

When God Digs a Ditch: Turning Evil for Good (Part 1)

Introduction

The Text

¹The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

²O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?³ Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.⁴ So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

⁵“Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.⁶ For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.⁷ They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.⁸ Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour.⁹ They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand.¹⁰ At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it.¹¹ Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!”

¹²Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.¹³ 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?¹⁴ You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.¹⁵ He brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad.¹⁶ Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.¹⁷ Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?

¹ 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.

² And the LORD answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.³ 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. (Hab. 1:1–2:3)

Isn't This Irrelevant?

- A. When you first come to the book of Habakkuk and read it through, you might be prone at first to think it a bit irrelevant to you.
- B. For one thing it seems it's just about one guy and his struggle with God. It's this deeply personal back-and-forth exchange and that's about it.
 - 1. It's like reading a guy's diary. It might be interesting, a little juicy in places, you can get some dirt on the dude . . . but it's not relevant to me really.

- C. For another thing, it's many centuries, even millennia, removed from us, isn't it? Habakkuk was ministering sometime around the end of the 7th century B.C. How is anything he's dealing with here going to possibly relate to us now in the modern world?
1. We go back and watch old movies, you see how outdated they are, right? The technology is laughable. These used to be big and cutting edge, but the culture has moved on and developed.
 - a. We went back and watched the old Star Wars a few weeks ago in preparation for Disneyland, and, forgive me (some of you are going to want excommunicate me for saying this), but it was hard not to laugh, the Yeti thing that attacks him (I guess they call it a "wampa"), he cuts off the things arm, the special effects, it was like something now a kid could do a better job with in his basement. But at the time it was groundbreaking.
 - i. Isn't that the sort of thing we should expect with this book? No one's worried about unrighteousness in Judah or Babylon anymore or things like this.
- D. So the book might seem immediately irrelevant to us for at least these two reasons: it's deeply personal, and it's far removed.

Clues That Push Back

- A. But, interestingly enough, even within the book itself, there are clues that push back on this for us.
- B. Against the first mistaken inference that this is just some personal beef between Habakkuk and his God, we come to see that God, when he responds to Habakkuk, is actually responding to all of us.
1. You can't see this straightaway in the English, but it's clear as day in the Hebrew.
 - a. Habakkuk, you remember, opens up with lament in vv. 1-4, and then in v. 5 God finally responds.
 - b. And when he does, interestingly enough, he doesn't just use the singular form of the Hebrew verbs, but the plural.
 - c. So he says, for example: "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told" (v. 5). And in every instance the verbs are plural not singular.
 - d. So, if we were try to bring this out in our English translations, we would find ourselves talking like a Texan or someone from the South (I've got family in both, I've heard it in action): "Y'all look among the nations, and y'all see; y'all wonder and y'all be astounded. For I am doing a work in y'all's days that y'all would not believe if told."
 2. In other words: God responds to Habakkuk's personal complaint by addressing all of his people. He knows this isn't just some issue Habakkuk is taking up with him. This is something relevant to us all. So he speaks to us all.

- C. Against the second mistaken inference that this is too far removed historically to be of any real relevance to us today, in [Hab. 2:2-3](#) (which we'll actually look at a bit more later) God actually tells Habakkuk to write his words and this vision down, because future generations are going to need to read it.
1. This isn't just for you Habakkuk, nor is it just for this generation. This will be relevant to those coming later just the same. It's relevant to us.
- D. And if there was still any doubt at all on this, all we have to do is consider the struggle Habakkuk is having with God here and see if you relate in the slightest.
1. Have you struggled with the problem of evil?
 2. Have you ever been troubled by the fact that injustice and oppression abound in our world and, on the surface at least, God seems to be doing so little about it?
 3. Have you ever been confused about the will and ways of God and how he's working in human history?
 4. Have you ever wrestled personally in the place of trial and tribulation, wondering why God would permit such a thing in your life and how he could still be good if so?
 5. Have you ever felt like God is distant, like he's abandoned you, like you are left to fend for yourself?
 6. Have you ever spent a night crying in your bed, confused about the way your story is playing out, heartbroken in the face of it all?
 - a. Isn't that all of us? No doubt. Bottom line: this book has a lot more to say to you than you may have first realized.

