

Light Shines Brightest in the Dark

by Joey Buran

Joey Buran's sermon highlights the enduring light of faith in God through the prophetic message of Habakkuk amidst generational and societal darkness.

Duration: 47:54

Scripture: Deuteronomy 29:29, Isaiah 55:8-9, Habakkuk 1:1-4, Habakkuk 2:4, Habakkuk 2:20, Habakkuk 3:17-19, Matthew 7:13-14

Topics: "Light"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the tremendous upheaval and moral and social events that have shaped and defined the world of the graduating class of 2002. The speaker emphasizes the importance of redeeming time and recognizing its shortness. They also mention their personal experience of feeling humbled by others' skills in surfing, highlighting the passing of time. The sermon references Ecclesiastes 3, where Solomon describes the different seasons of life, including both joy and sorrow. The speaker acknowledges that trials are a part of life, often caused by our own mistakes and sins. They conclude by referencing Habakkuk, who encourages singing a song despite the impending loss of everything.

Transcript

Good morning. This is kind of funny, but my certificate of ordination, he signed it, so it's kind of cool, you know. I share with First Service how whenever I teach in this pulpit, there's no other pulpit I could possibly teach in.

I get to teach in Pastor Chuck's pulpit there in the sanctuary. I go out and teach at various places in different circumstances. I'll teach in a public high school classroom, preach the gospel.

Various situations, but this is the only one where I can look straight ahead, and that's where my bride came through that door right there. Yeah, and Juan right there. It's like, I like the view.

It's a good view right here. It's a good view. There's something else about this sanctuary, too, that I forgot about, but I remembered it.

I used to vacuum this sanctuary, too. I used to do it in the summertime, and Gail wouldn't let us run the AC, so I'd work up a good sweat in here vacuuming. It's like, so you know what makes you pick up your trash when you leave? Because somebody vacuums it.

Praise the Lord. Why don't you go and open your Bibles to Habakkuk, the Old Testament book of Habakkuk. He's there in those minor prophets, only minor because of the length of their books.

And as I come down here this morning, I want to share it to you. This, of course, has been our home church off and on through the years. My wife and I and our children.

And it was a couple of years ago that the Lord made clear that we were going to be going up to Orange County, and God was going to plant us there and make us fruitful there, and he has been faithful to do that. Funny thing, though, over the last couple of years that has, I don't know if it's because I'm 41 now, and I turned 40 after moving to Orange County, but Moses said the days of man are 70, and if he's blessed, 80. So I don't know, but like when I hit 40, just kind of like, you know, it's halftime kind of a thing.

And that's presuming I've got the bonus time too, you know, 70 plus 10. And it's just been this theme with me the last couple of years about redeeming the time and how short time is. Well, and it's also humbling because I go surfing, and everyone surfs better than me now, and I used to be the best.

It's just like, I can take it. I can take it. You all know what I'm saying if you're over 40.

It's like, I can take that. It's all right. We can hang with this.

But in the midst of this, another thing that's really sunk in in my mind, especially being at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, our congregation there is primarily an older congregation. And it was kind of a shocker at first to go up to Costa Mesa and see, you know, 10,000 people. But many of them, most of them, a good portion of the church is 55 and older.

But then, you know, after a while, I realized, well, these are the people that were, you know, the young families when the hippies started getting saved 30 years ago. And so I'm like, well, you know, and I love everybody. So it's like, and it's cool, and it's just like, it's neat.

But I something like, wow. And then Lord, show me why I brought you here, because you're going to reach a new generation here. OK, I get it.

Yeah. All right. We're in the ballgame.

All right. And as I look around, I start thinking, well, you know, you know, Tom Brokaw had the book that was The Greatest Generation. And, you know, it's a very famous book, and he has a follow up book and everything.

And basically, it's the generation of people that were children during the Depression and then, you know, grew up during World War II or actually served in their late teens in World War II. And of course, many of them are alive and all over our country right now. We're trying to do everything we can to recognize them and honor them and esteem them for their sacrifices to our country.

And rightfully so. They're called the greatest generation. I minister in a convalescent home in Orange County, and I see these people and I think, you know, what a great sacrifice all of them made.

And whether it's men or women and, you know, the women will share like, oh, it was terrible. You just don't know what it was like. So many men never came back.

And wow, you know, and you realize it was a different generation. So we see that generation and essentially, according to the words of the Lord and through Moses, that's that final chapter right now for many of these people. It's the final push.

