

Faith in the Worst of Times

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[0 : 0 0] Thank you, Corey. It's great to be with you and to have September. I'll be preaching here in September Sunday evenings through the book of Habakkuk. So if you have your Bible there, please keep it open at Habakkuk chapter 1. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. That line will probably be familiar to a lot of you. For some of you, you might not know where you've heard it, but it sounds familiar. For some of you, you'll know, oh yeah, that's Dickens. Some of you might even know it's the opening line to one of his books.

It's a tale of two cities. Some of you might even know the story, the context, why this opening line is so perfect and therefore so memorable, why it spreads out, why it's gone viral as a line. It's the story of a French doctor who lives in the context of, well, the French Revolution is coming, the reign of terror is coming. All around there's hunger, there's instability, there's death and murder. The main character spends 18 years in prison and when you know the story, you know why this line is so perfect as a way to encapsulate the whole book. I think if you took that line, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times and tried to rework it a little bit to fit the book of Habakkuk, which is this really short little book in the minor prophets, only three chapters long. Chapters one and two would be the, it was the worst of times section and chapter three would be the best of times. Now Habakkuk is extremely short. You know, if you're flicking through a print Bible to try and find it, if you blink, you'll miss it because it's so short. But, and you could go to church for years and probably not hear it preached on or preached through. And there's so much that we don't even know about Habakkuk himself. He's mysterious.

We know that he's a prophet. We know that he's literate. At one point he's told to write something down on a clay tablet. So there's a tiny hint about his level of education. But apart from that, we know almost nothing about him. We don't even know how to say his name. People, you might have heard Habakkuk, Habakkuk. We don't even know which language his name was in. So the kind of scholars who get into this kind of thing debate, is it a Hebrew name that means embrace? Is it an Akkadian name that's the name of a plant? We don't know. Okay, so he's ultra mysterious. But his book is extremely important. Maybe disproportionately so when we think of how little we engage with Habakkuk as a book. To stick with where I started with this line, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Everyone knows that line. It's metaphorical everyone. It's extremely well known. It's such a well-known line that there's a parody version of it that stand-up comedians sometimes use to begin their show. And it's a parody based on a rapper called Buster Rhymes. Probably the first time and also probably the last time. He's ever been mentioned in a sermon in St. C's. But the parody is, it was the Buster Rhymes. It was the Worcester Rhymes. Perfect opening line. And people will laugh at that if they have never heard of Dickens. They still get that it's a reference to something that they've heard of. That there's a great line out there somewhere even if they don't know about the

French Revolution or the reign of terror or 18 years in prison. Habakkuk is kind of like that in a strange kind of way. So stick with me here. Habakkuk has a perfect line that encapsulates what the whole book is about. A line that has gone viral throughout the Bible. A line that's quoted three times in the New Testament. A line that probably if you're a Christian you will know. And it is this. The just shall live by faith. If you're a Christian do you recognize that verse? Absolutely. Every hand goes up. If you're not a Christian have you heard that verse? If you studied the Protestant Reformation at school and Martin Luther you probably heard the verse, right? It's extremely well known.

Where is it from? The Bible. Where in the Bible? Oh I know. It's in Romans. Bonus points. It's in Galatians. It's in Hebrews in the New Testament. Okay. And where are they quoting from? Okay and this is where if you know the book of Habakkuk you know they're quoting Habakkuk. Okay what happens in Habakkuk? What's the back story? What's the context of the line that the just shall live by faith in Habakkuk? What did Habakkuk live through? What's the story of this book? And then when you get into that story and you realize the kind of context that he's living in and when you find out who said this line in the book of Habakkuk. Was it Habakkuk himself?

[5 : 03] So we're gonna see as we go through the book it's something that God says to Habakkuk to describe to him the kind of life that he wants Habakkuk to have in a particular context where he feels like he's living in the worst of times. Okay so the more we get into it the more we start to see that Habakkuk is really important and that actually knowing the book of Habakkuk will change what might be really familiar words to you, the just shall live by faith. But Habakkuk is also extremely important because it's it's such a timely book, it's so particularly acutely relevant to our own day in our own context. It's set in a place where people didn't say it was the best of times and paradoxically it also felt like the worst of times. It was set in a place where people just felt like no it's just the worst of times. So Habakkuk was written in the 7th century

