

Living by Faith Alone

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Preacher: Jeremy Sarber

[0 : 0 0] Habakkuk, chapter 2. We'll be reading the first five verses of this chapter.! This is the word of the Lord.

I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower and look out to see what! He will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me, write the vision, make it plain on tablets so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up. It is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol. Like death, he is never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.

The prophet Habakkuk is living in trying times and he comes to God with some very challenging questions. He sees wickedness in Judah, namely injustice and violence, and he cries out to God, O Lord, how long shall I cry for help? He simply couldn't understand why God was allowing this terrible corruption to continue without any apparent intervention. He even accuses God of idly looking at wrong as though God is just sitting there doing absolutely nothing while the righteous in Judah suffer at the hands of the wicked. But the Lord is quick to respond. I am doing something. I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans or the Babylonians. In other words, God's answer to the prophet's complaint is that he is granting the

Babylonians the power to overtake Judah as an instrument of his judgment against them. And of course, this raises some questions as we've mentioned going along. How can this be? How can a good and righteous God let a cruel, idolatrous empire, arguably more unjust than Judah, swallow up a more righteous people than they? It's that classic struggle of the problem of evil. People often ask if God is just and he's all-powerful, how can he let evil persist in our world? Well, we don't have an answer to that question just yet. But as we've seen, Habakkuk's tone is changing. He's reminded himself, if you remember, of God's good character in the latter part of chapter one. Are you not from everlasting? O Lord, my God, my Holy One. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. You see, Habakkuk seems to move from utter despair at the beginning of this book to what you might call confusion. He asks, you who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he? In a way, this is the prophet confessing that God does have a wise plan in all of this, but he doesn't understand it. He doesn't quite grasp it. He can't yet see what the Lord is doing or why.

And as we come to chapter two of this book, his posture has changed considerably, it seems. He's no longer hurling accusations at God. He's no longer complaining as such. Instead, what is he doing?

[4 : 1 0] He stops and he waits. Verse one, I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

As you likely know, in ancient cities such as this, they were primarily defended by a huge wall that wrapped all the way around the city so watchmen could be stationed on the top of those walls to keep an eye out for any approaching enemies coming in the distance. And so it was his job, the watchman's job, to remain alert so he could warn the people below if the enemy was approaching. And this is how Habakkuk sees himself in this moment. He's standing, he's stationed on the wall, he's watching, he's waiting, and not for enemies to approach, but for God to answer his prayers.

These verbs stand and station are in a form that would indicate real determination on his part. The prophet is resolute here. He will not move. He will not give up until the Lord speaks. He will stay at his post. In other words, he is actively waiting on God. Actively. He says, I will look out to see what they will say to me, what he will say to me. Now, I don't know whether this is Habakkuk carrying his metaphor too far, but it's interesting that he says that he's waiting to see what the Lord will say to him. Is that just a figure of speech or does he expect the Lord to show him a vision of some kind? Well, as it happens, the Lord does give him a vision, verse 2, and the Lord answered me, write the vision. Now, it's not entirely clear what Habakkuk may have actually seen. Perhaps the word vision here simply refers to the revelation given to him. But regardless, Habakkuk is watching.

He's waiting. He's waiting. And he will not move until he has heard from the Lord. And what does he expect to hear? He says, I will take my stand and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint. What does the prophet mean by that? If he's waiting for the Lord's answer, why does he anticipate answering his own complaint? Well, some translations of this text say something like, what I will answer when I'm corrected or when I'm reproved.

In other words, the prophet is likely expecting God to answer him in such a way that actually corrects him and maybe what he has said previously. Again, his posture toward God seems to be changing here. His heart is softening, perhaps. His understanding is growing. He essentially admits here, the Lord will probably need to correct my thinking, and I'm ready for that. That's what I anticipate will happen. And I'm waiting. And this is a real turning point in the book of Habakkuk, because the prophet is no longer demanding that the Lord do something. He's no longer demanding that God answers him. Instead, we see him humbly position himself to listen, and more than that, to learn something. And I believe this is instructive. When we look back to the prophet's initial complaints at the start of chapter one, we do not see, as we've talked about, a prescriptive prayer. In other words, this is not an example of how we should be praying. It may be an example of how we honestly feel at times, but it's not an appropriate way to approach Almighty God, our Heavenly Father. But here, we do see a positive example of how the Lord should be approached. When we are troubled by what God is doing, or perhaps what He's not doing, the right response isn't to hurl accusations at God. It isn't to complain. Instead, we should, in faith, climb to the top of that watchtower and wait on the Lord.

