

August 30, 2026 - Habakkuk 1:5-2:1 - "Before You Take Your Stand"

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Date: 30 August 2026

Preacher: Brenton Beck

[0:00] Please turn with me to the prophet Habakkuk chapter 1. Habakkuk chapter 1. Habakkuk chapter 1, beginning at verse 5. Habakkuk chapter 1. Habakkuk chapter 1, beginning at verse 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. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation who marched through the breadth of the earth to seize dwellings not their own.

They are dreaded and fearsome. Their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. The horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves. The horsemen press proudly on.

Their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swift to devour. They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand.

At kings they scoff. At rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on. Guilty men whose own might is their God.

[1:47] Are 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.

You, O Rock, have opened them for reproof. You, O Rock, have opened them for reproof. them in his dress. I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint. This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. You were here last week. We started this series in the book of Habakkuk and or Habakkuk or I guess Alistair Begg said Habakkuk or in his accent and Duffy has some weird way of saying it. Talk to him later. Habakkuk. You got to get the hawk out of there.

So we started that last week and he had a complaint. He had his first complaint in the first four verses of chapter one and it was pretty straightforward. He had questions. He said, how long? He said, why? He continued to kind of like dive into some specifics. He says, violence surrounds me. Justice is perverted. The law is paralyzed. The law is not working and God appears to be doing nothing. That was between verse one and four. Habakkuk wanted God to simply act. He said, God, nothing around looks like you care. Does it look like you're even around? Where are you? I want you to act. And lo and behold today, God responds. We see that in our subtitle of our paper Bibles in verse five, we see the Lord's answer, right? God responds and God says what's going on has greatly to do with sight, with sight, with perception. As God says in verse five, he says, look among the nations. He says, see, see, see, and wonder and be astounded. You see, all along Habakkuk was looking at Judah. Verses one through four, he was looking at Judah. And God tells him that he needs to look a little bit further. He needs to look a little bit wider, expansively. And what will Habakkuk see? Well, very unexpectedly, as to the response Habakkuk desired in verse six, we see that God informs him, I am raising up the Chaldeans.

[5:40] What about Judah? Here's the tension though. Habakkuk had a problem last week when God seemed not to act. And he is going to have an even bigger problem because God is acting and he finds out what God is really doing. That's some tension. You see, sometimes the hardest moments of faith are not when God gives us an answer. Sometimes that's hard, but it's not always that when he gives us an answer, but it's when that answer, when God's answer doesn't fit the way that we think that God should be working. Like, this way seems more logical, a little bit better. It seems like everyone is going to win and it's just a win-win for everyone. But this way, I don't know, Lord. And church, that leaves us, leaves Habakkuk with a question that all of us will eventually face. What do you stand on when what you see doesn't make sense? What do you stand on when things around you and what you see doesn't make sense?

This is exactly where the passage is going. Because he gets the sense of what God's doing. He's still like, why would you do it that way, right? Habakkuk will learn that before he can take his stand at his watch post in verse 1 of chapter 2, before he can take his stand, he must first plant his feet on the rock, on the foundation. The sermon title today is Before You Take Your Stand.

Before You Take Your Stand. And I'm going to break this up into, I think it's going to help us to see three different problems. And I'm going to allow towards the end of the sermon to provide the solution. And I'm going to play my cards close to the deck with the main point until the end.

And so listen attentively, but I want to lay out these three separate problems that Habakkuk is facing. And before we do this, I want us to pray that the Lord would help us to not only see the difficulty in Habakkuk's life, but see the difficulty in your own life and how we ought to respond in these difficulties. Life is very, very challenging. It may not be right now for you, but I promise you, one day, you are going to want your sermon notes from today. Let's pray.

Father, we come to you knowing that we need your word to speak today. Sharper than a two-edged sword.

[9:09] It's the bread of life that we feast upon. May this be a feast this morning. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.

The first problem that we see in the text today is that Habakkuk needed to look wider. And we see this in verse 5 through 11, which was displayed on the screen. So you should be well hearse in this first problem. What we see unfold in these seven verses is God is doing more than what Habakkuk can presently see. He sees a little, he's kind of like looking through the keyhole of the door.

He could see, but his view is narrow. It doesn't have the whole presence. God responds to Habakkuk's complaint here. He says, look among the nations and see. It's as if Habakkuk's field of vision. It's as if you're going to be a part of the door.

