efforts and trust in mine. Stop trusting in your wisdom. Trust in mine. I've taken care of everything. I love you. I have accomplished everything that need be done to reconcile you to the Father. All you need to do is trust me. And to do that, you need to stop trusting yourself."

You and I are not good gods. We're not fit for that place. And it's silly for us to think that we are more loving and wise and patience and gracious and good than Jesus. Jesus takes better care of us than we even take care of ourselves. And that's what Paul says. "By observing the law, no one is justified." You're not gonna get there. The purpose of the law is to show your condition so that you'll run to Jesus with open arms. Now, some of you have already done that. Some of you are Christians. You understand the words of Habakkuk 2:4. You understand the words of Romans 1:17. You understand the words of Galatians 2:16 and Galatians 3:11. Faith. Faith. Faith. I trust him, not me.

And some of you now are in a circumstance in your life as a Christian where you struggle very hard because this is a terrible time for you. Hebrews 10 speaks to you. It quotes Habakkuk 2:4 again. We're uncertain of its authorship. It is perhaps Paul, but it doesn't declare emphatically. So we'll just read it as part of God's Word. Here's what Hebrews has to say to those of you Christians whose faith is struggling. It says, "Do not throw away your confidence. You start doubting, you lose your confidence. It will be richly rewarded. You, dear Christian, need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised for in just a very little while he who is coming will come and will not delay." And he quotes Habakkuk 2:4 again. "But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him, but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved."

What he's saying is this: For those of you who are Christians, your faith must be like manna, every morning new and fresh, because today is different than yesterday and tomorrow is different than today. And trusting God yesterday is not enough to carry you into tomorrow. You need to trust God every day because life changes. Circumstances change. And that trust is something that's abiding and ongoing. It's knowing God's Word. It's loving God's son. And it's bending your knee to what he says and wants, even and especially when it doesn't look like God's in charge or it doesn't look like God is good. Some of you this is a hard season and your faith is harder now than it's ever been. Some of you want to be married. You read the verse that says, "It's not good for the man to be alone." You say, "Okay. I agree. Where's my lady? Where is she (Laughter)?"

Some of you are married and you're saying, "I don't have the blissful union that I anticipated. This is a lot more arduous labor than I was hoping for." Some of you can't have children, you're struggling with infertility. Some of you recently have gone through miscarriages. Some of you have children and those children are ill or they are ill tempered and they are very much concerning to you (Laughter). Some of you your health is not good. You are not in the best of shape right now. Some of you your finances are not in the best of shape, be you're unemployed or under employed. And time are hard. And for some of you your relationships and your friendships and your family connections are strained or severed altogether.

And for those of you that are in those dark places and those dark times, Hebrews 10:38 says, "This is no time to shrink back and stop trusting." Now is not the time. Now more than ever you need to trust God. And you might say, "But I don't see it." You trust God until you see his Word made true. In Hebrews 10 he's saying, "You trust Jesus until you see him. Either he comes back or you die, but you trust him until you see him and then your faith becomes sight. And until then, you keep walking with him." And Habakkuk is in this day where he is like you. He surveys the condition of his people, he surveys the condition of his nation, and he says, "This, Lord God, does not look like you are good or in charge." But he comes to the conclusion at the end of the book, and it's a great conclusion, "I will trust you." And he says, "I will trust you when I'm unemployed. I will trust you when I'm flat broke. I will trust you when I have no dinner. And I will trust you when everything falls apart."

And it's very simply this, friends: Your life is a film, and right now you are 10 minutes in. And to throw your hands in the air and to walk out and curse the director because you don't like the ending is too premature. It's just too premature. That is not a guarantee that God will show up and wrap a bow at the end and make it "And they lived happily ever after", but Habakkuk says, "I don't care what the ending is. I'm sticking close to God all the way through no matter what because there's no other place to be." It's the same thing that happened to Job. For some of us it is very easy to trust God when things are well. "I'm healthy, happily married, making tons of money, my kids love the Lord. All my prayers are answered." It's easy to trust God. When none of those things are true, some of you struggle to trust God, and your first instinct is to say, "Well, I did it God's way for a while. It's not working. Time for me to reinsert my own wisdom and to doubt everything the Scriptures say and do it the way that I think it will work best."