[9 : 03] This is not our most natural response, is it? We may not complain to God, but we love to panic. We love to rush into creating our own solutions to the problem. But faith, many times, would have us simply stop, stand still, and trust the Lord's perfect timing. Our problem is never that God fails to answer our prayers. Our problem is that we demand the answer too quickly.

We want fast solutions, but often God is essentially saying to us, wait, just wait. And to be clear, this is not passive resignation that I'm describing. Habakkuk is active here. He climbs to the top of the walls. He stands ready. He's watching very carefully. He's keeping himself alert at all times, confidently waiting for God to speak. In the Lord's own timing, of course.

The prophet Isaiah says, even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted. But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. So we don't stop moving. We don't stop doing as we wait for the Lord to answer our prayers, but we're also not frantically trying to solve the problems ourselves either. And we're not accusing God of not caring or not doing anything about it. We humbly wait, we listen, and we learn.

Of course, we don't know Habakkuk's timeline. We don't know how long he had to wait for the Lord to answer, but we see it here starting with verse 2, the Lord's answer, that is, And the Lord answered me, write the vision, make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.

For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay.

[11 : 30] So the first thing God tells his prophet to do is write down the revelation he's about to receive. Whatever this is going to be, write the vision, make it plain on tablets. The Lord wants this recorded clearly and permanently. At this time, in this part of the world, messages were inscribed on tablets made of either stone or clay or wood, and the idea was that the message would be chiseled into some sort of durable form that would last, and that could be carried to others so they could read.

So this is not a response necessarily to Habakkuk exclusively. Evidently, he wants this written down, possibly even preserved, but he wants it written down that somebody he's going to run with so that others can read it. So this is likely a message for all of Judah. In fact, this is likely a message for future generations, and I would say that's relatively likely considering here we are a little less than 3,000 years later reading these very words.

The Lord says it should be written plainly, so he may run who reads it. Now, this could have a few possible meanings. Perhaps the Lord wants it written clearly and largely enough so that it can be read so easily, no sloppy or fine print.

It could be that he wants the message to be conveyed simply, so maybe even the uneducated plowboy is able to read it and understand what is written.

Regardless, it needs to be written in such a way that the messenger who delivers it can either read it very quickly before he takes off in a sprint or read it while he's actually running.

[13 : 31] This reminds me of when God told Isaiah in Isaiah 8, take a large tablet and write on it in common characters. It would seem God's emphasis is really on ensuring everyone understands what is being said, what is going to be revealed.

In fact, that's one of the lessons in 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul says, If with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said?

For you will be speaking into the air. You know, years ago I was invited to a small church conference in the mountains of Virginia, and it was an interesting experience.

All the preachers there had a sing-song style, as I've heard it called. They would preach extemporaneously without any notes and quite possibly without any formal preparation whatsoever for the sermon.

The sermons were very difficult to follow. They'd jump from one subject to the next, whatever really seemed to come to their mind, and they would talk. They would preach almost like an auctioneer.

[14 : 46] There would be a rise and a flow to their speech, and you could time their breaths and so on. So it was very, very difficult to follow these sermons.

And the very next year, when this conference rolled around again, one of the pastors called me not to invite me back, but actually to say I am not invited next time they have it.

And his reason was simple. According to him and some of the other preachers there, and this is an exact quote, I was, quote, too educated, end quote.

And that is honestly the first and only time I have ever been accused of that in my life. But what he really meant was that I articulated too much.

For reasons they probably couldn't explain either, clear, intelligible speech was not real preaching to them. But according to Scripture, if the message we communicate is not clear and intelligible, then it's just speaking into the air, as Paul says.