But then we see the next generation that came behind them, affectionately known as the baby boomers, which many of you are. And so that's, you know, Mike McIntosh gets saved and plants a church in San Diego. That's Bill Clinton was president for eight years.

And that's that generation from, you know, the the kids from the greatest generation became the baby boomers. They had the hippie thing going in the 60s, bare feet, long hair. And they grew up and many of them bought Lexus's and now they control dotcom businesses.

OK, you follow me? And and that's their what that was their generation. Then we have another one. That's the one everyone has a hard time with is Gen X. No one understands Gen X. Like you just barely start figuring out why guys would get tattoos all over, pierce their nose, pierce their ears and everything else.

Then the girls get tattoos and they pierce their chin and, you know, they pierce their eyelids. What is up with the tats and the piercings? But there they are. They're all over the country by the tens of thousands.

And we call them Gen X. And so if you watch TV, they're the people like the Saturn commercials are targeting, you know, or the Pontiac commercials like, hey, what's up? Yeah. You know, like that's them. All right.

And there are, you know, the 80 generation and everything else, you know, can't sit still, can't do anything, you know, but, you know, they know computers better than you do. All right. So that's them.

But then there's another generation. So there's generations of moon because now we see these younger kids rising up like, you know, Steve Henshaw's son, Joe, and you see, and even the younger kids as you come here and you see Tom with the children's ministry and we realize how fast these kids grow up. My wife taught second grade here, the second year of this school.

And Monday I was praying with a dad and a daughter in Mississippi, and they used to go to this church and my wife was the teacher of Stephanie Burpo. And she's 20, 21 now almost. And she's in love in Mississippi.

And dad wants to bring in Pastor Joy to talk to her about it. And I was like, Steve, it's OK. They grow up, you know, and boy, girl, it's kind of in that way out of me.

And but it's just and it just made me think like how fast that time goes by. It just, you know, Sandy Barrett gets married, you know, just moves on. It just is what happens.

This is this is the way it is. And now we see another generation. And I go to the public high schools and I see the Christian clubs.

I go to Christian schools and I see a whole nother generation. They're different than Generation X. They're not baby boomers and are not the greatest generation. And so really, if you go 80, you know, 60, 40, 20 or mix up those numbers a bit, essentially right now we see generations in movement.

In this realm of time on April 7th, 2002. 10, 10, 10 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. That's what we see.

And we can go back 100 years and see generations in movement like that. A generation just about finished, a new generation rising up and a couple in the middle marching along. And this is the history of man.

But more importantly, this is the history of God's people. And this is the history of the church. And as I study the Bible, I think quite often about the different generations.

Like, wow, you know, think about it. At one time you had Samuel, Saul and David. You know, and then you have women like Abigail at the same time.

You go, what an incredible generation. What was it like? And then, you know, Solomon being born. And it's just I think about these things and and just the different generations.

And as we look at the history of Israel, which really is pointing everyone toward Jesus Christ, everything in the Old Testament is pointing us toward Jesus Christ. So throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament, when you study 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings and 1st and 2nd Chronicles, and you get that timeline and even Nehemiah and so on, that time from about 1000 B.C. to 450 B.C., you have the hope of a nation with these different kings awaiting that promised Messiah and looking toward that promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. And you had God sending the prophets and different things happening.

And what as we come to Habakkuk, I want to begin to paint the timeline in the picture here. But he's about 626 10 B.C. But as we get closer to his timeline and we go from, say, David around 1000 B.C. and Solomon dying about 930 B.C. And then you have the divided kingdom of Israel and you have the northern kingdom and they existed for about 200 years. 722 B.C., the Assyrians came and took away the 10 tribes in the north and took them away into captivity.

And yet it's interesting to me that it was a very dark time for the people of Israel. All the things that they thought could never happen to them because they were God's people, because they had the law, they had the oracles of God, they had the prophets. Yet because of 20 wicked kings, not one good king in those northern kingdoms, people like Ahab and so on and so forth, there came a time when the truth became evident that righteousness exalts a nation and sins are approached to any people.

And though it breaks down on the individual basis, if you sow to the wind, you reap the whirlwind, as the prophet Hosea said at that time, it affects a nation, too. And so in any culture, in any society, we can see that there's social things, there's political things, there's moral things. But really, it always comes back to the individual.