He says, look among the nations. Not just Judah, but the nations and see.

Be wonder. Respond to this in wonder and be astounded. Why does God say that? The continued verses after that follow.

[10:52] For I am doing a work in your days. Literally, in Hebrew, it would sound like I am working a work. It's an emphatic way of saying I am doing a work. He's working a work. God is emphatically reinforcing Yahweh, the Lord, is already at work. Verse 1 through 4, God, are you doing anything?

God responds in verse 5, yep. And you're not going to believe it even if I told you. In other words, Habakkuk could see what God was allowing, but he couldn't see what God was arranging.

Habakkuk wouldn't believe if he was told. And we often jump to conclusions. I know I'm not the only one. I know y'all.

We jump to conclusions far too soon in our actions and what we do. Or maybe even our hearts of how we feel about situations.

And we just jump to those conclusions. Whether they're catastrophic. Like, I'm really good at making catastrophic conclusions. Very much so. Or just kind of simple little things here and there.

[12:16] But here, we are reminded that God's apparent silence must never be confused with God's inactivity.

Sorry, I got tongue twisted. His silence should never be confused with his inactivity. The shock arrives when God says, I mean, what?

God doesn't say, the Chaldeans seem to be getting stronger. It seems that they're on the rise. No. God is raising them. God has very significant guidance in their rise.

You might say, well, who are the Chaldeans, Brent? Not some historian buff? Well, the Chaldeans, you know Nebuchadnezzar from Daniel probably? Maybe from Bible stories?

[13:25] Well, these were the early Babylonians. These are the Babylonians that rose up into power. The fierce new empire under Nebuchadnezzar. More precisely, they were the people whose dynasty had taken control of Babylon.

The Chaldeans rose very massively. And we're now expanding across the ancient world. Even greater than the Assyrians at this time. The descriptions that God uses here are striking.

They're jarring. Look at this from verse 6 to 11. The descriptions that God uses here. That these people, look, they're bitter and hasty.

They're conquerors of lands that don't belong to them. They're dreaded and fearsome. They're accountable to no one. But themselves. They're extraordinarily fast.

They're intent on violence. They're contemptuous of kings. And they're dismissive of fortifications. They just take over land.

[14:37] They don't care. And these descriptions are very climatic, I think. Comparing them to leopards. Wolves.

Eagles. Diving upon prey. Armies sweeping forward like wind. Prisoners gathered like sand. Imagine that.

Prisoners gathered like sand. Cities. Laughingly reduced. To nothing. Nothing. But here's the tension, church.

Think about where we're at in this tension. vision. That God knows exactly what kinds of people these are. God knows that they will completely massacre God's own people.

vision. God has perfect vision. From beginning to end. Perfect vision. I don't even want to say 20-20 vision because he's not bound to our metrics of perfection.

[15:43] Right? That would be heretical. And I actually didn't include that in the sermon. I don't think you should include that in your vocabulary as well. And while Habakkuk asks God to deal with violence, God answers by showing him a violence greater than anything he had ever seen yet.

That's tension. And that's really, really tough. After describing their terrifying success, we see a little bit of a grace by the end of verse 11.

God says, guilty men, guilty men, whose own might is their God. Guilty men. Contextually, these verses, or this verse, matters a lot.

Because while God is raising Babylon, nowhere is God approving of Babylon.

They're guilty. God says that they are destined for destruction as guilty people. In other words, Babylon here, they worship their strength.

[17:04] They don't care about anyone on this earth or above this earth. Nobody here or nobody who was at the beginning or the end. They just care about themselves.

Consider Nebuchadnezzar's words from Daniel 4, verse 30. Nebuchadnezzar will eventually stand over Babylon and say, Is not this great Babylon which I have built by my mighty power for the glory of my majesty?

That's a guilty man of idolatry. Habakkuk needed his vision expanded into two directions.

The first direction is geographically. That he was just concerned about his immediate circumstance with his immediate nation. Didn't consider anything around at the nations, plural.

The other expansion that he needs in the other direction is chronological. He needs a chronological expansion. Habakkuk was evaluating God's faithfulness by one single moment in time.

[18:25] His day. His year. Which apparently was from hell. His season. And this is important.

Remember, God is responding and giving an answer to verse 1 through 4. And this is important.

