

I just want to do a bit of a little bit of a review to cover where we've been the last couple of weeks. Because really today is a crescendo of what has occurred the last couple of weeks. Two weeks ago, we said that man is limited. We said that that's the foundational element of our joy. We have to understand that we are limited and that we are not the solution to our own problems. In fact, by trying to fix our problems, nine times out of ten we create bigger problems for ourselves, more serious problems for ourselves and only pass on a more serious set of problems to the generations behind us. So it was a very chipper week and a lot of fun. And then this past week, we said that God is not limited like man is limited. So where man is limited in regards to time and scope, that's not how God operates. God is not limited by time or scope. And on top of Him not being limited in the ways that man is limited, He is good in all of His dealings. So where we're limited and cannot see that, God is unlimited and in all things is Good. The Scriptures testify to that over and over again, and as we showed last week, they will show us how dark moments in the end, when you get high enough to look down on history, ended up being great for the glory of God and for mankind and individuals. But there were those dark, dark moments of the soul for all of them. In particular, remember Joseph who was sold as a slave, put in prison and how that all ended up in the book of Genesis that we covered last week.

Now that those two things are established, we reach the crescendo of this section of Habakkuk. And this is where I'm hoping you begin to see some of those promises I made early on come to fruition. I'm hoping that you watch your limitedness and God's unlimitedness lead to your joy. So let's look at Habakkuk 2. We're simply going to read verse 4, and then there's a bit of compare/contrast here that we're going to have to get into. And then we're going to have to decipher some Christianese. We as Christians have a tendency to just regurgitate statements and words without really thinking about what they mean or letting the fullness of their meaning settle in on us in such a way that it transforms how we see the world and how we live our lives. So let's look at Habakkuk 2:4. This is a great verse to memorize if you're memorizing Scripture. "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith." So here's what you've got here. You've got this separating out of two kinds of men. You have a puffed up man who is not righteous, a man whose confidence is in himself. He is unaware of how limited he is. So he is his own answer, he can solve it, he can do it, he can get it done, he has no need to submit to God, no need to lower himself under the hand of God and he'll take care of it and get it done. The Bible calls him puffed up. He is conceited. He is his own savior and his own god. And that's what's happening this text. You can come across guys like this, not just outside of the church, but inside of the church. There are tons of them. Probably the greatest example of that in regards to religiosity would be the scribes and the Pharisees in the New Testament. If you don't have a lot of church background and aren't sure who those guys are, those were ruling religious parties of that day. They were constantly asking questions of Jesus in order to bust Him, but they could never do it. So they would have this question they would ask Jesus, and they just knew it was going to bust Him. "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?" And they knew that if He answered it this way, there was going to be this group who would hate him and they could rally up that group. And if He answered that way, they could grab this group and rally that group around Jesus. But Jesus always spoke in such a way as to diffuse the question. So whether it was about resurrection, whether it was about giving money to Caesar, Jesus would answer in such a way to completely diffuse the question. But look at the puffed up nature of religious people. Even though the question got squelched, it never occurred to them, "Man, maybe He is who He says He is." They just went, "Dang it! He won." And then they pulled back and tried to figure out another question to ask Him so that they might beat Him. Just on a side note, it's impossible to trick God. So somehow they just continued to think of these questions, He would continue to dismantle it and then they'd retreat and figure out a new way to try to trick Him. And they were never able to do it. So do you see that puffed

up, conceited nature in religion where all of a sudden you don't even need God? I mean, you can use God's language, you can use God's stuff, you can use God's doctrines and you can use God's theologies, but you don't need Him at all. So when you see that puffed up unrighteousness in Habakkuk, don't think of people outside of the church, because there are plenty of you in here today who are not righteous and in the end do not live by faith at all, but are puffed up in your own sight, your own will and your own desires. So that's the first picture that is painted.

And then the second picture is the righteous live by faith. So I want to talk about this, because that first word carries a lot of weight. "The righteous." What we know in the New Testament looking back on the Old Testament is that full righteousness is impossible for man. We cannot keep the law to perfection. It's why they had the sacrificial system. It's why they were constantly going into the temple to kill bulls, goats and spotless lambs on the day of atonement. They knew they could not be righteous, so they trusted the sacrificial system to enable them to be righteous. Now we know from the New Testament that that was all a shadow of what was to come in Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ was going to be our righteousness. But in the end, you and I are righteous only because of Jesus Christ, not because of anything we have done. But here's where we start to see the weight of what's actually going on in this text. The righteous, those who have right standing before God, those who are seen by God as holy, blameless and spotless, there is a way that they live and that way is by faith. So here's where we can go all Christianese if we're not careful. "Oh yeah, faith. We've got faith. We trust in faith."