A Bitter Pill

- A. Now, I want to set up where we're going this morning this way . . .
- B. If you have kids, I'm sure you've had to give them medicine for a headache or fever or something else?
1. A lot of times nowadays the medicine they make for kids, like liquid Motrin or whatever it may be, it actually tastes good. You smell it, it's like candy. Like we should be drizzling it on our ice cream or something.
 - a. In fact, it tastes so good that my kids want it even when they're not sick. Do you have this problem? Kid's been fine all day, then suddenly at night: "I'm sick, I need medicine." They're trying to pretend suddenly they're struck with something. I don't know how they get that stuff so sweet, but it is.
 2. When I was a kid, I remember I had to take this stuff for my asthma before I could really swallow a pill, we had to open up the little capsule and pour out the granules of medication on my yogurt or whatever I was eating. And it didn't matter what I poured that pill out on, I could have mixed it in with a Dr. Pepper and it would have still tasted terrible. You'd be spitting it out. It was nasty going down.

- a. But it's what I needed. It would help my lungs work. It would help me breathe. It didn't taste good. It didn't make me feel all that great at first, my tummy would be all turning over. But it brought healing. It was good in the end.
- C. And I think in many ways what we're going to see in these next couple weeks is just this.
 - 1. God's going to share some hard stuff with Habakkuk and with us about our trials and things. He's going to talk about how somehow, though he's not the author of evil, he does use it for good ends in our lives.
 - a. And it's going to sound weird, maybe grate on our ears a bit. The truth may go down a little hard, taste a little bitter, but if we stick with God in it, if we don't derail and lose our stomach, if we hang in and let him take us where he's trying to take us, it's going to bless us.
- D. It hurts at first, but it heals at last. Those two key words there mark out the direction we'll be headed. It hurts. It heals.
 - 1. I won't really be able to touch on the healing bit this time. We'll circle back next time and really press into that, and we'll try to grasp more of God's relation to evil and how it can work out in a good way for us.
 - a. It's at that point that we'll really make sense of the sermon title ("When God Digs a Ditch"), so if you're looking at that now going, "I don't get it," just come back next week and I trust it'll become clear.
 - 2. For now, we'll really just try to focus in on what's happening here as the medicine is going down. I want you to taste it, wrestle with it.
- E. So, just to reiterate, I've got two main headings that will spread out through these two sermons: (1) It Hurts; and (2) It Heals. So let's go!

(1) It Hurts

- A. Under this heading, we're just going to follow along with the text and we'll see in particular that: (1) Habakkuk Laments (1:1-4); (2) God Responds (1:5-11); (3) Habakkuk Laments . . . Again! (1:12-2:1); and (4) God Responds . . . Again! (2:2-3). That's the rhythm. That's the outline. Let's dive in . . .

(1) Habakkuk Laments (1:1-4)

- A. Last week's message, you may recall, was titled "Learning to Lament." And that's because that's what Habakkuk is doing in these opening verses, he's lamenting.
- B. We focused in on vv. 1-4 in particular and there we saw that he's witnessing all this evil going on in Judah.

1. The people of God aren't living up to the law and covenant God's given them, they're giving to way to violence, oppression, injustice, idolatry.
2. And it seems, from Habakkuk's vantage point, that God's not doing anything about it. He's just giving them a pass on it.
 - a. I suppose in some ways it's not a little unlike the whole outrage with the police and things in the Uvalde school shooting situation. "You're the guys who are supposed to be doing something about this evil. Why did you sit outside for over an hour while the guy's still in there with the kids? It's inexcusable!"
 - i. That's how Habakkuk feels with God and the evil he sees going on all around him. "Where are you? Why are you sitting outside doing nothing?"