Satan accused Job of being the same kind of man. Satan came to God and he said, "Who's your most righteous, God?" God says, "Job." He says, "Well, Job's a good guy. Job loves me." He says, "Of course Job loves you. Of course Job trusts you. You bless him. He's got a wife and kids and wealth and influence and prosperity and all his needs are met. Of course he loves you. But if it was a dark, hard day, he would trust you no more. He would curse you." God says, "No." Satan says, "Give me a shot." "Okay. Take your best shot."

Satan comes and attacks Job. Kills his children, kills his animals, destroys his wealth, ruins his physical health. He's sitting there in the dust scraping his own boils with shards of pottery. The only thing he does have are some terrible theologian buddies who want to sit around and argue Calvinism and the meaning of suffering rather than praying for him and his wife. She's the only one God didn't kill or allow to be killed, I should say. And that was no gift. Of all the people that Job probably would have wished would have died (Laughter), this woman would have been at the top of the list. Any woman who says, "Why don't you just cuss God out and die", she is not your ally, she's not a helper suitable, she's not your cut man in your corner. She's a dripping faucet. That's exactly what he had.

So he's down to this wife, these friends. No affluence, no family, no wealth, boils on his skin, sitting there cutting himself with shards of pottery to take away the itch. And what does he say? "God, even if you kill me, I'll trust you." What else are you gonna do? Take Job's wife's counsel and curse God and die? Faith is tested in trial and suffering. And here's the hard, hard word. We want comfort, ease and blessing. God wants faithful people who trust him. Those two goals are irreconcilable. Faith only comes through suffering and trial. And so God allows his people to go through hard times like Habakkuk was going through so that their faith would be built like those people in Hebrews. So that their faith would be built.

You need to know that God is not only big enough to pull you through your circumstances, he was big enough to allow you to get into them. You say, "Does God hate me?" No. Faith is like a muscle. It grows as you exercise it. If you don't, it atrophies. That's why faith leads to more faith leads to more faith leads to more faith, and God will allow hardship and trial to come to strengthen your faith so that you will be closer to him because his goal for you and me is not always comfort, but closeness to him. And he will compel us toward himself. That's the whole message of Habakkuk. That's the whole message of the Bible. Trust him, and trust him most deeply when it seems most hard, and that muscle of faith will exercise itself and you will grow stronger.

That's why people that have been through difficult circumstances with God they can trust God for things that previously would have crushed them because their strength has been built over time. It's like working out for your soul. Okay? I can still remember when I had a very hard time trusting God for a photocopier for this church. All right? I'm in the middle of having to trust him for over \$1,000,000.00 for a 1,600-seat building. Had I started with that, I would have died. But you see God provide, and faith builds faith builds faith builds faith builds faith, and eventually you're able to trust God for things that previously would have absolutely destroyed you.

And so then the goal is "Okay, God, I'm going to trust you." And some of you cannot say, "Well, God, I will trust you so that you will bless me because that paganism and that's manipulation of God." You need to be like Job. "You kill me, I still praise you. I trust you." You need to be like Habakkuk. Unemployed, sick, homeless. "I'll still trust you." And then God is free to do as he pleases. But if you set it up the other way, you will persevere for a season, and then you will end up cursing God because you felt that he sinned and let you down, and he didn't.

Habakkuk explodes 600 years later. It explodes in the life of the Apostle Paul. Fifteen hundred years after that explodes in the life of a guy named Martin Luther. I'll close with a historical study. Tonight's more of a lecture. Martin Luther was a guy silly like me, silly like Saul. "I'm gonna be good, moral, spiritual. God will love me." So what do I do? I go into ministry. A lot of pastors are in ministry trying to pay God back rather than just trusting Jesus. It's a huge problem. They work long hours and do incredible things because they want to pay God back rather than just saying, "Thank you, Jesus." Martin Luther was one of those guys. His incentive for ministry was to pay God back. He's gonna study theology. He's got the mind of a lawyer, of an attorney.