Now I want to spend the rest of our time today unpacking what faith is, where it comes from, can you exercise it and how do you work it out? And then I want to come back to Habakkuk and define what kind of man or woman you are, whether you are the puffed up, conceited kind who is unrighteous or if you are the righteous who is living by faith. Now we are, by our human nature, creatures of faith. Let me give you two examples that we're going to keep coming back to as evidence. One, when you drove here today, you got in a car and, completely by faith, thought your brakes would work. Now you're here, so I'm guessing they did. But you got in that car and it was an act of faith. You are sitting in a chair right now, and you didn't test it first. It was simply an act of faith. One cannot function in this world in a way that is healthy without faith. In fact, I would contend that even the most staunch atheist practices faith at a religious level. I would contend that an atheist has far more faith than we do as believers, because we have a simple act of faith that there is a God who has revealed Himself to us in the Holy Scriptures. Their acts of faith are, "Well, I, by faith, believe that the universe works this way. I, by faith, accept that this scientific research isn't going to be debunked fifteen years from now like most science behind me has." On and on I could go. There are a hundred million steps of faith for the atheist, and for us, there's just one. There is a God and He has revealed Himself to us through Jesus in the Scriptures. That is our step of faith. It's a simple one, and it's an easy one.

But let's define faith since we're all practicing it right now. Flip over to Hebrews 11. Starting in verse 1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." So if we take our illustration of the brakes in your car and the chair you're sitting on, let's put it into this text and see if what I'm saying is true. According to the text, faith is the assurance of things hoped for. So when you got in your car, you were not afraid of your brakes not working. There was a complete assurance on your part that those brakes were going to work. There was complete assurance on your part that the chair you're sitting in would hold you. Most of you didn't test it out. In fact, I'd probably bank that none of you tested it out. None of you pumped your brakes in the driveway just to make sure they were working before you pulled out of your driveway. You didn't push down on your chair before you got into the chair. You had assurance in what? Hope. You hoped your brakes would work, you hoped that that chair would hold you and you were assured of it, so you sat down and you drove your car. So the second part of that definition is, not only is it assurance of things hoped for, but it's conviction of things not seen. So again, let's use our two illustrations. Did anybody crawl under their car and check the brake line before you pulled out of the driveway? Did anybody make sure everything was connected correctly? No, you didn't. Why? Because you had a deep conviction of what you could not see. What about your chair? Did you check the bolts? Did

you check and make sure everything was put together the right way? Did you get underneath your chair and make sure that all the iron was connected to the iron and the wood was connected to the wood? No, you didn't look at it at all. You just sat down. Why? Because you have a deep conviction of what you don't see. You see, we're all creatures of faith. So faith is assurance of things hoped for, and it's a deep conviction in what we cannot see. That is the biblical definition of faith.

So with that put in place, let me show you a couple of things about faith. Go over now to Ephesians 2. What we know about faith from the Scriptures is that, without faith, it's impossible to please God. So without an assurance of things hoped for and a conviction of things unseen, you and I cannot please God. We do not have the ability to please God. So faith is monumentally important for us to live in, walk in, rest in and exercise. So let's look at where faith comes from and how we grow in our faith. Because what I'm about to show you is at some level scary and at some level shows us what we talked about a couple of weeks ago. So Ephesians 2, starting in verse 8, "For by grace. . ." Grace is another Christian word that, if you're not careful, you'll miss out. Grace is just unmerited favor. It is a free gift. So let's keep reading. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Did you hear what just happened in that text? He just said that you and I are saved, we are made righteous before God by the grace of God alone through faith in that grace and that the faith to believe in that grace is not our own doing. We don't muster it, it's not our choice to have it, but rather even the faith to believe in the grace of God is given to us by God, so that no one can boast. So if you believe in God, if you love God, if you worship God, if you're pursuing Jesus Christ, then you have no position in which to judge harshly others. Because even the faith you have to believe in God's grace for you was given to you by God, so you would have nothing to boast in but Him. We said in week 1 of this little part of Habakkuk, "You're not awesome."