[15 : 55] It should be easily understood by those who deliver the message and those who hear it. So the Lord wants Habakkuk to make this revelation, this vision clear to all who hear it.

And in verse 3, we learn that this vision is really a promise. God will act.

But the promise will be fulfilled according to the Lord's timeline. Not Judah's, not Habakkuk's, not anyone's, but the Lord's. He says the vision awaits its appointed time.

If it seems slow, wait for it. And as we'll discover, the promise is simply this. First, God will bring judgment on the wicked, namely the Babylonians.

And second, God will preserve the righteous. Now, that promise isn't fully expounded in this passage, but it will be. And the point here is that Habakkuk and all the people of Judah will have to wait patiently because the Lord has his appointed times for these things to unfold, and they will likely take longer than anyone really wants them to take.

[17 : 18] You see, the Lord has already addressed Habakkuk's concerns about the wickedness in Judah. That's why he has been raising up the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans are his answer to Judah's wickedness.

But now, as we saw in the last passage, Habakkuk really wants to know what the Lord intends to do about the wickedness of the Babylonians. What are you going to do about them?

And the Lord says, I will do something about them as well. But not yet. Babylon's downfall will not happen overnight.

In fact, it would not happen for another 70 years. Even so, it will surely come, the Lord says. It will not delay.

Notice the emphatic reinforcement here. This kind of parallelism is common in the prophets, in the Psalms of the Old Testament. It's meant to emphasize the point by repeating it.

[18 : 17] It may seem like Babylon's downfall will take a long time. But it will happen. And more than that, it will happen at exactly the right time.

It hastens to the end. It will not lie. In other words, God's plan is always moving toward the appointed conclusion. Always. There can be no deviation.

There can be no delay. The plan is fixed. And though it may feel as though things are not moving in the direction the Lord said they would, they are.

It is impossible for God to lie when He reveals His plan. And when He makes a promise, it may not unfold in the way that we want. It may not unfold according to the timing we prefer.

But it will happen as God ordained it to happen because God is sovereign and He cannot lie. But oh, the waiting.

[19 : 21] As Tom Petty is saying, waiting is the hardest part. That's when doubts are prone to arise within us. That's when men like Habakkuk grow impatient and demand to know when the Lord will finally do something.

According to 2 Peter 3, that's when scoffers have the easiest time convincing us that the Lord will not fulfill His promises. Concerning the second coming of Christ, they say, where is the promise of His coming?

For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation. Do you see any signs of His coming? Do you see any evidence?

Things are how they've always been. Nothing's ever changed. Do you really think the Lord's coming back? And what does Peter say to that?

Do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

[20 : 44] So if the Lord seems like He's slow in fulfilling His promises, we should consider that, first of all, time is nothing to God. One day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

What may feel like forever to us is a millisecond to our Creator. And second, we should consider that God has a wise and benevolent purpose behind His delay.

There's a good reason He doesn't fulfill His promises immediately. We may not know all of those reasons, but He has them. And we're called to trust in Him, as we see even in this passage of Habakkuk.

It's right there in verse 4. Behold, His soul is puffed up. It is not upright within Him, but the righteous shall live by His faith.

He starts with, Behold, behold Habakkuk. Behold the people of Judah, the Lord says. Listen up and listen carefully.

[21 : 56] Now, what God is doing here is offering a stark contrast. This was true for them, and it's still true for us, by the way. Fundamentally, there are only two paths we can take in this life.

As Jesus told us, there's a narrow gate that leads to life, and there is a broad gate that leads to destruction. There is a proud, self-centered approach, and there is a humble approach that trusts in God, not self.

And we cannot reasonably straddle the fence. As Joshua told the people, Choose this day whom you will serve.

Pick your road and travel it to the end. So, first of all, the Lord presents the soul that is puffed up. The person, His ego, His mind, His heart, is swollen with pride and with arrogance.

He's bloated with self. He's presumptuous. And his desires are not upright within him. They're not level or straight.

[23 : 08] This man's posture is one of a haughty self-reliance, which stands in direct contrast to the righteous person in a right relationship with God.

