



HINDS' SIGHT

*The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like **hinds'** feet,
and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.
Habakkuk 3:19*

Text

Habakkuk 2:1-20

Topic

God accuses the nation of Babylon of being constantly drunk on wine and then pronounces a series of five woes against them

Title

"The Days of Wine & Woes-es"

Introduction

Country music knows how to glorify a drunkard.

Back in 2011, CMT named the forty greatest drinking songs of country music. On the list are songs with playful titles like, *I'm Gonna Hire a Wino to Decorate Our Home* (David Frizzell), *You Ain't Much Fun Since I Quit Drinkin'* (Toby Keith), and *It's Five-o'clock Somewhere* (Alan Jackson and Jimmy Buffet).

Number one on the list was Garth Brooks with *Friends in Low Places*, who sings,

*'Cause I've got friends in low places
Where the whiskey drowns
And the beer chases my blues away*

It might surprise you that God wrote a drinking song. It was for the nation of Babylon; but, as is really the case with the abuse of alcohol, it wasn't all fun and games.

Hab 2:15 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing him to your bottle, Even to make him drunk, That you may look on his nakedness!

Hab 2:16 You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also - drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the LORD's right hand will be turned against you, And utter shame will be on your glory.

God's take on drunkenness is a lot more graphic and realistic.

Drunkenness was, in fact, a characteristic of the Chaldean's who ruled Babylon. Those of you familiar with biblical history will remember that the night Babylon fell to the invading Medo-Persian armies, its king and its leaders were attending a drunken party.

God will use the Chaldean's lust for drunkenness to describe their seemingly insatiable lust for power, leading to their conquest and cruel treatment of lesser nations, for which God will hold them accountable, and see them overthrown.

That's all well and good; but while waiting for God to overthrow Babylon, Habakkuk and his fellow Judeans were going to be subject to them - held captive by them, in exile, in Babylon.

How should they live? We'll see that "the just shall live by his faith" (verse 4).

The "just," meaning those who have faith in Jesus Christ, are **always** to "live by [their] faith," in every generation, in every country, in every circumstance.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: You Live By Faith Because You've Seen The Father, and #2 You Live By Faith Because You've Seen The Future.

#1 You Live By Faith
Because You've Seen The Father
(2:1-4)

Habakkuk was writing in the seventh century BC. He was concerned about his nation, Judah, because its people, the Jews, had abandoned God. They still went to the Temple and offered their sacrifices; but they also worshipped idols, in some cases offering their own babies as human sacrifices.

Everywhere he looked, Habakkuk saw "violence" of one type or another. He wanted God to do something to bring the Jews back to their spiritual senses.

God had already been doing quite a lot to reach the hearts of His chosen nation. He had sent prophets to Judah, for example. He had allowed the northern kingdom of Jews, called Israel, to be overrun and taken captive by the Assyrian Empire, as a stern warning to Judah that He could do the same to them, if they failed to repent.

Now God was revealing to Habakkuk that He was, definitely, preparing to allow the nation of Babylon to overthrow Judah.

We saw, last week, from a passage in Jeremiah that God warns all nations that, if they grow wicked, He will intervene in judgment; and often He judges nations by raising up other nations to conquer them.

Habakkuk was understandably disturbed by this news. He took it seriously, and assumed the role of a watchman on the walls, looking out to see the approaching invaders.

Hab 2:1 I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected.

I wonder if Habakkuk physically went up to the ramparts? These Old Testament prophets often acted-out their prophecies. We tend to think of this only as a metaphor; but I'd wager Habakkuk was up on the wall, for all to see.

Habakkuk understood that, in light of God's plan to punish and discipline Judah, he would need to proclaim a message to those among the minority of Jews who were following the Lord - the remnant - giving them spiritual strength to stand in a time when the majority of Jews were sinning.

Hab 2:2 Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it.

The "vision" was the message God was about to give Habakkuk - mostly for the remnant of godly believers who would be affected by Babylon's conquest.

They would suffer the same national disgrace that the majority brought upon Judah, even though they were true and sincere followers of God.

Keep that in mind in these verses, and in this book. It is especially for believers who are caught in awful circumstances, but still called upon to represent the Lord.

"Make it plain on tablets" meant just that - Habakkuk was to commit the message to "tablets." He was to write it down; to publish it for all to not just hear, but to read.

"That he may run who reads it" could mean it was to be in large print, so someone going by even running would be able to read it. Think freeway sign.

It more likely means that, having read it, the message will fuel your spiritual walk in such a way that you, yourself, become its messenger, running swiftly to proclaim it to others, and so on.

Jeremiah, who was contemporary with Habakkuk, said something along these same lines. Or, rather, God said it to him:

Jer 12:5 If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses?

The message God was about to give is what keeps believers running with horses in terms of spiritual endurance.

One more verse to set it up before God gives it to His prophet:

Hab 2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.

The first thing to note, about this verse, is the seeming contradiction, where God says, "it tarries," then He says "it will *not* tarry."

It's not a contradiction. It has to do with God's timing, and how we experience time as human beings. As will become clear in the remaining verses, God will Himself overthrow the Babylonian empire. But not until what He called "the end."