And it was at that time that God sent the northern kingdom, Isaiah and Amos and Hosea and these prophets. And to anyone that would hear, they spoke truth. Isaiah 53, if anyone was willing, they could so hear the promised Messiah and see him on that cross before crucifixion was everyone conceived of by the Roman world.

But there was that Messiah, there was that hope of the coming one. And that generation under King Hosea, not the prophet Hosea, but King Hosea, they were taken away to never be heard from again, 722 BC. So it was about 100 years before we come to Habakkuk.

But it's noteworthy because we give us a timeline that takes us back to, say, Teddy Roosevelt being president. If we take now here, we go back about 100 years, we've got Teddy Roosevelt being president. You follow me? You with me? So we're about 100 years ahead with the fall of the northern kingdom.

Now, Judah was to learn from the mistakes of Israel. They were to take note that no one is exempt from the truth, that as a man sows, so shall he reap. If you sow to the flesh, you reap corruption.

If you sow to the spirit, you reap life. And it was plain and evident. Isaiah, after he left the northern kingdom, went down to the southern kingdom.

His words comforted Hezekiah, the king. Great revival, great things. But alas, Manasseh became king.

And for over 50-some years, this wicked king Manasseh ruled in Judah. And then there were other kings. And about 650-640 BC, as we're getting closer to the fall of the southern kingdom, when Babylon will come, there had been essentially silence.

In other words, if you study when the prophets prophesied, there had been a period of silence. But now, all of a sudden, at about 620-610 BC, the prophets are prophesying. The spirit of the Lord is on the move.

A dark time, a very, very dark time, socially, morally, and politically, is about to descend upon the land. And yet, God's spirit is on the move, and the prophets are prophesying. Zephaniah prophesied.

The Lord has the final say. He will judge the earth. Jeremiah, the son of a priest, rises up, not to be a priest, but to be a prophet.

And he prophesies faithfully for many, many decades to people, very few who listened to him. But alas, some did, but the majority did not. And as the prophets are prophesying, and Jeremiah is prophesying, and the spirit of the Lord is on the move, there is this man named Habakkuk.

And now he begins to prophesy about 610 BC. Babylon is strong and getting stronger. Judah is morally weak and getting morally weaker.

They saw themselves as being exempt from calamity and tragedy, because we're Judah. We're Israel, the promised Messiah. You know, the seed of David.

You know, Star of David on your chariot. God bless Judah. That Judah, that's who we are.

That's us. We're, you know, we're religious. We go to the temple.

Well, in the midst of that, here comes Habakkuk. Habakkuk 1.1. The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw. O Lord, how long shall I cry and you will not hear? Even cry out to you violence and you will not save.

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. Therefore, the law is powerless and justice never goes forth.

For the wicked surround the righteous. Therefore, perverse judgment proceeds. Habakkuk poured out his heart to the Lord.

He was aware of what was going on. In fact, these four verses could describe maybe anyone with the mind of the Lord. Looking at what's going on in our nation over the last ten years.

How could this happen? How could the wicked people or should I say godless people control all the media by and large? How can they control the vast majority of government? How can they control our educational system? If you go back to the greatest generation, they taught creation in the public schools during the time of the greatest generation. There was meaning and purpose. The Ten Commandments,

prayer, even public spanking was all a part of that generation that made great sacrifices.

But look where we've gone and look where we've become. And you only need to look outside on East Vista Way and drive throughout North County and watch our news today to realize nationally how far we have been in decline. And every statistic proves it morally in amongst the teens, amongst the adults, the rate of divorce, adultery, immorality, perversion, wickedness, everything.

And the facts prove me correct that we have been in a horrid decline morally and socially. But unfortunately, alas, the church has too. Because statistics prove that there are far less godly men and women who teach the Bible this day than 40 years ago.

That is who believe it's the word of God and will stake their life and sacrifice all they have for its truths and precepts to be taught and proclaimed. And that is the truth and that's the way it is. In fact, the statistics basically show that 7 out of 10 people occupying pulpits in the United States do not believe this is the word of God.

And it was not so after Prohibition and the Depression and into World War II. So you can see there are some parallels and you might look and say, oh, gosh, how can this go on? And that's what Habakkuk was saying. Well, he was just looking at his own people.

He was looking at the corruption amongst his own people. He was looking at the altars to the false gods on the hills of Judea. He was looking at what was going on under the Terebinth trees and the Tamarisk trees.

He was looking at the idols that were there in the temple yard. He could see all that. He didn't even have to look at the Babylonians.