But we'll come to that. Now, who is the Lord describing here? Is he talking about the people of Judah? Is he referring exclusively to Babylon?

He really doesn't clarify. So, while the description here is certainly true of Babylon, I kind of doubt that the Lord intended to limit it to only Babylon.

Let's remember, this book all started not because Babylon, out there somewhere, was proud and wicked. Habakkuk first cried out to God because he saw these sins in Judah.

Regardless, verse 4 relates a universal principle that applies even to us. And I can say that. If for no other reason, because Habakkuk 2.4 is one of the most cited or alluded to verses from the Old Testament in the New Testament.

[24 : 22] The latter half of verse 4 is quoted directly in the New Testament three times. Paul quotes it in Romans 1 and Galatians 3. And the author of Hebrews quotes it in Hebrews chapter 10.

But more than that, it is hugely influential because of its foundational role in the teachings of the New Testament. The clarity that the New Testament brings draws much from even this one verse.

So, someone might say, what's the big deal? It's only quoted three times in the New Testament. And that's true. But we should also consider how it's quoted, how it's used.

For example, in Romans chapter 1, Paul writes, That's Paul's thesis.

That's Paul's purpose statement for the entire letter. His entire epistle to the Romans is built upon that premise which he draws from Habakkuk 2.4.

[25 : 42] In other words, the apostles of the New Testament saw this seemingly obscure line from a seemingly obscure prophet as foundational to our understanding of the gospel itself.

And more than that, the Spirit of God led them to see this. And just think about the impact it's had. You might remember Martin Luther's conversion story.

After a lifetime of desperately struggling to please God through his religious works and penance, Luther could not find peace. He described his soul as being in prison.

And then the light finally broke through when Luther finally grasped the meaning of this one verse. The righteous shall live by his faith. The Lord opened his eyes to see that righteousness, the righteousness that the Lord himself requires to be saved, is not something we can possibly earn.

It is only a gift of God received through faith in Jesus Christ. Luther would later write, When by the Spirit of God I understood these words, the just shall live by faith, then I felt born again like a new man.

[27 : 08] I entered through the open doors into the very paradise of God. And let's not forget what this new man did for the church. The truth that had set Luther's own soul free spread throughout all of Europe.

That discovery was the spark of the Reformation. With Scripture in hand and conviction in his heart, he nailed his 95 theses to that church door in Wittenberg, not really as an act of rebellion, but as a pastoral plea to rediscover the gospel itself after so many years of darkness.

And from that moment on, the precious doctrine of justification by faith alone has been breaking chains all over the world ever since. So as it happens, there is something monumental hidden away in this short little book by a minor prophet.

And what exactly does it mean? What does it mean that the righteous shall live by his faith? Well, there's a couple of ways we can answer this question, because the passage inevitably has immediate application in Habakkuk's day.

But like many of the Lord's prophecies, it also has a broader meaning, right? Which is evidenced in the way that the New Testament authors quote and use this verse.

[28 : 40] So let's consider this statement in three parts. First, who are the righteous? Well, in Habakkuk's day, the righteous were those who had not embraced the injustice and the violence, would not bow down to worship idols.

He was the opposite of the man in the first half of this verse, whose soul is puffed up and is not upright within him. This is the man who has remained faithful to God's commands.

He's still living with integrity despite the rampant corruption all around him. He's still upright. He's still aligned with God. And this is how the Old Testament often speaks of the righteous.

They are righteous in their morality, in their conduct. But if we pull back, there's another very real sense in which no one is righteous before God.

Psalm 14 says, Isaiah says, So in reality, no one is righteous.

[30 : 19] In other words, no one naturally has a right standing before our holy God. We are sinners condemned by God's law. And that's really the tension presented here in verse 4.

If God is utterly holy and His law is perfect, who can really be called righteous? Evidently, the righteous aren't self-made.

They're not righteous by nature or by performance. God forbid we ever puff ourselves up like the first man in verse 4 and assume that we can earn a right standing before God.

But if we can't, then who is righteous? Well, before we come to that, secondly, let's consider the outcome of the righteous.

The righteous shall live, the Lord says. So for Habakkuk and for the faithful remnant in Judah, God is promising to preserve them.