BC. Okay so in the time before Christ and in the world around Habakkuk there are three huge national political military powers that have all been vying for position of world domination. So you have the Egyptians led by their Pharaoh, you have the Assyrians and you also have the Babylonians and the geopolitics of this in the background to Habakkuk's life is that the Babylonians are getting extremely powerful, so powerful that their enemies have to unite to try and stop them from dominating. So the Assyrians and Egyptians team up and the Babylonians utterly destroy them. Okay so you can read about this in Jeremiah 46. There was a battle, the battle of Kar-Khimish happened in 605 BC and Jeremiah writes about it when the Assyrians and Egyptians teamed up to fight the Babylonians and the Babylonians completely destroyed them. If you want to, if you're in London and you go to the British Museum you can see a clay tablet there, it's called the Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle and it talks about this battle as well and the Chronicle tells you that some of the Egyptian soldiers tried to flee when they saw they were losing and they tried to get home to Egypt and the Babylonians were such an efficient military machine that they got there ahead of them and killed every single one of them, they're not a single Egyptian soldier made at home. Okay so this is a world-changing event that's there in the background and what it means is that some of the world's biggest armies have just been wiped out and now there is one big army in the world and if you want to oppose them and it's literally a question of what yeah but you and whose army, okay they can now do what they want in the world and they are the Babylonians and this is and this means that they now have no rivals they have their plan for world domination and the strategy is well if you destroy all the military opposition then it's a soft takeover after that because nobody has any power to oppose you and that is Habakkuk's problem. This is why it feels like the worst of times for him because he can see that the

Babylonians are coming and humanly speaking there is nothing that can be done to stop them. They have the right, okay in terms of might is right, they have the right to come and take the best of what your land produces and if you don't give them that well they'll take your sons away turn them into eunuchs in the court of their king, they want you to live by their values, they want you to speak their language, to worship their gods above all their supreme God Marduk and they want you to see their city Babylon as the center of the world, as the pinnacle of everything that you would want. It's the city of Babylon and this might seem kind of abstract and ancient history to you, okay if you wanted to come a bit more alive and again if you happen to be in London and you go to the British Museum and you go to their Mesopotamia section you can see artifacts of the Babylonian Empire and just how impressive it was. If you go to

Berlin and go to the city museum their Babylonian display will absolutely blow you away in terms of the might and the grandeur and the resources that they had. So this is all coming and if you're Habakkuk it's like a tsunami of oppression is there in the distance and it's getting closer and closer and it feels like humanly there's just nothing that you can do to stop this. So these aren't the best and the worst of times, they just feel like the worst of times.

The world he's in was not the world as he wanted it to be and why do I say that that's timely in 2024 in Edinburgh? Well that is how a lot of people in our culture and our city see the world as well. So I grew up in the way back in other ancient history the 1980s and 1990s which were in British culture were decades of excess. Cheap credit, materialist values, living to consume, a culture of you know spend and then show that you've spent, a culture of let the good times roll and don't judge me way more than a culture of feeling sort of guilty for the consequences of our actions or talking about justice across society. But that feels like they didn't in the distant past and nowadays the culture around us is very different. If you ask people to describe this as feel like the best of times or the worst of times the long list of things that will roll. Not so much letting the good times roll but the long list will be well the cost of living crisis, the war in Ukraine, the culture war in our newspapers and our schools, the situation in Israel and Gaza, the struggling education system, the struggling NHS, the sense of politics being futile and unstable and everyone hating each other and you could just go on and on. People feel deep anxiety about all of these things and it's not surprising nowadays when you meet young adults who don't really see a future of flourishing opening up for them. It's hard to find housing, it's hard to find jobs, it's hard to imagine having a family one day and you sometimes meet young people who will say even if I could what I want to, would I want to bring children into this world.

[11 : 48] If you lived in Habakkuk's day, one of the slogans, an export slogan, aspirational living for the Babylonians and a sort of persuasion attempt to make you become one of them was, may the enemy not flourish. So if you went to Babylon itself, the city, there was a big street that you walked down when you came in, 180 meters long, really grand, display of power as you enter the city and the city was called, may the enemy not flourish. Street is kind of implied.

