
WHAT AN IGNOMINIOUS MEMENTO?

THEME: “THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH”

HABAKKUK 2:1-4

ADEOYE, EMMANUEL (EVANG.)

*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. Then the Lord answered me and said: "Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. 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. "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith. **Habakkuk 2:1-4***

IGNOMINIOUS: A word marked with or characterized by disgrace, shame, Humiliating, despicable

MEMENTO: An object or item that serves to remind one of a person, past event etc.

This chapter reports an experience Habakkuk had that is similar to one recorded by Asaph the psalmist in Ps 73. Like Habakkuk, Asaph was bewildered at the providential working of God in this world: he was disturbed because the wicked seemed to be prospering while the righteous were suffering. Like Habakkuk, he reasoned with God, and then, like Habakkuk, he gave God the opportunity to reply.

When I thought to know this," he wrote, "it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God" (Ps 73:16-17). There in the sanctuary he found God's answer to his problem, and his sighing was turning into singing. Let's join Habakkuk on the watchtower, which was his sanctuary, and listen to what the Lord said to him. When God did speak to His servant,

The prophet saw himself as a watchman on the walls of Jerusalem, waiting for a message from God that he could share with the people. In ancient days, the watchmen were responsible to warn the city of approaching danger, and if they weren't faithful, their hands would be stained with the blood of the people who died (**Ezek 3:17-21; 33:1-3**). It was a serious responsibility.

The image of the watchman carries a spiritual lesson for us today. As God's people, we know that danger is approaching, and it's our responsibility to warn people to "*flee from the wrath to come*" (**Matt 3:7**). If we don't share the Gospel with lost sinners, then their blood may be on our hands. We want to be able to say with Paul, "*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men*" (**Acts 20:26, NKJV**).

You get the impression that Habakkuk was fearful of what the Lord might say to him because of His servant's "complaint." But the Lord graciously answered Habakkuk and gave him the vision he needed to turn his worrying into worshipping. This vision included not only the words in **Hab 2**, but also the revelation of God's glory recorded in **3:3-15**. When you behold the glory of God and believe the Word of God, it gives you faith to accept the will of God.

We wouldn't be studying this book today had Habakkuk not obeyed God's orders and written down what God had told him and shown him. This writing was to be permanent so that generation after generation could read it. It was also to be plain, written so that anybody could read it, and it was to be public so that even somebody running past the tablets on display could get the message immediately. Habakkuk wasn't the only person in Judah who needed this message, and it was his obligation to share it.

The revelation God gave was for a future time and about a future time. While the immediate application was to the end of the Babylonian Captivity, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews interpreted it to refer also to the return of Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, he changed "it" to "He" and applied it to our Lord. "*For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry*" (**Heb. 10:37**). Along with the scoffers Peter wrote about, some readers might ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (**2 Peter 3:3ff**) and God's reply is, "*Wait for it! It will surely come*".

The contrast here is between people of faith and people who arrogantly trust themselves and leave God out of their lives. The immediate application was to the Babylonians.

The sinner. The Babylonians were "puffed up" with pride over their military might and their great achievements. They had built an impressive empire which they were sure was invincible. The words of Nebuchadnezzar express it perfectly "*Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power for the honor of my majesty?*" (**Dan 4:30, NKJV**). But Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians aren't the only ones puffed up with pride and self-sufficiency. This is the condition of most of the people in today's society who belong to the world and live for the world. The Apostle

John warns us against "*the pride [vain glory] of life*" that belongs to this present evil world system which is against God and without God (**1 John 2:15-17**).

A discouraged Jew in Babylonian exile might ask, "*Will the Lord come and deliver us?*" and the answer is, Yes! Wait for him. Besides puffing them up, what else does pride do to people? It twists them inwardly, for the soul of the unbeliever is "*not upright*," which means his inner appetites are crooked and sinful. He delights in the things that God abhors, the things God condemns in the five "woes" in this chapter. One of the chief causes of the corruption in this world is what Peter calls "**LUST**" (**2 Peter 1:4**), which simply means "evil desires, passionate longing." Were it not for the base appetites of people, longing to be satisfied but never satisfied, the "sin industries" would never prosper.

Pride also makes people restless: they're never satisfied (**Hab 2:5**). That's why they're given over to wine, never at rest, never satisfied. They're constantly seeking for some new experience to thrill them or some new achievement to make them important. Pride makes us greedy.

The Babylonians weren't satisfied with what they had; they coveted even more land and wealth, and therefore set their course to conquer every nation that stood in their way. More than one king or dictator in history has followed this resolve, only to discover that it leads to disappointment, ruin, and death. **The just**. Now for the contrast: "*The just shall live by his faith*".

This is the first of three wonderful assurances that God gives in this chapter to encourage His people. This one emphasizes God's grace, because grace and faith always go together. **Hab 2:14** emphasizes God's glory and assures us that, though this world is now filled with violence and corruption (**Gen 6:5,11-13**), it shall one day be filled with God's glory. The third assurance is in **Hab 2:20** and emphasizes God's government. Empires may rise and fall, but God is on His holy throne, and He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

"The just shall live by his faith" was the watchword of the Reformation, and they may well be the seven most important monosyllables in all of church history. It was verse 4. quoted in **Rom 1:17**, that helped to lead Martin Luther into the truth of justification by faith. "This text," said Luther, "*was to me the true gate of Paradise.*"

Justification is the gracious act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous and gives that believing sinner a perfect standing in Jesus Christ. The "just" person isn't someone who has met all of God's requirements by means of good works,

For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal 2:19; see Rom 4:5). "For if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Gal 2:21, NKJV).

Our Lord's parable of the Pharisee and the Publican makes it clear that no amount of religious effort can save a lost sinner (**Luke 18:9-14**). We can't justify ourselves before God because we stand with the whole world, guilty and condemned before His throne (**Rom 3:19**). All we can do is put saving faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross, because that is the only way to be saved. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (**Rom 5:1**).

The victory. We are not only saved by faith (**Eph 2:8-9**), but we are instructed to live by faith. "And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith" (**1 John 5:4**, NKJV). Faith is a lifestyle that is just the opposite of being "puffed up" and depending on your own resources.

Habakkuk knew the difficult times were coming to the people of Judah, and their only resource was to trust God's Word and rest in His will. Living by faith is the major theme of the Book of Hebrews (**Heb 10:30**), for in that book the phrase "*by faith*" is found over twenty times. To live by faith means to believe God's Word and obey it no matter how we feel, what we see, or what the consequences may be.

This is illustrated in **Heb 11**, the famous "by faith" chapter of the Bible. The men and women mentioned in that chapter were ordinary people, but they accomplished extraordinary things because they trusted God and did what He told them to do. It has well been said that faith is not believing in spite of evidence: it's obeying in spite of consequence, resting on God's faithfulness.

LESSONS TO TAKE HOME

- **GOD HAS A BETTER AND BEST ANSWER TO EVERY SITUATION OF LIFE**
- **ZERO YOUR MIND FROM OTHERS OR NATIONAL CHALLENGES**
- **CHRISTIANS ARE TO WAIT FOR AN APPOINTED TIME**
- **WE MUST LEARN TO TRUST IN GOD**

CONCLUSION

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(BE NOT DISMAYED)**