He sees God as a judge and God as a prosecuting attorney. He sees himself as a defense attorney. He realizes that God's case against him is that he's a sinful man unfit for heaven and forgiveness. So he picks up ministry, he picks up the Scriptures, he starts to studying trying to find a way to defend himself against this case that God has made against humanity. He comes to the conclusion that God has an airtight case, that we're all wicked. That's the only thing that is absolutely provable in Christianity is the evil of the human heart. That's why we lock our doors, right (Laughter)? And that's why we have jails. That's why we have attorneys. That's why we have prisons. That's why we are reticent to even extend a hand of friendship to a stranger because we know not whether they are a friend or foe.

He said, "You know what? God's case against humanity is a winner. We're bad. And especially if God is judge, can't lie to him. And if God is prosecuting attorney, you're not gonna beat him. There's no way out." So what he decided was "Okay. Then what I will do, I will study the Scriptures and I will find all the things that God wants me to do. And then I'll do those so God will like me." And he tried really hard. Really hard. Harder than any of us. He became a priest, which meant no wife, no sex, no kids. Not enough would be "I'm done. That's not gonna happen,," He actually went that far.

"I'll be poor." Gave up prestige and prominence and wealth. "I'll work long hours with little recognition. I'll be a monk and a pastor and a professor of theology." He said, "Not only that, since sin requires punishment, I'll punish myself. I'll sleep on an uncomfortable bed or the floor. I'll eat terrible food or starve myself so I rack my body." And he actually did have intestinal problems for the rest of his life. "I'll avoid all worldly pleasure. I won't laugh. I won't have a good time." Some monks go so far as self-flagellation. They beat themselves. It's interesting because teenagers do the same thing, ritual cutting, abuse. They know that they're wicked and they know that some form of punishment must be made, so rather than trusting Jesus, they harm themselves.

And this guy was so racked because he was such a clever and clear-thinking mind when it came to the Scriptures that he realized that in light of God's Word, he was doomed. What they would do then is they would send the men into confession with a priest. This was Catholicism. And you would go in to the priest and you'd tell him all your sins, and then he would absolve you and proclaim forgiveness upon you. I know that 'cause I was raised as a Catholic boy. We do the same thing except for our priest's name is Jesus. He's our high priest. We go to him and confess our sins, and he died for them and he pardons us and grants us forgiveness. It's not a man. It's Jesus Christ.

And he would go in. What they would do, they would go in for confession, name all their sins, and then go do their work as monks. The problem was Martin Luther would be in there all day (Laughter). Every single day. And the other monks thought "He must be lazy, trying to get out of the work. He goes in there and prays all day so he doesn't have to go out and hoe the garden." He's a wicked man. He wasn't a wicked man. He was an honest man. He would go in and confess his sin. And then he realized that even the way he confessed it was a sin, so he would confess his sin and the way he confessed his sin. And then he realized that the motive for confessing his sin was a sin. So he would confess the motive and the mean and the sin. Right? Because it's not just doing the right thing. It's doing the right thing in the right way for the right reason.

"I'll do what God says as God says for God's glory. Oh-oh. I did it for my own. That didn't count. I got to confess it all. And now even confessing my means and my motive and my method, I'm even doubting why I'm doing that. Maybe it's just to impress the priest or 'cause I'm scared of God, it's not out of love or grace. That's a sin, so I need to confess that too." And he's in there all day. Finally, the priest says, "Enough already. Can't you be in denial like everybody else and just go hoe the garden (Laughter)? Everybody else is in denial. Can't you just say, 'Well, I had a bad thought and we say blah, blah, blah, now move on?'" Luther's like "No. I was reading the Scriptures and it says, 'Be perfect.' It says, 'Do everything.' It says, 'Obey God.' It says, 'Motives count.' It says, 'Method counts. Everything counts.' I'm not making it."

And this guy literally was so depressed that he was almost at this place of suicide and coming apart. And then something amazing happened. He was studying the Book of Psalms, and it brought him back to Romans 1:17 that I took you to where Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4. And that led him all the way back to Habakkuk 2:4. Over 2,000 years after it was written, that same little verse that "God lit the wick up" that exploded for Paul, exploded for a guy named Martin Luther. I'll read it for ya. It's down at the – under Martin Luther, it's the last paragraph – the second to the last paragraph. It's the middle paragraph. And then this is my editorial comment. "The same Spirit that inspired the writing of Scripture illuminated Luther's understanding of Habakkuk 2:4, as quoted in 117."