Now if you're in here and you're struggling a bit, if you have weak faith, then this can be a bit discouraging, but here's where I would tell you to take heart. This puts us absolutely in a position of desperation where we can't muster faith as much as we've got to continually ask the Lord for it or for more of it. You'll actually see this often in the Scriptures. Probably one of my favorite stories around this is in Mark 9. Jesus and the big three come down from the mountain of transfiguration, and the rest of the disciples had been arguing with the scribes because they had tried to cast a demon out of a boy and it hadn't worked. So Jesus comes down into the middle of what really is chaos, and He asks what's going on. The father of the young demonized boy comes up to Jesus and says, "Your disciples have been trying to cast a demon out of my son, and they can't seem to do it. So my son, since he was young, has gritted his teeth, has gone into convulsions and the demon has tried to kill him on multiple occasions by throwing him into fire and throwing him into water trying to destroy him. But we've always been there to drag him out. Can You help me?" And Jesus says just a quick line about believing and if you believe, all things being possible. And when He says that, the father falls to the ground, sobs and says, "I believe. Help my unbelief." Now if we're honest with ourselves, how many of us are there? How many of us go, "No, there is part of me that believes. There are parts of me that absolutely believe, but then there are these other parts of me that have doubt, that hold back and that go, "Can God really do that? Is God really good? Can God really accomplish these things?" And so in those moments, our prayer is, "I believe. Help my unbelief."

Just to make this personal for me, I believe that God has healed me from oligodendroglioma, my malignant brain cancer. The scans are coming back clean. I believe He has healed me. Now something happens sometimes, specifically around MRIs and around times when my doctors, who are doing their job and laying out statistical, scientific information for me, will say, "Chandler, this has an 85% recurrence rate." 85% of people who get this die from this. They have said, "More than likely, when August comes and we take you off this chemo, it's just a matter of time before it comes back." So in my head, what I think is, "That's a word curse." I'm thinking, "You don't know what you're thinking about. You're looking at statistics, and life doesn't always line up with statistics." That's why Mark Twain said what he said about statistics.

So in the end, I'll go home and begin to lay in bed and go, "Oh man, is this coming back?" So in those moments, how I fight that is I ask the Lord to help my unbelief, strengthen my faith, continue to stir up faith in me to believe that He is able and He is willing. And for those of you who would go, "Well God is sovereign, Matt. Doesn't He already know?" Listen, absolutely He does. What I know I've been commanded to do in the Scriptures is to believe and obey without doubt. And then God's will is God's will. He'll do whatever He pleases, but the commands of God on my life are to be obedient to what God has called me to be obedient to and trust that He is able and willing. Watch Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Isn't this exactly what they do. "He can save us, He will save us and even if He doesn't." So we need the gift of faith. We need to ask Him for it.

So faith is a gift of grace. Now go over to Romans 10, and let me show you something that will help you understand why I'm on you all the time about plugging in, belonging, getting into the Scriptures and getting under the Scriptures. So let's look at Romans 10:14-17. "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." So faith is a gift of grace, and that gift is dispensed in our hearing. So we become believers and our faith grows into that belief by hearing the word of Christ, by sitting under the word of God. Now if we watched how Paul, in the New Testament, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, interacted with the churches, what he does in almost every letter he wrote is constantly preach the gospel to people who already knew it. He's going to constantly draw their attention to the fact that their righteousness is not theirs. It is imputed to them by Christ. So some of you really struggle with guilt, some of you struggle with shame, some of you cannot get past yourself enough to love and worship Jesus Christ, but the gospel isn't that you're good enough. The gospel according to Romans 8 is that, where we could not be obedient to the law, weak as we were in our flesh, God did by sending His son in the likeness of human flesh. He fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law. Jesus lived a perfect, spotless life and then imputed that to us. So do you know who lived perfectly? You did, in Christ. On judgment day, that's how it happens. Do you know who was spotless, do you know who was blameless, do you know who was above reproach? You were, in Christ. Now think about that. That's unbelievable.

So he wants to remind them of that because people have a tendency to go one of two ways. They have a tendency to stumble a bit and be a little bit slow in their sanctification. So they get down and go, "Oh man, I messed up. I'll try to fix this again." And then you've got the type-A, super disciplined guys. So they'll end up dominating the checklist. I'll get up every morning and read my Bible, I'll go here, be a part of this, get into this, do that." And they'll nail that and become conceited and puffed up. And then they'll no longer know God and walk with God. They'll simply use God to make much of themselves. So Paul wants to constantly remind the early church, "Your righteousness is Christ's righteousness imputed to you." He also wants to remind them of the centrality of the cross and what they are owing to God in regards to God was absorbed in Jesus' death. So you get Jesus' life and Jesus takes on your death. Which is why Paul says, "I've been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in the flesh. And the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up to me." Do you see what he said there? "I'm dead." Paul, in all his shortcomings and all his failures, every time he has sold out and every time he has failed to do what God has asked him to do, that died on the cross with Jesus Christ.