C. And so Habakkuk is lamenting.

1. And I said that biblical lamenting is composed of at least three elements. It's complaining, if you will, but (1) in God's direction, (2) on the basis of God's Word, (3) with expectation of God's response.
 - a. And that's what we see in those opening few verses. He's talking to God. He's wrestling with what God has said in the Scriptures and how he's not seeing it line up with reality. And he's expectant that God hears him and will respond.

D. And, you know, God does respond. That's what we see next in [vv. 5-11](#).

1. Can I just pause here and remind you, then, that in the dark night of your soul, when you feel most alone, he's most present. When you feel like the only one who hears your prayers and cries for help is your little beta fish in the bowl on your bookshelf . . . he hears you. He loves you. He will respond.
 - a. Though sometimes, when the response does come, it comes to you like a bitter pill.

(2) God Responds (1:5-11)

"Look and See"

- A. So God begins there in [v. 5](#): "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told."
- B. Now, you need to notice that God here actually picks up the language of Habakkuk's lament and throws it back at him in his response.
 1. Do you remember what Habakkuk says there in [v. 3](#): "Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?" He's saying in essence: "I see this and you don't. I'm looking at this and you aren't. Look and see Lord!"
 2. And then here God comes back, borrowing those same Hebrew verbs: "Look among the nations, and see . . ." ([v. 5](#)). In other words: "You were telling me to look and see, Habakkuk."

It isn't me who needs to do such things. It's you. You're wondering if I'm ever going to do something about the evil among your kinsmen in Judah? I already am!"

- C. You know, in [Isa. 40](#), God through the prophet addresses the people who will someday soon be led off by the Babylonians into exile. And he knows they're going to be freaking out, thinking he's forgotten them, thinking he doesn't see. And so he says this: "[25 To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One. \[In other words: "I'm not a man like you. Stop acting like I'm just another man. I'm God.\]"](#)[26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.](#)

[27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? \[28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable" \\(vv. 25–28\\).\]\(#\)](#)

1. He just says: "Pause the complaining for a moment here and look up. Do you see the stars? Do you see the planets hurling around our solar system? Do you see the creamy flow there right across the middle, we call it the Milky Way, but you want to know what it is? You're looking through a cross-section of our galaxy--more stars and planets in there than you could ever count! You realize, don't you, that you are talking to the one who made all of these and keeps them in place? Do I see? Come on. Do you see?!"
- D. We just went up to my parents' new house there in Flagstaff. They live off in the country, and the stars were just breathtaking. On a clear night I got the kids together and we just laid out on a blanket and took it all in. And there just happened to be this random, fluke meteor shower that was set to make its first ever appearance in the sky that night (the tau Herculids). It was awesome.

1. And you're just thinking: he made this, he's upholding this, he sees this. I'm pretty sure he sees more than me and more than you.

- E. The fact that the Lord sees is at once a comforting and terrifying reality, isn't it?

1. It's comforting because he sees, he knows what going wrong and he will do something about it.
2. And it's terrifying because he sees, not just what's wrong out there, but what's wrong in here. We can hide from each other. We can't hide from him. We can dress in our Sunday best and play "church." But he knows we're faking it. He knows what we're doing in the dark when no one else is around. He knows the stuff that's turning in your heart.

- a. In [Luke 12:2-3](#), Jesus says: "[2 Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. \[3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.\]\(#\)"](#)

- i. How many of you would like that? If God just broadcast over the sound system here all the stuff you've been thinking about, all you've been turning over in private?

(1) It's comforting, but it's terrifying.

F. Habakkuk's asking if he sees. "More than you know."

1. So he says, "It's not me who needs to look and see. It's you. But now you're going to look out and you're still not going to get it. Nevertheless, I'm going to try to let you in on some of it . . ."

"I Am Raising Up the Chaldeans"

A. So he goes on to say there at the beginning of v. 6: "[B]ehold, I am raising up the Chaldeans [aka the Babylonians] . . ."

1. And then he goes on to describe what Babylon is like, and it's just frightening. Let's just go verse-by-verse here . . .

