

Sermon Theme: Stand Up Straight; You have a Savior

Text: Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Habakkuk 1:1-4 The burden¹ which the prophet Habakkuk saw. ² O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. ³ Why do You show me iniquity, And cause *me* to see trouble? For plundering and violence *are* before me; There is strife, and contention arises. ⁴ Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

Habakkuk 2:1-4 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. ² Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision And make *it* plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. ³ 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. ⁴ "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

I am perhaps not the person to be telling you this as I don't do it well, but I am going to tell you anyway. Stand up straight. I don't do a good job at it. I am often hunched over looking at the ground and with terrible posture. I am told that you should imagine a string is attached to the top of your head pulling you upwards. That is how you should stand.

God isn't warning us in our text about the dangers of bad posture. He is warning us about something that is far worse. He is warning us of our soul not standing up straight. **4 " Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him;** What does that mean? Well, you probably have a general sense of a soul that is twisted, but we get a better sense by comparing the two contrasting phrases. **4 " Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.** What is the opposite of "proud" in the first phrase? The just. What is the opposite of not having your soul upright? Faith, faith in God. We will be reminded today as we have been many times before and will need to be reminded many times again - stand up straight for you have a Savior.

Did Habakkuk have bad physical posture? I have no idea. Maybe he did. Maybe he had back pains and indigestion from his poor posture. But it wasn't a bad back and poor digestion that were the burden our text talks about. Things were awful in the world. Sin, injustice, and idolatry were rampant in Israel. Heathen nations were doing terrible things. Believers were suffering. And those believers like Habakkuk kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. They kept waiting for God to smite the ungodly and bless the godly. And..... nothing happened.

Does that sound familiar? Haven't you at times felt the growing ungodliness of the world and wanted God to do something about it? Haven't you thought God should do something about it. Haven't you at times been punished for doing what is right and seen the unethical not only get away with their deceit and cheating, but prosper? Does it fill your craw with bile? Have you ever felt the country, society and institutions are going down the tubes and you are hopping mad or really worried?

That is how Habakkuk felt and in fact believers of many places and times have felt. There is a temptation to get really bent out of shape about it. I don't mean that you should be okay with ungodliness or apathetic to the decay of society. But there is a temptation to either get bent over in despair or tip back your head and raise your fist in anger toward heaven. Habakkuk didn't do either of those bad postures. Neither are good for the soul.

Habakkuk didn't understand why God wasn't stepping in and doing something. But I don't think he is being defiant and angry at God. He has questions for God, and he is sure that God has good answers, so Habakkuk sets himself to hear those answers. That is different than Job for example. Job let his soul get all cranked out of shape and defiant and challenged God that God was being unfair. God answered Job in a rebuke. **(Job 38:1-4 NKJ) "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 'Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.'"**

Jobs' soul was all bent out of shape because He thought he knew better than God. Job lost the faith he had previously that God had a good reason for what He was doing. This is a lesson we should take to our heart when we are tempted to get all bent out of shape. It is a lesson when we think our life is unfair, or when we think God should do something and He doesn't. Habakkuk in our text, couldn't understand why God wasn't acting, but he still had humble trust that God had a reason.

Notice that about our text. What is the opposite of a puffed up, prideful spirit that thinks they knew better than God? It is humble faith. Humble faith in Jesus keeps your soul from getting all bent out of shape. It keeps you from getting all bent out of shape when life, the country, the world isn't going the way you think it should.

If the world is going to hell in a handbasket, is God still in control? Yes. Does God still know what is best? Yes. Then don't let your soul bend over in despair or get twisted in anger. Stand up straight. Live by humble faith in Jesus who loved you and gave Himself for you.

This brings me to the next point about standing up straight. When Habakkuk humbly said to God "I don't understand", God's answer was for Habakkuk to trust Him. Habakkuk should neither give into anger or despair. He should trust. He should live by faith.

That is the principle we should apply in several ways. This phrase is used several times in the New Testament.

Galatians 3:11 "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."

Hebrews 10:37-38 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul."

It isn't just when confronted by the ungodliness of the world that we should live in faith, faith in God our savior. It is also when confronted by our own ungodliness and sin that we should live in

faith, faith in God our savior. As easy as it is to get bent out of shape at the sins of our neighbors and the world, it is also easy to get bent out of shape at our own sins. Tell me does God want you angry at Him for your sins? You all know that answer to that. And yet sometimes we do it. Sometimes we get angry at our sins being pointed out or punished. Other times we get really bent over in despair because of sin.

We know that it is wrong to be angry at God for our sins, but we don't always know that we shouldn't despair over our sins. Why is it not okay to despair over our sins? Because God has provided you with a savior in His Son Jesus. That is what Jesus was doing for you on the cross. He wasn't showing off. He wasn't doing it to make you feel bad. He was doing it so you could be forgiven. You are forgiven. Stand up straight. No, don't stand up straight because of your deeds but because of Jesus' life and death.

Yes, as Christians we should at times be prostrating our souls on the floor saying "God be merciful to me a sinner," but then we should stand up straight before God. Why? Because the just shall live by faith and the just by faith shall live.

Humbly but firmly trust in God for the forgiveness of your sins. **(1 Jn. 2:28 NKJ) " And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."** Those who humbly trust in Jesus for forgiveness can look God in the eye. Those who trust in themselves and the life they have lived won't be able to look God in the eye. But you can unashamedly stand before God because you are trusting in the life and death of Jesus. His righteousness is yours by faith. His holy life is your holy life. Your sin is gone, and your iniquity taken away by Jesus' death on the cross. Stand up straight for you have a savior. Amen.

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