Habakkuk must believe God's work before he can understand its full significance.

It's important for Habakkuk to believe God's work. God lays it out. He still doesn't. It's unbelievable. And this is a profound theological point.

I want to reinforce that what you can presently see right now here today, what you can presently see is not the measure of what God is presently doing.

What you presently see is not the measure of what God is presently doing by the least bit. Now, I'll admit there are many moments where I look at things that are visible and I'm like, say, what?

[19:31] You know, I think of like history, the darkest periods of history. I think of just recently just more Nigerians being massacred by Islamic extremists. And just, I'm like, God, you don't think this is a problem?

Right? Like, it seems like God might be doing nothing about this, but to my own fault, the reality is actually this. I am simply not seeing everything that God is doing.

The problem is me. I believe it is equally important for us to condemn violence, right? Condemn violence and injustice in all ways, shape, or forms, not just be like, well, Nigerians, God's doing it, so praise the Lord.

Right? I think we should condemn violence where condemnation is due. Right? But we must also be very careful of drawing conclusions about God's plans, God's ways, from a single day, from a single circumstance, or a single point in history.

And mind you, in the scope of all eternity, it might be your single lifetime. Do not draw conclusions about God's plans, about God's way, from a single day, single circumstance, or single chapter of your story.

[21:02] I think it's safe to say, though, by the end of this verse and by the end of this problem, I think Habakkuk got his answer. What's God doing?

His mouth is probably dropped, I think, of Looney Tunes, just down to the floor. Right? Well, seeing more clearly hasn't made things easier.

This has gotten complicated, significantly complicated. And church, this is why faith cannot plant its feet merely on what faith sees.

So let's look at the second problem. Did I have the first problem up there before? Okay. Praise the Lord. Okay. Brent, you told us not to pay attention to screens.

We see a second problem here. Habakkuk needed to plant his feet on the rock. Not to plant his feet on what was seen.

[22:06] He needed a wider vision. And now he gets to another problem. He needed to plant his feet on the rock. This section of Scripture moves in sort of like two stages very quickly, and then a third just dominates the end of it.

Three stages in these verses, 12 through 17. Habakkuk first affirms what he now sees and what God's doing. Habakkuk accepts what he sees and what God's doing.

And then he argues a majority of this section. But let's look at him affirming. Habakkuk plants his feet upon the truth. God says this really theological difficult issue that's unfolding in human history. And he says, are you not from everlasting? Oh, Lord. Oh, Yahweh. My God. My Holy One. Personal nature. My Holy One.

We shall not die. Meaning that Yahweh is the one who sustains Habakkuk. This is a proclamation. This is an affirmation of truth.

[23:09] A rock. A mighty fortress. And Habakkuk begins by confessing God's character after receiving a very, very difficult answer.

Meaning that before Habakkuk tries to make sense of what God is doing, he immediately reminds himself of who God is. Which leads very quickly into the second half of the verse of his accepting. Habakkuk accepts what God's answer means. He says, oh, Lord. Oh, Yahweh. You have ordained them as a judgment.

And you, oh, rock, have established them for reproof. Here it is, church. Before Habakkuk can take a stand and wait in this watch post of the beginning of chapter 2.

Before he can do that, he plants his feet on the rock. He plants his feet in theology. He plants his feet in the character and the nature of God.

[24:19] Now, obviously, we see here, if you really think about this, you're just like, how did he make that conclusion? That he, that all of a sudden this is a judgment? I asked that question to Habakkuk this week and believe that it is an inference that stems back several verses.

He's inferring this by connecting the dots. Because God said, I am raising up the Chaldeans. And you kind of ask the question, well, God, why?

Well, because God's responding to Habakkuk's complaint, which was, why aren't you bringing justice? Why aren't you righting these wrongs?

So God says, I'm doing a work. I'm working a work. He's raising up the Chaldeans. Justice is being brought by the means of the Chaldeans.

An inference. In fact, God raising up these wicked rulers as a way to judge this nation is a Mosaic warning to Israel.

[25:27] It's a fulfillment of Scripture. Looking back in Deuteronomy 28, 49 to 52. I won't read it all or give you too much here. But Moses warned Israel that persistent covenant rebellion would result in God bringing, and I quote, a nation against you from far away, swooping down like the eagle.