B. In v. 6 he says: "[They're a] bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own."

1. So their nasty brutes and they're moving fast. They're impulsive, and they're greedy.

C. Then v. 7: "They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves."

1. The idea with that last bit there is that this is certainly not a nation that holds to the law of God. They make up their own justice, they play by their own rules. They exalt themselves over everyone else, even over God himself.

- a. Quick side note: There's a lot of this going on today. We don't like objective truth or a fixed moral code. That's why we talk about "my truth" or "your truth." And we define what's right for us based on how it feels to us. If it feels good existentially, in the moment, it must be good ethically, morally. Our justice, our law, goes forth from ourselves. "No one outside can tell me what's right or wrong, not even God. Nope. I define that for me."

- i. When we go this route, we're on a slippery slope towards Babylonian depravity.

D. Now v. 8: "Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour."

1. When we were in Flagstaff, the kids and I were hiking around dusk in the woods back behind my parents' place and off in the distance we saw it: not wolves, but coyotes. First one, then another, then another, then another, and they kept coming. And immediately I'm reaching for the hands of my kids. One I'm not too worried about, I could probably hold my own with a stick or something, but a pack? That's a different story.

- a. And that's what it's like when the Babylonians roll into town.

- E. Then v. 9: “They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand.”
1. The language here would be especially painful for the Jew I think. Because the image of sand is usually picked up by God to describe how much he’s going to bless the people of Israel.
 - a. You remember, perhaps, that promise he made to Abraham so many years prior: “¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed . . .” (Gen. 22:17–18). The idea is, I’m going to give you descendants beyond number and in and through you and them I’m going to bring blessing to all the nations!
 - i. And yet here God is using the same imagery to run in precisely the opposite direction. These Babylonians, instruments of my judgment, they’re going to capture so many of you, you won’t even be able to number it, like sand at the shore.
- F. On to v. 10: “At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it.”
1. The accent here is on their arrogance, their bloated egos.
 - a. The laughing God is talking about here isn’t the kind of laughing you do when you hear a good joke or when you’re watching a comedy or something.
 - b. This is the kind of laughing you do when you feel like everyone else is stupid, bite-size, nothing in your sight.
- G. And then, finally, v. 11: “Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!”
1. That last line points to their idolatry and even self-worship.
 - a. I’m reminded of what King Nebuchadnezzar says later in Daniel when he’s walking on the roof of his royal palace there in Babylon: “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30). “Look at me. Aren’t I strong? Aren’t I something special? Who can stop me? I’m like a god!”

This Is God’s Response?!

- A. So God wraps it up with that. And I wonder: are you catching this? This is God’s response to Habakkuk’s lament. “You want me to deal with the wickedness in Judah? Here’s how I’m going to do it. I’m going to raise up and use a nation even more wicked than them.”
- B. And to this, as we’ll see, Habakkuk just throws up his hands. Here his complaint transitions from “Why in the world aren’t you doing anything?” to “Why in the world are you doing this?!”

1. “You call this an answer?! You’re going to right the evil and injustice in Judah by using a nation even more evil and unjust? This just aggravates the problem.
2. That’s like saying you’re going to put out the fire with gasoline, you’re going to heal the headache with a hammer, you’re going to cushion the fall with a bed of nails.
3. The solution is worse than the problem, the cure more troubling than the disease. You’re aggravating my dilemma, not relieving it. You’re piling more evil and injustice upon evil and injustice. If this is the medicine I’d rather keep the cough.”

a. It’s a bitter pill. It hurts going down.

C. Have you ever been there? God answers you. But it isn’t the answer you wanted.

(3) Habakkuk Laments . . . Again! (1:12-2:1)

A. So Habakkuk laments again. He just goes deeper in at this point. It’s the same basic outline we saw in the opening verses, just taken further.

1. He complains in God’s direction.
2. He does so on the basis of God’s Word.
3. And, amazingly, he still does it with great expectation that God’s going to respond and help.

Element #1: In God’s Direction

A. For Habakkuk here, regarding that first element, it’s quite obvious, he keeps talking to God.

1. He doesn’t start a blog and vent to the general public about how unfair God is.
2. He doesn’t start an atheist’s unite club on campus.
3. He doesn’t go on some bender and try drown his frustrations in booze.

a. He prays. He complains in God’s direction.