[31 : 24] The Babylonians will come. Cities will be utterly destroyed. People will be carried away. Many people will die. But God will spare the lives of many of those righteous remnant.

Despite everything, they will live. But again, if we pull back, we realize the Lord has a greater meaning here. He must because even if He spares some lives through the Babylonian conquest, they still have a much greater problem hanging over their heads.

They will die eventually. They may not die by the hands of the Babylonians, but they will die eventually and they will face God's judgment for their sins.

Yes, they are relatively righteous compared to the Babylonians and maybe others in Judah, but as we've seen, they're not righteous according to God's perfect law.

So what is that bigger meaning behind the promise that they shall live? Well, let's consider the third and final part of this verse.

[32 : 34] The righteous shall live by his faith. Clearly, this is not faith in himself or faith in his own works.

That's characteristic of the first man who's puffed up. He's relying on himself. No, this is descriptive of the one who has God alone as the object of his faith.

He is like Habakkuk in this moment, leaning his entire weight upon the sovereignty of God, waiting on the city walls for the Lord to speak a word of promise and to eventually fulfill that promise.

You'll remember that Habakkuk acknowledged the true character of God. He is everlasting and holy. He is our rock. And then he immediately positioned himself to wait on the Lord with that steadfast determination.

In other words, to live by faith is to tie one's life, his survival, his salvation, his everything entirely to God, his character, and his promises.

[33 : 47] And this really serves as the great fault line of humanity. Ultimately, there are two kinds of people. On the one hand, we have the proud who rely on themselves.

They may be religious people. They may not. But we have the proud who rely on themselves. And on the other hand, we have the humble, the righteous, who rely on God.

The former will perish while the latter will live. So, to sum up, one must be righteous to live and one becomes righteous only by faith.

But when we read this verse in Habakkuk, we're only seeing the seed of a reality that will grow into something much, much bigger. Let me show you.

Returning again to Romans 1. Paul says he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

[34 : 57] And then he explains why. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith or faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

How does a sinner become right before God so that he might be saved for eternity? It's not by obeying enough or any degree of self-improvement.

We need better than our so-called righteousness. Our best righteousness isn't righteous enough. We need the Lord's righteousness. We need the righteousness of the Son of God who fulfilled the law perfectly and died in our place for our sins.

And how can we receive this righteousness, this right standing before God? From faith for faith, Paul says. It begins with faith, it continues in faith, and it is completed in faith as it is written.

The righteous shall live by faith. And by quoting Habakkuk, Paul is basically saying, in effect, this isn't a new concept.

[36 : 12] I'm not making this stuff up. This is what God has been saying all along. If you want to live, it will be only by faith. Then, in Galatians 3, Paul comes at the same verse from a slightly different angle.

There he's battling the idea that we can start the Christian life by faith, but somehow finish it by works, by our own achievements, by our own earning, our own merits. So he writes, now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith.

And then he goes on to say, the law is not of faith, rather the one who does them, that is the commandments of God, shall live by them. So the logic is this.

We can either live by the law and ultimately be judged by the law, or we can live by faith and ultimately be judged with the righteousness of Christ imputed to us as though we are just as righteous as He.

And these are mutually exclusive paths. We can't mix the two. One goes one direction, one goes the opposite direction. And Paul, he really quotes Habakkuk in Galatians to drive a huge wedge between any form of works-based righteousness and the true gospel.

[37 : 45] The law says do this and do this perfectly and you will live. If you don't do it perfectly, you will not live. But if you do it perfectly, you will live.

And the gospel says, believe. Just believe and you will live. So in both Romans and Galatians, Habakkuk 2.4 is placed right at the heart of what it means to be justified before God.

It really answers the question, how can a guilty sinner be declared righteous in the sight of a holy God? How can a guilty sinner survive his judgment and live for eternity?

And the answer is, by faith alone, in Christ alone, the righteous shall live by faith. And lastly, Hebrews 10 brings another dimension to this verse.

There the author is writing to weary Christians who are suffering and consequently tempted to completely abandon the faith and he reminds them of the Lord's promise saying to them, for yet a little while and the coming one will come and will not delay.