Habakkuk needs to really broaden his vision. Even back to Moses, Moses' day. In other words, the Torah had already warned Judah that persistent rebellion could bring foreign invasion as a covenant judgment.

Isn't that Habakkuk's resolve? You have appointed them for judgment. This is unfolding according to Scripture. So after Habakkuk plants his feet on the rock, we reach quite a dicey dilemma.

So he affirmed, he accepts, but now from verse 13 all the way to 17, he argues. He argues. He says, And then we see this stuff occurring in this passage.

We see like humans are being likened to fish. We could see Babylon sweeps in, sweeps up God's creation with hooks, with nets.

[27:35] People will become these commodities, collateral damage to everything. Conquered populations sort of become trophies.

Habakkuk accepts though. These are descriptions that are expanded from the Babylonian ways of verse 11, and particularly of what is going on.

But he accepts. Judah deserves judgment. Babylon is the means. But here is the question. Here is the question. How can the Holy One use an unholy instrument?

How can the Holy One use an unholy instrument? How can God, who is perfectly righteous, perfectly holy, use such an unholy instrument, unholy means?

I mean, if you talk about this over coffee this week, you're going to be in this theological circus in your brain, in your Bible. The first problem was, how can a just God tolerate wicked Judah?

[29:04] Well, his second problem is, how can a holy God use wicked Babylon? One commentator says, Habakkuk's questions arise on, quote, the foundation of biblical faith.

This is important to see. Because you might actually have a problem with the idea of questioning God and arguing with God, right? Like, well, who am I to argue with God?

But still, you have a prophet in Scripture arguing with God, right? Habakkuk's questions arise on the foundation, though, of biblical faith.

And it is precisely because he believes certain things about God. That he finds that God's ways are so difficult because of what he believes about God.

But, this is the difference between, as this commentator says, quote, bitter cynicism and believing confrontation. One is a denial that refuses to believe, and the other is a belief that refuses to deny, right?

[30:14] You see, church, we should identify the problems. We should identify the problems, but do not abandon the rock. This is Christians that are currently or sometime in the future going to be carrying burdens of church hurts.

It will be Christians who carry a burden someday with abuse, whether from a church or church leaders or possibly just people in their lives.

This is the burdens that Christians are going to carry from neglect, from loneliness, from your own grief, and what God is allowing in your life, and even from sorrow.

Habakkuk asks, how can a holy God accomplish his purposes through wicked men? Yeah, that's a mystery. But it doesn't change who God is.

And actually, it even clarifies the gospel for us. How clearly we look upon Calvary and see Jesus for who he was, according to Acts 2.23.

[31:25] He was delivered up according to the definite plan and the foreknowledge of God. The bloody man hanging upon the cross.

A pool of blood remains under him. That wickedness that occurred to Christ is according to the definite plan and the foreknowledge of God.

This isn't saying that, like, it doesn't eliminate every mystery of God's plans, but the cross of Scripture gives us a supreme example of how this going on in Habakkuk's life can very well be true. Because God uses evil people often for his ultimate good. At the cross, God remains perfectly holy. Wicked men remain truly guilty. God remains completely sovereign. And most of all, the greatest evil human beings ever committed became the means of which God accomplished the greatest good that this world and you and I have ever known.

[32:46] Salvation to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Like you, like me. Everyone who believes. You see, if Calvary teaches us anything about providence, it teaches us that we cannot judge the final goodness of God's plan by the darkness of the chapter that we are presently reading in our lives.

If Calvary teaches us anything about God's plans, anything about God's ways, it teaches us that we must never judge the final goodness of God's plan by the darkness of the chapter we're presently enduring.

And it could be very dark indeed. Which raises one more problem, I would say. One more problem. The problem is that Habakkuk needed to wait. Let me get my clicker. Habakkuk needed to wait. He says in chapter 2, verse 1, it's like a resolve. I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me.

[34:09] To look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaints. I want us to picture for a moment an ancient watchman before flock cameras were

invented and put up and stolen from Howland.

Picture an ancient watchman climbing this tall structure in order to get this elevated view of the entire landscape of the land.

To see the horizon as far off as possible. Imagine him climbing and taking his station at the top of that structure. And scanning, looking out, scanning the horizon.

What happens next? He waits. He waits. Notice how nothing in the watchman's waiting is actually in his control.

He doesn't know what will appear on the horizon. The watchman doesn't have control of when something will appear.