The "end" of what? Well, in context, God would overthrow the Babylonian empire at the "end" of seventy-years of discipline and punishment He had in store for Judah.

Further out, in the future, at the end of the Great Tribulation, the Book of the Revelation says that Babylon will rise to prominence again, only to be finally, ultimately, overthrown by God at the **very** "end."

Verse three is putting the believing Jews in Judah, and believers in all ages, on notice that God's plan for history will unfold according to His timing; but, in the mean time, at any given moment, those who are godly may be caught-up in circumstances that are less than desirable.

How should we then live as God's representatives?

Hab 2:4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

God draws a contrast between "the proud" and "the just." Think *nonbeliever* versus *believer*.

The first part, describing the nonbeliever, should be translated, "look at the proud; his soul which is lifted up is not straight or right within him." It's a description of what we would call the natural man, who has not surrendered his pride and humbled himself to be saved by the grace of God.

"The just shall live by his faith" should read, "the justified-ones shall live by faith."

Do you know how a person is saved? They are saved when they are declared righteous by God on account of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and source of righteousness. When a person trusts Jesus Christ, God sees them as justified, meaning He sees them just-as-if-they'd never sinned.

I must pause for a moment to mention how important these few words are - "the just shall live by... faith." John Walvoord said that, not only were they central to the Book of Habakkuk, but they were the central focus of the entire Bible.

This great principle - "the just shall live by faith" - was the Scripture that so inflamed the soul of Martin Luther that it became the watchword of the Reformation.

The apostle Paul quoted them three times in the New Testament:

- In Romans 1:17 Paul quoted them with an emphasis on what it means to be justified.

- In Galatians 3:11 he quoted them in a context of telling the justified ones how to live, comparing and contrasting our life in Christ to legalistic works that have no value.
- In Hebrews 10:38 he quoted them to encourage the justified to go on living by faith despite even the most severe circumstances.

The vision, or the message, that God gave Habakkuk to proclaim, especially to the believing remnant in Judah, was to go on living by faith, enduring their terrible circumstances, because despite the Babylonian captivity, God was working all things together for the good, and would providentially bring history to its prophesied conclusion.

As we often mention, we, as believers, are living in-between the two comings of Jesus Christ:

- He came the first time offering to establish the promised kingdom on the earth, but was rejected by the nation of Israel.
- He is coming a second time to establish the kingdom and will be received by the Jews who survive the Great Tribulation.

"In the mean time... In-between time... Ain't we got fun" is not always the case. In fact, we suffer in many ways - often on account of what nonbelievers are doing.

We are the justified ones who can, in those circumstances, live by faith, because we have seen the Father.

What? When have we seen the Father?

You might recognize those words from a discussion Jesus once had with His disciples.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

John 14:8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Have we seen Jesus, and, therefore, the Father?

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

Hebrews 1:2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Hebrews 1:3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...

This translates the Greek term used for the impression made by a die or stamp on a seal, or the engraving on a coin. The design on the die is reproduced on the wax or metal. Jesus Christ is the reproduction of God. He is the perfect, personal imprint of God in time and space.

You absolutely can make the argument that we've seen Jesus, and therefore have seen the Father, in terms of the character and nature of our gracious and merciful God.

Remember I said that Habakkuk's words were quoted three times in the New Testament? And that one of the times is in Hebrews 10:38?

Here are the words (again) in Habakkuk:

Hab 2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, **It** will not tarry.

Hab 2:4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

Here is the quote in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:37 "For yet a little while, And **He** who is coming will come and will not tarry.

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

Did you notice a slight but incredible change? Habakkuk said "it will not tarry." "**It**" is changed in Hebrews to "**He** who is coming will come and not tarry."

The "He" is, of course, Jesus, at the end, in His Second Coming. The Hebrew believers, the justified ones who were suffering extreme persecution, were to "see," by faith, Jesus in His Second Coming.

We can, and should, live by faith, despite circumstances, because we "see" Jesus, and thereby "see" the Father - as loving and gracious and merciful, despite what we must sometimes endure as His longsuffering waits on sinners to repent.

#2 You Live By Faith Because You've Seen The Future

(2:5-20)

There are a series of five "woes" in this section of verses. They are each a type of song called a *lament*, sung against Babylon, predicting its overthrow.

They had their immediate fulfillment when the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. They will have their ultimate fulfillment when, at the end of the seven year Great Tribulation, God destroys a future, revived Babylon:

Revelation 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the **judgment** of the great harlot who sits on many waters, Revelation 17:2 "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were **made drunk** with the **wine** of her fornication."

Once a drunk, always a drunk, it seems, for Babylon.

Hab 2:5 "Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, He is a proud man, And he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell, And he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, He gathers to himself all nations And heaps up for himself all peoples.

These verses aren't about alcohol. I'm not going to get off on a rabbit trail about drinking, and your liberty in Christ - except to say that you should "be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Holy Spirit"; **and** to remind you of your obligation, in all liberties, to never stumble weaker believers.

The Chaldeans *were* notorious drunkards; and God used that to describe their lust for power. They could be described as drunk on conquest.