So that's the message that you hear when you come into the city and that's to tell you get on site. If you're not, you will not flourish and that's a message to Habakkuk, people like him. But nowadays I think a lot of people around us feel like this world that we live in is not a place of flourishing and that's why Habakkuk is so timely. It's a book that makes us ask, how do you live as a person of flourishing? Is that even possible if it feels like you live in the worst of times? Or if people around you see that as the kind of age that you live in? And what does it look to live by faith in those times? So this week and then over the next four Sunday nights we're going to go through these these three chapters and tonight we're starting in chapter one verses one to eleven where we get introduced to Habakkuk and we have this first interaction with God in that context. And that on its own is something to notice. It's actually really important. You shouldn't just gloss it over. When you think of prophets in the

Bible, if that's a thing you think about, you tend to think of someone, probably, who hears the voice of God to the people and then who comes and who's like a megaphone for God. What do prophets say? Thus is the Lord, right? But Habakkuk is different. He's a prophet, really clear in verse one, but rather than talking from God to the people, Habakkuk is a prophet who talks to God. So in that sense he is different. He's really unique among the prophets. So tonight we're focusing on these eleven verses. We're going to do that briefly in three parts. Thinking about what Habakkuk saw, because verse one tells us that he saw something, and then we're going to look at what he did, or what he said, and thirdly we'll look at how God responded to him. So verse one, the oracle that Habakkuk, the prophet, saw. And sometimes in the Old Testament, when you have oracles, oracles are messages that a prophet hears, or the oracle will be a kind of supernatural vision that a prophet sees. Okay, so something somewhere else that a prophet sees, some revelation of supernatural reality. But the oracle that Habakkuk sees also is not like that. His oracle is actually a vision, or a different way of seeing the world around him that everyone else is looking at as well.

It's not a vision of something else, it's actually the world as it really is around him, which we're going to see as we go through these verses. And there's something else really important again to notice here, that this is obviously an English translation, the book of Habakkuk written extremely long time ago in Hebrew. And in the Old Testament in Hebrew, there's a word that sometimes you have to translate into English as oracle, something like that a prophet hears or a prophet sees. But sometimes the same word elsewhere in the Old Testament is something that you need to translate as burden, as a heavy load to bear. And in those passages, it's not really talking about someone who sees something, it's just a burden that a person bears. But sometimes it's very clearly a vision or something that a prophet sees or hears. And so the word has these two distinct meanings, you see translated differently in different parts of the Old Testament. But with Habakkuk, I think those two meanings come really close together to the point that almost that they overlap or that it's a double meaning, both a burden and a vision. Did he see a vision? Yes. Did he bear a burden? Yes. So for example, some of you will have grown up reading the King

James Bible. And if you read Habakkuk in the King James Bible, begins the burden that the prophet Habakkuk did see. And that's not a wrong translation, just like it's not a wrong translation in the ESV here, the oracle that he did see. So when we think about what he saw, his oracle, his vision, his burden, we have to start off seeing him as someone who is put in a very particular position by God. He has been convinced of some things by God. He has been compelled to see the world in a certain way by God. And Habakkuk can't undo that. He can't unsee what he has seen. He can't unbelieve what he has been compelled to believe. But none of that, none of the way that God has convinced him to see the world makes his life easier. In fact, it's a burden. Makes his life harder. It's an oracle and it's a burden. So what was it that he saw? Well, he saw violence. How long, oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help? And will you not hear or cry to your violence and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity? Why do you look idly at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me.

[18:09] Strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted.

Now, there's violence. I've already said that in the background there's this, there's been this huge sort of World War in effect in the background and a huge battle, catastrophic, terrifying. If you wonder what's going to come next for us in our small town, in our village, that's there. There's iniquity wherever he looks, his eyes cannot unsee the evil that is there. There's destruction, there's strife, there's contention. The world around him is falling apart. It's being destroyed and if you read down through this to what God says in his answer to Habakkuk, you start to see that it's being destroyed not through neglect. You know, our houses are falling apart just because we don't look after them and they've kind of fallen to dust. It's falling apart through being plundered and pillaged. Our world is being destroyed because somebody is taking all the bits and anything of any value to them and we can't do anything to stop them. The Babylonians can come and do what they want. Now, that's the kind of world that you're in if you're Habakkuk. Think about it like this. So there was,

I read an article in the BBC website this week and it was about shoplifting, which is now a really endemic problem in a lot of places across the UK. There's really little that's out there that's a strong deterrent to shoplifters and a lot of them steal to maintain drug addictions. And if you're a shop owner, shoplifting is a really big problem. It's a threat to your livelihood. And what shop owners who feel like this say in the article is, well, at the end of the day, I just have to raise prices for the people who do pay for what they leave my shop with. And they're the ones who pay for what's been stolen in effect. So they get punished and other people steal and I can't do anything about it to stop them. And also in the article, there are some shoplifters who are willing to buy stolen things from other shops because they can resell them at a profit as well. And who aren't really that bothered and who work with the shoplifters. Now, in that kind of a scenario where the were for petty crimes, feels like the law is paralyzed. What would you expect to find for the people who live in that? That's their immediate reality. You would expect to find what you can see in that article strife and contention. People respond to lawlessness differently. It sets people against each other in all kinds of ways.