He could look at what had happened to God's people. In fact, God said later on that the people, his people became worse than the Canaanites who were driven out of the land, that they did worse things. And I just finished 2 Kings last week in my devotions and to the point, it's horrible.

You don't even want to read it. It's horrible how desperate and vile God's people were when the Babylonian captivity came and the Babylonians came. And so here we are about 610 BC in this environment.

And if that, you don't think that's enough to kind of like, whoa, what is going on? But now this is what goes on from there, what the Lord's response to Habakkuk was. Verse 5, Look among the nations and watch and be utterly astounded for I will work a work in your days which you would not believe that were told you for indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans. And then in the rest of the verses here through verse 11, he describes what the Babylonians would do.

They're bloodthirsty, powerful, vicious, tenacious, cruel, with no heart, no compassion. I suppose the parallel would be terrorists that have no regard for life. Just absolutely no regard for anything decent.

The Babylonians, if the Syrians were bad, wait till you see what Babylon does. And God says to Habakkuk, they're coming and they are coming to your town. Habakkuk cried out, oh no, we're bad, but they're worse.

How can you do this? And in chapter 2, he said, chapter 2, verse 1, that he was going to stand his watch. Because he's like, Lord, I don't get it. We're better people than these guys.

Why are you going to let them prevail over us? And he said, I'm not going to do anything till the Lord hears from me. You got to give Habakkuk a lot of credit for that. He cared, he sought, he drew near.

And the Lord answered him in chapter 2, verse 2, And the Lord answered and said to me, write the vision, make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it, for the vision is yet for an appointed time. But at the end it will speak and it will not lie, though it tarries, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.

So the Lord says to him, I've got a vision for you. You need to write it so the people can understand it and run with it. And it will come to pass as sure as sure can be.

For whatever the Lord speaks, it surely comes to pass. And he gave him a critical exhortation in verse 4 when he said, Behold the proud, his soul is not right in him, but the just shall live by faith. Now in the New Testament, the just shall live by faith is quoted repeatedly in relation to being saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

It has a much far-reaching concept beyond what God gave to Habakkuk about 610 BC. But the interesting thing is, it's a contrast to the proud. Behold the proud, i.e. the hypocrites or the Babylonians.

Behold them, their soul is not upright in them, but the just, he shall live by his faith. And then throughout chapter 2, Habakkuk saw the vision of heaven. And he saw the Lord.

In fact, in verse 20 of chapter 2, he said, But the Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silent before him. And then in chapter 3, he prayed a profound and moving prayer.

And when he came to the end of his prayer, he made this declaration in verse 17 of chapter 3. So look at this verse, please, with me when he says this. Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit beyond the vines, though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food, though the flock may be cut off from the fold, though there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength.

He will make my feet like deer's feet, and he will make me to walk on the high hills. To the chief musician with a stringed instrument. What an interesting ending to this wonderful book.

Habakkuk says, Let's sing a song about it. We're going to lose everything, but let's sing a song. It's all going to just be plundered.

But I'm going to worship the Lord. And I'm going to rise above my trials and my calamities. Habakkuk could be rightly said to be the prophet of faith.

Because he proclaimed faith. He was a man of faith. And through him, in the darkest of social, moral, personal times, God gave the wonderful vision about faith.

And what I want to talk to you about on this second service this morning, in a generation of great darkness, where the light shines brightest in the darkness, when things seem to be going so wrong and things are not understood, we need to comprehend both individually and even socially, that is when the light shines brightest. In the darkest valley, the hope of the cross shines brightest. And when death and its

sting comes, the hope of the empty tomb and the risen Savior takes on its greatest meaning.

And in a culture where things are completely unraveling and the ambiguous gray middle ground of lukewarm takes over absolutes of right and wrong in the name of existentialism, as we rot, it would become more dark and more sinister. That is when the light is capable of shining brightest. And as great darkness was to come to Jerusalem, that holy city where the temple dwelt.

And yes, Ezekiel would shortly after this, see the vision of the glory of the Lord departing from that temple. God would still be faithful to his people. To his faithful people who could trust in him and believe in him.

Because God has a remnant in every generation. Jesus said, enter by the narrow gate. Few enter it and it's difficult and it leads to life.

But he said, broad and wide is a path that leads to destruction and many go thereby. Jesus said, many are called, but few are chosen. The invitation is extended, but so few are willing to pick up their cross daily and follow Christ.