He says, "There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith." And this is the meaning: "The righteousness of God is revealed by the Gospel, namely the passive righteousness, which the merciful God justifies us by faith. As it is written", he quotes Habakkuk 2:4, "he who through faith is righteous shall live. Here I felt that I was altogether born again and have entered paradise itself through open gates. Here a totally other face of the entire Scriptures showed itself to me." Martin Luther got saved in Habakkuk 2:4. And out of his understanding came what we call the Reformation, the cleaning up the understanding of the Gospel and the recognition that "I don't save myself. Jesus saves me. I don't need to be good. Jesus was perfect. I don't need to please God. Jesus did on my behalf. I don't need to work my way to God. God has humbled himself and come down for me. I just need to trust him, and he will take away all my sin and he will love me and forgive me and adopt me into his family."

"He will then give me a new heart. He will give me a new life. He'll make me a new creation. And then all these Scriptures that I know are good I will begin to live in accordance with those Scriptures by grace because it's grace that saves me and it's grace that empowers me to honor God, through the Holy Spirit that the Son of God will send into me so that it's no longer I who live, but it's Christ who lives in me and through me and often times in spite of me. And then God gets all his glory and I get my redemption and I trust him, not me, and it's about him, not me, and he's God and I'm not." And 2,600 years after Habakkuk writes this little verse it's still working because God said it. That's how true it is that that's how God still saves people. That's how God still transforms and loves and heals and forgives and redeems people.

"Know who I am. Don't fight me. Trust me." Okay? "And once you have, keep trusting me until you see me, and then your faith shall be sight." At this point, I call you all to response. Last week a number of people came to Christ in this church. That's great. They stopped worshipping themselves and started worshipping Jesus. If you're a non-Christian, that is what you need to do. Your trust needs to be in Jesus, not yourself. His death, burial and resurrection, not your morality or spirituality or sincere or insincere attempts. You recognize your sin. You own it, you name it, and you ask Jesus to forgive you, and he will. And you trust him and belong to him and walk with him. And he will give you the grace to become the person that he intends for you to be. He's good from beginning to end.

For those of you that are Christians, this is a great time for you to reaffirm your faith in Christ. And if you are struggling like those in Hebrews 10 or like Habakkuk, to ask God for more faith for the season that you are in, and repent if there has been a time where you have accused him of not being good or distrusted his affections toward you. And then we respond by singing and taking an offering and by taking communion. And I'll explain those to you because each of those is a demonstration of faith. For communion you will get out of your seats, which is a recognition that one day, like Christ, you will get out of your graves, we will all rise together out of our graves, those who are children of God.

And that as you come forward, you are showing that you have faith in Christ. The object of your faith is shown in the bread and in the drink. It's the body and blood of Jesus. "God. Come to me to die and rise for my sin." And as you do that, you're demonstrating faith in Jesus. It's not just faith. Lots of people have faith. It's faith in Jesus. It's the object that counts. And as we partake of the offering, we don't pass the plate. There's a basket in the back, there's baskets up front, you can send it in during the week. Whichever is appropriate between your conscience and God. It is also a demonstration of faith. It is faith that the God who provided this, if I give it to him, will provide again, and that he always has and that he always will. And it's faith.

And then we leave here to go live our lives with clear consciences knowing that Christ has finished his work, and we trust him. Okay? So I'll pray, and we'll transition at that point. Father, God, thank you for a chance to study your Word. I thank you, Lord God, that you showed up and actually spoke to Habakkuk, actually answered his great question. God, it's a question that we all have. If you're good and you're in charge, how come we and the world look the way we do? Thank you, Lord God, for the honest answer, that you have a plan and that you're working that plan and that that plan is for us to trust you so that we would be transformed and agents of transformation on the earth.

God, it's my prayer for any tonight who may not know you that they would simply see that they are either trusting in you or trusting in themselves and that they would realize that it is very silly for them to trust themselves over you. God, for those of us who need an encouragement or a refreshment in our faith because we're growing weary and losing heart, I pray that you would send that through your Spirit. And, God, as we come to partake of communion and as we partake of our offering and we partake of singing and fellowship, please just keep us ever mindful that it's all a demonstration of faith. Trusting that you are God and that you are good, that you have come and that you are coming again. We look forward to seeing you face to face. Amen.