And then he wants to remind them of the resurrection, and he wants to remind them of the fact, not just that the wrath of God towards them was taken in Jesus and that Jesus' perfect life was imputed to them, but the idea of expiation is this kind of Jesus washing and cleansing you from all unrighteousness. Highland Village has been voted "safest city in America" a couple of times and "safest city in North Texas" seven years running. But there is an unbelievably dark undercurrent in and around the metroplex. There is a level of sexual deviance that is unbelievable. There is a level of

adultery that would surprise you. Just think about the children that are growing up in those environments where parents are swinging and swapping partners. There are people hooking up with other people in gyms. All that stuff is going on right underneath all this pretty, shiny stuff. There is a lot of shame that people carry. So this idea of expiation is this idea that God is cleansing us, this idea that God is putting us a spiritual bathtub and with the water of the Word is washing us clean so that we can be rid of that shame, have all that disgrace and have all the weight of that guilt washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ. So the reason why you need to sit under the gospel over and over again is because, by hearing it, faith grows, and as the gift of faith grows, you become more and more assured of what you're hoping for and you develop deeper convictions of what you cannot see.

Now, not only do I think it's important for you to understand the gospel and for you to really get and understand what the gospel is, but I also think you need to really understand the promises of God. Once you understand the gospel, the fact that God sees everything shouldn't produce fear in you but a deep gladness in you that God sees. So that means there is nothing in my life that He didn't see coming. John Piper often says, "God doesn't drive an ambulance." That's not what He does. He doesn't show up after the carnage is over and try to put things back together. It's not our God. God sees everything. Jesus has promised you, in Matthew 28 along with dozens of other texts in the Scripture, that He will never leave you nor forsake you. Think about that. So not only does He see everything, but He's there with you. The book of Hebrews says He's even empathetic to your pain, to your suffering and to the difficulty that befalls you. He knows. He was tempted in every way, except without sin. You can read about this in the book of Hebrews. So He's not asking you to suck it up. He understands. The Bible tells us He's praying for you, interceding for you at the right hand of God as one who is empathetic to where you are. And then one of my favorite ones is that God can't lose. He can't lose. You've got to get out of your head those really goofy movies where you've got God and Satan in this dualistic battle to the end where it's "Who knows who's going to win." If you'll read your Bible, do you know how it ends? Jesus shows up, says, "I AM" and it's over. So that's not some sort of cataclysmic seven-year long battle. It's just God going, "I'm done with this. I AM." And all the enemies of God are vanquished forever. It's also imperative for you to understand that, regardless of what befalls us in a sinful, broken world, you and I will die. It's going to happen to you, and it's going to happen to me. When? None of us know, but it is coming. And we talked in week 1 about that lack of knowledge that we have that that day is coming. So in the end, we're going to die, we go face-to-face before Jesus into heaven and heaven is not purgatory but it's not the end of the game. Most of us, because of bad books and very bad movies, believe that God sucks us out of this world, completely destroys it and then we hang out in mansions of glory forever. There are even songs that sing that. The only problem with that view is actually the Scriptures. So you and I are in heaven with Jesus until heaven and earth are made new. There is a fire that befalls the earth and refines it to the point there God redeems and reconciles all things. He combines heaven and earth into the new city, and you and I have physical, resurrected bodies. This is 1 Corinthians 15. We see a little bit of that in Jesus' resurrection. We can see that the human form, although is changed, is very much touchable. It still eats, but we can see that the resurrected body tends to be able to cover distances a lot more quickly than we can. So we see Jesus at Emmaus seven miles away, and almost instantaneously, we see him back in Jerusalem. We see Him walking through doors. So He's got a physical body. But if God has to destroy the universe and make a new one didn't the devil win? Because God would be going, "Well, you ruined that. I'm going to have to start all over." No, He reconciles, He makes all things new, not in the way that it is brand new, but rather in a renewal type way. Creation will be renewed, and that is a promise. And that's why Paul is going to say in 1 Corinthians 15 that death has no victory, death has no sting. So it hurts here in the moment. It never want to take away from that. That's absolutely true. But when all is said and done, victory belongs to God. He cannot lose. He will not lose. The promises of God will always be victorious.