Woe #1:

Hab 2:6 "Will not all these take up a proverb against him, And a taunting riddle against him, and say, 'Woe to him who increases What is not his - how long? And to him who loads himself with many pledges'?"

Hab 2:7 Will not your creditors rise up suddenly? Will they not awaken who oppress you? And you will become their booty.

Hab 2:8 Because you have plundered many nations, All the remnant of the people shall plunder you, Because of men's blood And the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.

It's interesting that, the night Babylon fell during their drunken party, they had brought out the goblets that had been plundered from the Temple at Jerusalem. They were drinking out of them, mocking God.

Here is the story, from Daniel:

Dan 5:4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

Dan 5:5 In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Dan 5:6 Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.

One possible application for us: Don't we have a hard enough struggle against the flesh already? Why get drunk, so that you have fewer inhibitions to temptation?

Woe #2:

Hab 2:9 "Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house, That he may set his nest on high, That he may be delivered from the power of disaster!

Hab 2:10 You give shameful counsel to your house, Cutting off many peoples, And sin against your soul.

Hab 2:11 For the stone will cry out from the wall, And the beam from the timbers will answer it.

Babylon thought of itself as an eagle, secure in its lofty nest. Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of Babylon during the Judean captivity, would learn something about being an eagle:

Dan 3:30 The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"

Dan 3:31 While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!

Dan 3:32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

Dan 3:33 That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like **eagles' feathers** and his nails like **birds' claws**.

Why do we always think of Nebuchadnezzar as wolf-like, when God says he was made eagle-like?

The Chaldeans thought they could ascend on high and secure themselves. Sounds a lot like the man who builds bigger barns to hold all his possessions, only to lose what is truly of value, his soul.

Be vigilant to value what God values.

Woe #3:

Hab 2:12 "Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed, Who establishes a city by iniquity!

Hab 2:13 Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts That the peoples labor to feed the fire, And nations weary themselves in vain?

Hab 2:14 For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.

The cities of the Babylonian empire were built by the blood and sweat of enslaved peoples. Murder, bloodshed, oppression, and tyranny were the tools used in their building projects.

The word translated "iniquity" summarizes this type of injustice towards others. God would judge Babylon: Those whom they enslaved to build for them are depicted as stoking the fires of the inevitable judgment upon Babylon. The Babylonians thought they were building, but their injustices would leave them burning.

Future Babylon is described, in Revelation eighteen, as trafficking in "the bodies and souls of men" (v13). I'm sure you are aware that women and children are being sold as sex-slaves all over the world.

God is concerned that societies care for the poor, the widows, the children, and the elderly. We must do what we can. Just remember that all our efforts at social justice will fall short until Jesus is on earth, ruling and reigning, for only then will "the earth... be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea."

Woe #4:

Hab 2:15 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing him to your bottle, Even to make him drunk, That you may look on his nakedness!

Hab 2:16 You are filled with shame instead of glory. You also - drink! And be exposed as uncircumcised! The cup of the LORD's right hand will be turned against you, And utter shame will be on your glory.

Hab 2:17 For the violence done to Lebanon will cover you, And the plunder of beasts which made them afraid, Because of men's blood And the violence of the land and the city, And of all who dwell in it.

Those taken captive by Babylon were forced to adopt the Babylonian's immoral practices, and were forced upon to bring sordid pleasure to them. Both figuratively and literally, they got their captives "drunk" in order to take sinful and perverse advantage of them.

Our society today is pouring its own wine, and it is vintage immorality. You are bombarded with ideas and images to intoxicate you into accepting the immorality of the times. Societies all over the world are hard at work blurring gender differences, and encouraging the abandonment of biblical morality.

It will one day be exposed as the sordid, shameful expressions of the natural man, opposed to that which God intended.

Woe #5:

Hab 2:18 "What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it,
The molded image, a teacher of lies, That the maker of its mold
should trust in it, To make mute idols?"

Hab 2:19 Woe to him who says to wood, 'Awake!' To silent stone,
'Arise! It shall teach!' Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, Yet
in it there is no breath at all.

Babylon was notorious for its idols. Nebuchadnezzar got into the act, having a huge golden image cast of himself and demanding that everyone bow down to it.

The Bible is straightforward about the stupidity of idols. Since they are man-made, they are less than man - yet men look up to them!

Our society carefully carves its idols. Whether they be people or possessions, we look up to them.

Is anything, or anyone, standing between you and a closer, deeper, relationship with Jesus? It's an idol.

These five woes all combine to prophesy the demise of mighty Babylon - both then and in the future.

We know the future! When the apostle Peter realized this, he wrote,

2Pet 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 2Pet 3:12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

2Pet 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

2Pet 3:14 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

2Pet 3:15 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation...

We must be "looking forward to these things." There's no getting around it; as justified ones, we are to live by faith in whatever circumstances we are in, looking and living forward to a better future with it's wonders and rewards.

The "longsuffering of our Lord" that brings the offer of "salvation" to nonbelievers is, simultaneously, what brings suffering to us.

Look beyond it; live beyond it - as a citizen of Heaven who, while on earth, runs with the message that Jesus saves.