And Habakkook, when he looks around himself and sees, okay, the law is paralyzed and really bad times are coming. Habakkook sees that happening. But for Habakkook, it's not just, I'm a shopkeeper and I sell grain and someone came and lifted a bag of grain and I couldn't do anything to stop it.

And Habakkook state, we're talking about the background to something like the book of Daniel. It's our children who are shoplifted. It's that the Babylonians will come along and say, okay, these look like your most talented, healthy, young people with the brightest futures where you're from. They are now ours. We're taking them to Babylon, new names, new language, new religion, new education. We are going to turn them into, your future is us and you can't do anything about it. Okay. And the law is paralyzed. That's what it feels like for Habakkook. And so Habakkook has an interconnected world with international warfare and an empire that's about to take over his home and his people and a society that's falling apart where God's law is paralyzed, where justice wasn't done anymore and Habakkook doesn't want to go along with it. Okay. And the message from the Babylonians is, well, here's your solution. Join us. Resistance is futile. We are the Babylonians and that would have been the easy option by far for Habakkook in the immediate, but he doesn't want to do that. So that's what he saw. What did he do? Well, he cries out to God, oh Lord, how long shall I cry to you for help? Okay. So what he saw around him was terrible. It looked hopeless and bleak, not the best of times and a cheery way alongside the worst of times. And what you can see in this verse is that Habakkook prays about it and he prays about it a lot. Okay. You don't say, how long will I cry to you if you've only done that once? Okay. This is repeated. This is his posture towards God, not a one-off. This is the stuff of his prayers over and over. Now one thing to,

[23 : 15] I'm just going to zoom out for a second to give you the big picture of the small book of three chapters. Okay. Habakkuk begins like a Sam, okay, song from the Old Testament and it ends like a Sam as well in chapter three. And in the middle, there's something else. God speaks. But why does it begin like a Sam? Okay. Well, think about, for example, Sam 13. How long Lord will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? Sam 89. How long Lord will you hide yourself forever? Okay. So it begins like a Sam and also ends like a Sam in the chapter three is Habakkuk Sam. It's a song that's set to music, but for the best of times. But at this point, we're still in the worst of times and the Sam for the worst of times is lament. It's a call to God of where are you? Why are you doing nothing? What are you doing? So he asks God, where are you in all of this? But there's something else that he does here that's really important, which is that he points out to God, that God is the reason that he doesn't want the world to be like this, that he can't just become a Babylonian. Okay. He says, you cause me to see this. You cause me to see this as the as evil, not as good. You are the reason that I'm that I'm like a stick out like a sore thumb here. And what are you doing? You're making my life more complicated. Now that thing to you cause me to see iniquity. Why do you do this? It might sound like a strange thing to say. Okay. In first glance, literally, you know, is are his eyes being held open so that he has to look at these things? Is that what it means? Why do you cause me to see it? But that's not what it means. I think that this is what he means when he says this. Something words to these effect. It's because of you. It's because I believe in you. It's because I believe you because I'm convinced by you, convinced of you that I cannot be happy with how things are in the world. These aren't your standards.

This is not a reflection of your character. And I want a world that is a reflection of your character, a world where your standards are a flourishing set.

How we flourish. It's like he's saying, you Lord are the reason to me that this looks wrong. And if you weren't there, I wouldn't measure things by your standard.

If I didn't follow you, I would have less reason to feel lament about this. And maybe then I could just see the world like a Babylonian and my life would feel a lot easier. But I can't do that because you are there. Because I am convinced of you, compelled by you. And that's why I don't want to assimilate into Babylonian culture. I don't want to live by their values and worship their gods. But as long as you sit by and do nothing, it's like you're making me see the world as it shouldn't be for you. And yet what are you doing? You just leave me here to stew in it. How long, oh Lord? Now, if you were a Christian in Edinburgh, 2024, maybe this is a point where you start to think, I can have a cook feels what I feel. I can relate to him. Maybe there are times where you thought, what I believe and what the city of Edinburgh at large wants me to believe and to do to long for, they're not easily reconcilable on many points.