Now, if faith comes by hearing and faith is a gift given to us as we hear, by the grace of God, to mature us in such a way that our lives please God, how often are you putting yourself under those truths of the gospel and the promises of God? Are you studying the Scriptures? Are you in biblical community? Are you in places that are stirring these things up and churning these things up? We are prone to wander. We are prone to drift. We must constantly put ourselves under these

things and get into the waterfall and let these things pour over us over and over again so that, in the day of trouble, we will find an anchor for our souls. What's that anchor? Faith. Faith in what? The promises of God, the gospel of God and the hope that we have found, our assurance of that hope, our conviction of what we cannot see, that it all works out for our good and God's glory in the end. It doesn't mean that you can't hurt right now. It doesn't mean you can't bleed right now. It doesn't mean you can't weep right now. It doesn't mean you can't be in agony right now. It simply means that, when all is said and done, our hope is not in now but in the assurance of what will come.

So here's why I want to push you to be people of the Scriptures. Here's why I want to push you to be people of the gospel. As you get into these things and as you practice these things, they grow and become second nature. So you didn't check your brakes, and you didn't check that chair. When faith is exercised over and over again, it becomes like your brakes in your car, it becomes like that chair you're sitting on. Now how many of you have sat in a chair that has collapsed on you or some moron friend of yours yanked out underneath you and you just fell on the ground? A lot of us have. Probably all of us have at one point. I watch my youngest daughter right now try to sit, and it's like an Olympic event. It's like she needs to train for it. She tends to get one cheek on and then fall off to the side. But my eight-year-old doesn't do that. I certainly don't do that. My wife doesn't do that. You don't do that. Why? Because you have sat down enough to know that 99.99% of the time, that chair is going to support you. How did you learn that? By sitting. You know that your brakes work because your brakes haven't given out on you yet. And if you have, I would just love to hear that story. It's just a terrifying idea to me. We've had several ice days here lately. It's a little bit different when you're driving on ice, isn't it? Now all of a sudden, that faith is like, "Oh I know the brakes are going to work, but will the tires catch the ground?" When you exercise faith, when you put yourself under good teaching and under the Word of God, you know the promises of God, when you put to test the promises of God and you watch how time and time again He comes through, faith grows, you become strong in your faith, which then activates the spiritual gifts you've been given. And now we're really moving and growing.

So back to Habakkuk. Which one of them are you? You've got two men painted in that picture. You've got puffed up and conceited with no need for God. You're it, your faith is in you, you can get it done, you can accomplish it and you can make it happen. I always just want to ask the question – how is that working for you? Or do you live by faith? Is your faith in the God who is there, the God who will always be victorious and the God who sees all things? Are you putting your hope in your limitedness or in the reality that He is not only unlimited, but He is loving? So where is your confidence, and where is your hope? Now don't make this more complex than it is. Just think about it. Where is your confidence? Is it in you? Is it in what you can do, what you can accomplish, how you can get things done? Or is your confidence in the reality that God is, that He loves you and that He is good, gracious and loving? I'll tell you how you can see it working itself out. Are you consistently pursuing Him, chasing Him and seeking after Him? If the answer to that is "no," then you are a bit of a functional atheist. You are going, "I've got faith. I just don't practice any of it." That's like, "I've got food. I just don't eat any of it." Well, you starve to death. In the same way, faith must be exercised and practiced. How is that done? By the pursuit of a God who our faith is in, so that there might be an assurance of what we're hoping for and a conviction in what we can't see. So do you possess faith or do you possess a brittle faith in yourself? God is going to go on in Habakkuk to judge the Chaldeans, the nation of Babylon, and we'll watch how and why He does those things. But before we go any further in this text, this is a question you have to answer. You being here today does not make you a believer in Jesus Christ. I would not do you a favor or a service at all to pretend that because you're in this room you're a believer in Christ. Do you have faith? Are you exercising that faith? If the answer is "no," then you have inoculated yourself to your real need of Jesus Christ. You have put confidence in a place that cannot sustain and will eventually crumble around. So oh that you might hear enough and that God might, in His grace, grant you the faith to believe.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women. My hope would be that, as we close out with singing songs unto You, that where we don't have faith, we would be a bit nervous and that we would come and ask for prayer. Maybe

for the first time, I hope that You would reveal to us that we have put all of our confidence in us and we don't have confidence in You. And maybe that's the reason for some of our bitterness. Maybe that's the reason for our frustration in life, that we continue to let ourselves down and then hate ourselves because we can't measure up and be as good as we want to be. I just pray that all of that would die today and that we might find our faith rooted solely and deeply in You. Thank You for Your Word. Thank You for how You teach us. Thank You for how You care for us. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."

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