It was that way 2600 years ago. And alas, it is that way today on April 7, 2002. God is definitely bringing revival to this country.

There can be no question about that. We see that in reality even now. I believe there are many more people in the churches across the United States today.

Then there were the weekend of September 6th and 7th. There are many more people. But as we live in a time of uncertainty, where they call it the Middle East crisis.

They call it the war on terror and various things. We can get overwhelmed, but what it really comes down to is it comes down to the individual. Because this generation saw the worst thing possible.

And Job himself said of his own life, that which I feared the most has come upon me. And as our generations are of movement, and as my generation is moving through here. And by the way, if you're in your 40s, we'll be out of here about 2040 if you haven't thought about that.

And that's if we get the bonus 10. As we're in motion, who knows what the future brings. The Lord could certainly come back tonight.

It looks like he's going to come back tonight as far as I'm concerned. I'd be blessed if he came back tonight. I'd like to blow this roof right off.

You know, I'm good with that. But he could delay us coming for weeks, months, years. In fact, for all we know, he could delay us coming for generations.

My 11-year-old daughter, Hannah, may one day be a grandmother. Who's to say? I mean, George Mueller thought the Lord was coming back in the late 1800s. He was convinced.

Jesus said, watch and be ready. But who then whom will his master find being that faithful servant at his coming? The balance of being ready for the day of the Lord and the balance of being faithful for this day in the realm of time for the Lord. And that is the life of faith.

For we are called to live a life of faith. And I don't know, you know, how the midterm elections are going to go in November and who's going to be in power and who's not. I don't know who the president's going to be two and a half, three years from now.

I just know that in a crazy world where your children have seen a president commit adultery in the West Wing, they have seen their fellow students kill each other on public high school campuses. They have seen an election decided by the Supreme Court and they have seen terrorists fly airplanes into buildings. I do know this, that God is faithful in every generation to those who will put their trust in him and live the life of faith.

That is what, if your children are the class of 2002, you need to understand something. In each of the last four years, this is what they've seen. That's what they saw their freshman year, their sophomore year, their junior year and their senior year.

How's that? What generation has seen such tremendous upheaval in four years of such cataclysmic moral social events that shape and define a nation? And the class of 2002 has seen them all since the beginning of their freshman year as they graduate in just a few months. This is their world. And it's very different than the one that you kissed them that morning when they went off to their first day of high school.

It's very different. So here we are, this life of faith. And the first thing I want to point out to you in application on this life of faith in every generation is God is working on a picture so much bigger than ours, we don't even understand it, both on a national level, an international level, and on a personal level.

He said in verse 5, I will do a work in your days which you would not believe though it were told to you. And that's very comforting to me because it's what Isaiah said 120 years before this. As for God, his ways are not our ways.

His thoughts and ways so far as the heavens are above the earth, so far are his thoughts and ways above us. And God said through Moses in Deuteronomy, the things that reveal belong to us and to our children, but the secret things belong to the Lord. And God knows everything and we don't.

And that's very comforting. But Job said at the end of his life, or after the end of his trials when he went through all that, he said, before I had heard of you, but now I know you. And we know that Romans 8, 28 says, all things work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

And so with these types of promises, we have to accept the reality that things happen in our life that we do not understand and we may never understand. And when we are with the Lord, I seriously doubt that we are going to be concerned with those issues since there's no more tears and no more sorrow. And the reality of it is that in this life, through trials, tribulation, and yes, and those of you that are older, you know exactly what I'm saying, tragedy.

We must accept by faith that God is working on a bigger picture that is bigger than us and our finite mind's ability to understand it. And yes, with 6 billion people on this planet, you in your personal life. In other words, it doesn't have to make sense.

We always want to make sense. We want to formulate God. We want what goes on in our life to make sense.

In fact, I remember Pat Robertson interviewing Elizabeth Elliott on the 700 Club on the 40th anniversary of their husbands being martyred there in Ecuador, the Aka Indians. And Elizabeth Elliott was there with the other four widows. And Pat Robertson, God bless his soul, he wanted to make sense.

And he said, now Elizabeth, it's just wonderful that there's a church there in that Aka village. And it's just wonderful that, you know, you were involved in baptizing one of the men who killed your husband. Oh, it's a glorious story.

And isn't it great? And you know what she said? It blew my mind. She looked at Pat Robertson. Elizabeth Elliott's a serious woman to begin with.

And she said, it would have been wonderful if none of those things happened. And Pat was kind of like, how does this relate to the conservative vote? You know, just kidding. I lived there for four and a half years.