[39 : 06] But my righteous one shall live by faith and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. Actually, those Christians were in a similar position to Habakkuk.

They're waiting on the Lord and it's very hard. But the answer to them is the same as it was in Habakkuk's day. My righteous shall live by faith.

So, the book of Hebrews interpretation of this verse is pretty close to its original application. Not only are the righteous justified by faith, but they also persevere by faith.

They endure by faith. Now, as much as I would love to leave things right there, verse 5 takes us back to the first man, the arrogant, puffed up man.

Moreover, the Lord says, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol.

[40 : 13] Like death, he never has enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples. Now, it feels almost strange for God to warn against wine at this point.

What does drinking here have to do with anything? Well, let's go briefly to Daniel chapter 5. Let's jump ahead about 70 years after everything the Lord said would happen concerning Judah's fall at the hands of the Babylonians has happened, and let's see where we find Babylon.

Verse 1 says, King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. Well, that's interesting.

The Babylonians, they were known for their revelry and drunken feasts, and here we see that again, of course. The king and his men, they're feasting, they're drinking. In fact, the next verse says, Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.

They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Wow. If that isn't arrogant, I don't know what is.

[41 : 50] He's using the very cups that they stole from God's temple in Jerusalem to get drunk and to praise false gods.

Next it says, verse 5, immediately, the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace opposite the lampstand.

And the king saw the hand as it wrote. Then the king's color changed and his thoughts alarmed him. His limbs gave way and his knees knocked together.

And what did the hand write on the wall? God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end. You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. And the chapter ends with this. That very night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed and Darius the Mede received his kingdom.

[42 : 56] wine is a traitor. It will deceive you and it will stab you in the back.

Wine could potentially represent much more than the drink itself but the lifestyle that surrounds it. But more to the point, all of verse 5 is describing the general character of a life apart from faith, whether it's the Babylonians, maybe it's the wicked in Judah, or even people today.

That phrase, never at rest, is probably the most telling in this verse. Never at rest. That's the life of unbelief. Never at rest.

It may look impressive, it may look enjoyable on the outside, but there's no peace on the inside. It never experiences the shalom of God.

Like death, which is personified here, never reaches a point of satisfaction. Sheol, or the grave, has taken billions of people over the years.

[44 : 06] And you know what? It's still willing to take more and more and more. It's never satisfied. This man described here may gather up for himself every nation and bring every last person on the earth under his control and yet, in the end, he will be left just as empty as Belshazzar, dying alone.

You see, pride, idolatry, greed, self-indulgence, these things promise, they promise a fun and rewarding life, but they're all traitors.

They may promise life, but they deliver death. So you see the contrast here. You see this fault line running through it.

One man, he's swollen with self while the other is humbled before God, trusting in him completely. And one will be swept away when judgment comes and the other will live because his faith is not in himself, but in the truly righteous one.

So the question we're left to answer is, which one are we? Are we the proud who perish or the righteous who has turned from himself, cast himself upon Christ in faith and will ultimately live forever?

[45 : 41] Let's pray. Gracious Father, we are troubled at times by what we see in the world. We're grieved by the weight of evil and we confess that we don't always understand your ways.

Yet we know that you are everlasting and holy and that your purposes never fail. Teach us to take our stand on the watchtower and wait on you with steady and trusting hearts.

make us a people who listen before we speak, who bow before you before we question, who trust before we see.

Keep us from the pride that puffs up and blinds us to our real need. Draw us instead to that humility that clings to your promises.

And when your timing feels slow to us, Lord, renew our strength. when doubts whisper that nothing is happening, remind us that your vision will come to its appointed end.

[46 : 48] Lord, grant us the faith that looks to Christ alone for righteousness. Keep us from restlessness, grasping for anything and everything. And for any here who may still rely on themselves, I pray that you would open their eyes to the beauty and sufficiency of the one who lived and died and rose for sinners.

Let them turn from themselves and live. Help us, Lord, to be found among those who trust in you, who wait on you, who walk by faith and not by sight.

And we ask this in the name of Christ, our righteousness in our life. Amen. Amen.