Element #2: On the Basis of God’s Word

A. And when he does, we see it plainly, he does so on the basis of God’s Word. He’s trying to take what God has revealed of himself in Scripture and make sense of how it could be playing out like this in reality.

1. So there’s two seemingly incompatible realities that he’s wrestling with here, like oil and water, he doesn’t get how they come together.
 - a. On the one hand, he knows who God is and what he’s like.
 - b. And, on the other hand, he knows who these Babylonians are and what they’re like.
 - i. He just says: “How can it be that this kind of God could in some way raise up and use this kind of people for his purposes?”

B. So, in the verses there, he lays out what he knows of God:

1. You're "from everlasting" (v. 12). In other words: God is eternal; he knows the end from the beginning; he's sovereign, and big, and in control.
 2. You're the God of the covenant. So he calls him "LORD" (v. 12)—which, again, is the English rendering of the covenant name of God: YHWH. Attached to that name for Habakkuk is personal relationship and commitment from God to his people. So Habakkuk is saying: "You're the God of the covenant. You're faithful."
 3. You're the "Holy One" (v. 12). You're set apart God, you're far above us.
 4. You're the "Rock" (v. 12). You're our stability, our foundation, our protector, our provider.
 5. You're pure. "You . . . are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong . . ." (v. 13).
- C. But then, over and against this, he lays out what he knows of Babylon, what God himself has already said he's aware of concerning these vicious men . . .
1. They're "traitors" (v. 13)—treacherous men.
 2. They're even more "wicked" than those in Judah (v. 13).
 3. They treat people like animals. It's like we're just fish and they're coming with their "hook[s]" and their "net[s]" and gathering us up as spoil (vv. 14-15).
 4. They're idolaters. They don't worship you nor give you credit for what they have. "Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich" (v. 16).
- D. And, as he's trying to bring these two together, like Mentos and Coke—it doesn't work, it just explodes, and makes a mess on the floor.
1. And all these questions erupt out: Are you seriously going to correct the evil in Judah by using a people even more evil in Babylon? "Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?" (v. 17).
- E. You see it's the same kind of issue as before only burrowed deeper down.
1. Before it was: "Are you going to do anything about evil of Judah or just let it continue?"
 2. Now it's: "Are you going to do something about the even more grievous evil of Babylon or just let it continue?"
 - a. I don't get it. It's water and oil. It's mentos and Coke. It's a bitter pill. And I don't see where the healing might come from.

Element #3: With Expectation of God's Response

- A. But yet still he expects his God to respond. So in Hab. 2:1 we read: *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.*
1. I love that. He's using military terminology here—"stand at my watchpost," "station myself on the tower." This is a fight for faith!

- a. And let's just be clear: he's not watching for Babylon here, but for God! "I know you're going to answer. I know you're going to help." This is some gritty, gutsy stuff.
- B. Listen, Mercy Hill, don't give up. So many times we're one and done, right? We pray once and then if God doesn't immediately show up, we move on. But Habakkuk shows us the way to really press in in hard times. I'm going to sit here all night and watch if I have to. What are you going to say?!

(4) God Responds . . . Again! (2:2-3)

"Wait for It . . ."

- A. Well, just as Habakkuk laments for a second time here, so too God responds for a second time. It's those verses I mentioned way back at the beginning, [Hab. 2:2-3](#): ² *And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it."* ³ *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.*
 - 1. He says: "Habakkuk hold up, wait, pop some tums or something for that heartburn, it's going to be okay. You might not get what I'm doing now, but give it some time and you will."
- B. He goes on in the verses that follow (which we'll look at in the weeks to come) and he reassures Habakkuk that he's not siding with Babylon here. He's going to judge them in the end for their sin as well. He's going to make all that wrong right also.
 - 1. In fact, if we keep reading, we see that he issues five "woes" in [Hab. 2:6-20](#) where he describes what he's going to do about all this. He's going to mock the mockers and taunt the taunters. He's going to reverse the fortunes of these guys.
 - a. But, more than that, he's going to save his people from the Babylonians, preserve a faithful remnant, he's going to bring them back into the land. He's going to work all of this for good in the end.
- C. I said last time that Jeremiah was likely a contemporary of Habakkuk there in Judah. He talks about all this. And in [Jer. 16](#), God says:
 - 1. "Listen, yes it's going to be hard, yes I'm going to hurl you out of this land for your sin, but I'm going to bring you back, and when I bring you back, it's going to be like a new and better Exodus."
 - 2. "And more than that, when the Gentile nations who had you under their thumb see that their gods are false and impotent, they'll come to know my name as well."
 - a. In other words: this is moving towards redemption here. This is moving somewhere good in the end.