And some other points, you know, in this context, my faith doesn't make being here difficult. But another point that really does. But I can't unbelieve what I believe. How long, oh Lord? My life would get a whole lot easier. My career would progress faster or whatever. My immediate social circle would accept me more easily. If I could just stop believing, if I weren't a Christian, if I just assimilated, if I weren't an awkward person for my culture to accommodate. If you feel like that, Habakkuk is your guy. He's your minor prophet who gives you permission biblically to say, how long, oh Lord, do you see me, oh Lord? You've given me this burden. So that's what he does. Lastly, and further briefly, how God responded.

[28 : 01] And we're looking here at verses 5 to 11. So this is God's answer to him. Now, God's answer begins, 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. So imagine that you're Habakkuk and God starts to respond with, I am going to do something that you would not believe if I told you. And I guess maybe for a lot of us, if you're a Christian, you immediately think, I know what's coming next, it's going to be really good. This is like in the New Testament, you know, the promise of heaven that God has prepared something so wonderful for those who love him that they couldn't even imagine until they get there. But here's the plot twist. That is not what God says. What God says to Habakkuk is, you're not going to, you wouldn't believe what I'm going to do even if I told you. I am raising up the Chaldeans, which is another word for the Babylonians. I'm raising them up, the people you are terrified of. They're bitter. They're hasty. That means they bear grudges and they're in a hurry to get revenge. They plunder and they pillage. They want to spread all over the world. They want to take all of your homes. Everyone dreads them. Everyone fears them. They don't believe in justice.

They don't believe in dignity. The reason that they, out of all of their different gods, they say that Marduk is the greatest, this is because Marduk is the best warrior. His weapons are the best that's slaying his enemies. He's the least forgiving and the most vengeful and they want to make everyone, everywhere, into people who think that he is great. They're the ultimate colonizers, the ultimate empire and they're also, God tells Habakkuk, they're armed to the teeth and they love violence. They're like the opposite of the way that God presents himself in the Old Testament. You know, they see all of these people just as sand to be oppressed, whereas God, if you think of that image in the Old Testament, wants to bless the whole world through Abraham.

There's a numerous of sand on the shore. So in every way, they're like the opposite of God and God says, you won't believe what I'm doing. These are the people I'm sending to you. Okay? Salvation from violence, more violence is coming.

Salvation from injustice, more injustice is coming. And there's a stunning piece of, there's a stunning verse at the end there. When God finishes off describing the people who are coming to Habakkuk in verse 11, they are guilty men whose own might is their God. When God describes them in effect, God says that their religion, their worship of the God Marduk, it's all a sham. It's not really the worship of Marduk. Marduk is just a projection of the violence in their own hearts and the power that they're addicted to where they're taking over the world. And behold, God says to Habakkuk, I am raising these people up and I'm sending them to you. And then God's answer stops. And you have to imagine Habakkuk at this point thinking, what? Because God's response to him basically is, I will fight injustice with injustice. I will fight violence with violence. And because it's so counterintuitive to Habakkuk, so hard to understand, that's why God begins everything by saying, you are not going to believe what I'm about to tell you. This, the first place will make no sense to you. Now, what we're going to see over the next few Sunday nights is that this isn't the end of

Habakkuk's interaction with God. As God is revealing the gospel to Habakkuk, it's the beginning. But what I want to stop with tonight is saying this, that ultimately the meaning of Habakkuk is found in the life and the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that makes this book direct and important to you, actually whether tonight you're a Christian or not. If you're a Christian, what you will see through the book of Habakkuk is that Jesus is the true and the better Habakkuk. He was someone, Habakkuk was someone you'll see who could wrestle faithfully with God, even in surrounded by darkness and the worst of times. Jesus did that but to perfection, to a degree that Habakkuk never did. In his worst of times, Habakkuk can cry out, how long, oh Lord, until you do something about this. But in Jesus' worst of times, the thing that he has to cry out is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Habakkuk, listen to God, talk about ending the violence and the injustice of the Babylonians through more injustice and violence. But Habakkuk is probably standing there thinking, what? You know, as a gut reaction, we're going to see next week what he goes on to articulate. But Jesus entered that world of violence and ended violence and injustice by submitting himself to it, to the violence, to the injustice of a