[35 : 40] The watchman can't even hurry it towards him. Like, let's get on to it. I have to go to the bathroom. I want to go to Bob Evans.

Get my reservations. No, a watchman's responsibility, church, is simply this. Remain at your post and keep watching.

A watchman doesn't find distractions to bide his time. Just as you might be watching in your life.

As you're watching and waiting at your posts. Distracting yourself things to bide the time. Or to make the darkness of your life to appear actually less than serious.

Whether that's through self-medicating yourself through alcohol or drugs. Whether it's through pornography and distracting yourself with fantasies on the internet.

[36 : 40] Whether you're a man or a woman. Or anything. Anything entertainment. This world is full of entertainment, right? A watchman doesn't find distractions to bide his time.

No. A faithful watchman waits well. He says, I will take my stand. I will station myself.

I will look out. Church, are you waiting well?

Are you waiting well? Biblical waiting means to faithfully remain where God has told you to stand until he gives you the light that you do not have yet.

To give you the understanding. And that understanding could come in this life. It could come in the next. But it will come.

[37 : 53] This image echoes Psalm 130, verse 5 through 6. Where the psalmist says, I will wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word, I hope.

My soul waits for the Lord more than watchman for the morning. In other words, a watchman can't make the morning arrive.

But he knows the morning will come. Habakkuk is that watchman. How about you? Standing back from a moment and seeing this unfold.

Seeing God answering. And Habakkuk accepting, affirming, and then arguing more.

We ought to appreciate this rich development that we just walked through. Because Habakkuk started with, oh, rock.

[38 : 59] Oh, rock. Oh, rock. Oh, Yahweh. The rock. And then he ends with, I will take my stand. What Habakkuk does in verse 1 of chapter 2 is possible only because of what he believes in verse 1.

Verse 12 of chapter 1. He's only able to take his stand because of what he believes. That allows us to faithfully remain.

His situation didn't determine his response. But God's character, God's nature did. In other words, what Habakkuk does is a consequence, I guess we could say, is a consequence of what Habakkuk did.

What he believed here was a consequence of what he did. Before he takes a stand on the watchtower, he has already planted his feet on the rock, and that enables him to wait well.

Church, when you cannot stand on an explanation or understanding in your life, stand upon the rock.

[40 : 15] Don't call this intellectual laziness. The atheists will call that intellectual laziness. But I think atheism is actually theologically lazy as well.

This is actually supremely what faith demands. This is precisely biblical faith expressed.

There may be circumstances where we can never reconcile a tension that exists that can never be relieved. We're not going to have all the answers, especially relating to what God has revealed about himself, that God is love, that God is good, and you turn on the news and you see everything evil unfolding.

Yeah, there's tension in that. But don't pretend that this tension isn't real. Dismissing it. Hapakah didn't. He didn't.

Sometimes waiting in faith amid confusion is saying, Lord, I don't know why, but I do know who. And for some reason, this is being allowed.

[41:28] Lord, help me wait well for the understanding. You want to talk about a robust faith? That's a robust faith. We know that God is eternal.

We know that God is holy. We know that God is just. We know that God is our rock. Stand on the rock and remain at your watch post, church.

Maybe it's the season that you're in right now, or maybe something horrific that you have no awareness that's going to unfold in your future, even my future.

Remain at your post and wait well. Habakkuk still does not understand everything at the end of the passage.

Just like we are all often left scratching our heads at what in the world is going on, right? But Habakkuk knows where his feet are. He knows where his feet are planted and whom they're planted in.

[42:35] He has looked wider. He has learned that what he can see is not actually everything what God is doing. There's much more than what meets the eyes.

He confessed, my God, my Holy One, O rock. And then he does and is enabled to say, I will take my stand and remain.

The point we need to drive in today is that before you take your stand at the watch post, plant your feet on the rock.

Before you take your stand at the watch post, plant your feet on the rock. There will be seasons when you can't stand on your explanations and your theorizing.

Where you can't reconcile God's plans with God's ways and his character. And the questions just continue to come that God just isn't answering. But you can't stand on what God has revealed about himself.

[43:38] Of who he is. That he is holy. He is just. He's faithful. He's loving. He's forgiving. He's steadfast. Plant your feet on that rock.

Then take your stand at the watch post, church. And simply wait well. Let's pray. Amen.