D. [Jer. 32](#), Babylon is literally now surrounding Jerusalem, it's over, they are besieging the city. And God says, amazingly, "I want you to buy some land here Jeremiah." What a horrible investment that would be. I'm about to buy land that's going to be overrun by the Babylonians any day now.

1. I was talking with a guy on the hike yesterday about how he wished he could buy a place in the Santa Cruz Mountains there but people were saying don't do it. Fire insurance is crazy, if you can even get it now. But what God is telling Jeremiah to do here is not just buy a house in the Santa Cruz Mountains, it'd be like buying the place when a fire is already lit and encircling it. How foolish.

a. So Jeremiah's like: "I'm going to buy land in Judah now, why?" "Because I'm bringing you back. I'm not done with you."

i. Now Jeremiah's going to die during the 70 years of exile, he's not literally coming back to this place.

ii. But God's getting at the greater work he's doing, even the new Jerusalem that's coming, and our inheritance in it.

(1) What looks to be so hopeless, man, he's still working!

How Do We Get on the Right Side of This?

A. Next week we'll look more at the puzzle of how God relates to evil and can work it for the good of his people.

1. Today I just want to ask how do we get on the right side of this? How can we be sure he is going to actually work stuff for our good? How can we be sure we're not going to be swept away in his righteous judgment . . . as we truly deserve?

B. I mean, here's what we've seen: Judah's going to be judged; Babylon's going to be judged; we already mentioned how God sees the junk in our own hearts and we all deserve to be judged as well.

1. It's like the prophet Isaiah when he's pronouncing all those woes up the people and then when once he catches a vision of God in his glory he just falls on his face and says, not "Woe to you," but "Woe is me!" ([Isa. 6:5](#)). I'm unclean. I deserve the judgment of God along with everyone else.

C. This is why, I think, by the way, Habakkuk is later going to cry out in view of all of this: "[I]n wrath remember mercy!" ([Hab. 3:2](#)).

1. It's as if he's saying: "Whoops, maybe I got carried away in asking for your judgment on Judah or Babylon. Now I realize your judgment should rightly sweep me up as well. In wrath remember mercy. I need mercy."

a. Well, where does that come from? If God's eyes are so pure, how does he look on me or you with favor.

D. Answer: Jesus. Everything described here, coming for Judah and Babylon, Jesus ultimately takes that in its fullest form on behalf of his people on the cross.

1. Violent men are going to set their hook in him, catch him in their net, drag him captive to that cross.
2. They're howling like a wolfpack around him there, mocking, taunting, laughing, laying siege to our Lord.
3. He's being swallowed up by men more wicked than he.
4. He's being hurled from the city, dragged outside its gates, to the place of exile, where the unclean things go.
5. All the secret sin in you and me, it was publicly punished in him on that cross. He was treated like a sinner though he was not. "In my place condemned he stood."

E. Jew or Gentile, Judahite or Babylonian, Habakkuk or Nick Weber, we all get saved one way: as Habakkuk puts it in [Hab. 2:4](#): "the righteous shall live by . . . faith."

1. Faith in what? Ultimately, the gospel. Faith in who? Ultimately, Jesus.
 - a. "[I]n wrath remember mercy!" He gets the wrath, I get the mercy. He gets the judgment of God, I get all things now working for my good!