[33 : 32] Roman crucifixion. He destroyed it from the inside. He defeats death by dying because it's not possible for death to hold him. So if you're a Christian, Habakkuk, it's like Old Testament backdrop to Jesus that helps us understand him in really profound ways. But if you're not a Christian, finish by saying this, that if you're starting to think about Christianity, the Christian Gospel, and tonight you're wrestling with it through Habakkuk, what Habakkuk will help you think through is that the Gospel is a message that will necessarily confound you. Its claims will defy whatever expectations you begin with about what God should be like, what God should do. And I want to say this to you did you know that the Bible actually realizes that about you and that it assumes that about you regardless of where you come from? Okay, let's give you the Gospel in a couple of sentences. God is perfectly righteous and He judges you by His perfect moral standards, but you can't meet that through your moral performance, your religious performance. So before God, you are actually justly condemned. It's your status before Him. But God is also gracious beyond your wildest imagination. And in Jesus, 100% because of Jesus perfection, God offers you unconditional acceptance, gratuitous forgiveness because He loves you and

He's your Father and He wants you to be His child. And that forgiveness then can become the new motivation you have for how to live a different life. I want you to imagine two people, neither of them believes this message, but who hear it.

They're both from here, but they've grown up in different generations. One is someone from my generation in the 80s and 90s, a geriatric millennial like me. My generation back then, our icon was you know, Noel Gallagher, you know, let the good times roll, nobody can judge me. Someone from that generation will hear that Gospel message and have a particular stumbling block. And it is, don't judge me. I should be accepted, yeah, but I have a really big problem with a God who would say, I am your Lord and I tell you to be different. Imagine person number two is Gen Z, is like 12 to 18 years old in a Scottish high school with all of the values that go along with that generational package. And that person's icon is not Noel Gallagher, that person's icon is Greta Thunberg, that person is supremely moralistic. There's all kinds of evil. How can you not live with the consequences of your action and call other people out for them? That person has different stumbling blocks and it's not sin being called out or the idea that there are perfect standards and we should be held to account for them.

Well, that person will find much harder and more counterintuitive will be love your enemies, forgive gratuitously. Don't accept people because of some of their good deeds, love people in spite of their bad deeds. So even within two generations in the same city you could have very different stumbling blocks.

And that's even not even beginning to think about what would it be like if you heard this and didn't believe it and you grew up in Saudi Arabia or in Cambodia. People have all kinds of different stumbling block reactions to the gospel that are not the same and the Bible assumes that about you. If you want to see this read the book of 1 Corinthians in the New Testament because it begins with this and that when Paul in that book presents the gospel he begins by saying that different people have different reactions to it. They find it problematic in different ways. Jews who ask for a sign think that it's the gospel as a stumbling block and Greeks who seek wisdom think that it's just moronic, that it's foolishness. So what I'm trying to make here just to finish off is that when you find Jesus you will find some of what you were looking for, absolutely, but what you also discover is that there's a whole lot that you weren't looking for and you realize that you should have been and there are a lot of things that you were looking for and they're very so much depending on your generation and where you come from in the world and where you were just not looking for the right things at all. And whether you're reading the Bible in the

[38 : 37] Old Testament in a minor prophet like Habakkuk where God begins to present the gospel to him with a you wouldn't you won't believe this even when I tell you or whether you're reading the New Testament and it's Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 saying pay attention to where you're from and how you hear the gospel. The gospel begins with this kind of prefix to you that you will not believe this when you are told and this is how God begins to present the gospel through Habakkuk. So we're going to pick that up next Sunday night as we go through his second complaint to God, but we'll finish with that for tonight. Let's pray.

Lord our God, our Father in heaven, we thank you for the light of the gospel, for the hope that it shines into our world even when it feels like Habakkuk felt like he was in the worst of times. Lord we thank you that the gospel is yours, that it is your message, that it is your plan, that your Son has come into our world in ways that confound all of our expectations and we thank you that your spirit wrestles with us to convince us, to compel us, to bring us to Christ from all of our different starting points. So Lord we pray that you would encourage us, that you would build us up in faith through the time that we have this month Sunday nights reading through Habakkuk together. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.