I have that liberty. So I can say that. But it was really neat because she took Pat Robertson to a deeper level.

She took him past building God's kingdom on earth, that God building his kingdom in heaven, in the hearts of people on earth. Not my will, but thy will be done. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

And Elizabeth Elliott, on the 40th anniversary, could look Pat Robertson in the eyes and said, if nothing had ever happened, if it never made sense to you or to me, it was good because the Lord is good. Truly, God is good to Israel. And she said, essentially, if there was no church and no Akka's got saved, and nothing ever happened except I lost my husband, who preached the gospel with his life, not his words, because he did not return the violence, I will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

That's what, if you ever seen the video, through Gates of Splendor, the home footage of the whole thing with the Life magazine, it's incredible. And she said, I will trust in the Lord. She essentially said that day on the 40th anniversary, God is working on a bigger picture, Pat, bigger than you and I can understand.

And it doesn't have to fit in our equation of how God works. That was her response. And that's a good response.

And by the way, that is the response of faith. Because faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence not yet seen. And Elizabeth Elliott's faith would be that it was not in vain to take her young husband with her precious little daughter and to have her living in the jungles of Ecuador to reach the people who had never heard the gospel.

Because our life does not have to make sense. Our life needs to be faithful. We need to be faithful to the Lord.

It doesn't need to make sense to you, me, or the person that judges us. What it needs to be is faithful to the Lord as best we can discern what he's doing in our life. Because the measuring rod of the Lord is not that it made sense, and people can write a biography about it.

The measuring rod of the Lord is that we are faithful. Well done, good and faithful servant. And that we trusted him.

And that's why Paul could say that these light afflictions are working for a far more eternal weight of glory. God is in the business of eternity. And every generation, all of us in movement right now in the realm of time, we're all connected to eternity.

Eternity is in our hearts, Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 3. We are headed for eternity. And for the kingdom of God, for the believer, we live in eternity now. I give my sheep eternal life.

We have that life working and moving in us now. And God, for whatever pains and sorrows we may face in the realm of time, know this, he's working on a bigger picture that has an eternal purpose. And Solomon said, well, in Ecclesiastes 3, there's a time and purpose for everything under heaven.

There's a time to be born and a time to die. And then he described life. He said there's a time to laugh, but there's a time to cry.

And there's a time to dance, and there's a time to mourn. And obviously we know this, that life is filled with trials. And the longer you live, the more you'll be affected by the trials of your own stupidity and sin.

I use that term for myself. But we all know, look, when I look for the enemy, I just look in the mirror. You know, that's who I fear.

Scary little man, 5'7", 41. You go away, bad old man, son of Adam. You know, that's the enemy.

And we self-inflict things through our own sin in our life. Other people's sins affect our life. I was able to lead a 14-year-old girl to the Lord Thursday night.

She had her piercing through her chin. She was in tears. She's a little girl having to be a woman because neither of her parents are there.

Her mom's not there. Her dad's not there. She lives with friends, and she hangs out on Main Street, Huntington Beach.

And her 20-year-old sister brought her to church. Think how radically her life has been affected by other people's selfishness and sin. Incomprehensible.

No wonder she's pierced. She hurts. And then life itself.

Because we know the foolish man and the wise man both built their houses. One was on the rock, one was on the sand. But they both had the floods and the storms come.

And I'm amazed how little tragedy I've really faced in my life at the age of 41. I mean, we did my son's funeral right here. I remember the Bernacchi's funeral here.

I've seen some funerals here. First funeral I ever did was right here. Eight people, these two rows.

I had to get down here and stand in front of them. My first funeral right there. Life is filled with tragedy.

I'm surprised I haven't had more, to be honest with you. And know this, the longer we live, the more likely we'll be affected by sin and death. The tragedies of life.

And death has a painful sting. In watching Jeremy Camp's wife die, Melissa Camp, how bitter and deep and painful was the sting for a 23-year-old man whose 21-year-old bride for four months was going to be

with the Lord. Death, even with the cross, has bitter sting.

How much more without the cross? And so when we think about living a life of faith, the first thing we have to realize is God's working on a bigger picture. And that's really what faith is, is trusting that whatever trials and tribulations and tragedies we go through in our generation and with our generation as we march through this life together and on an individual basis, to know that God is working on a bigger picture. And it's an eternal picture.

And he can't even explain it to us. And you know, it's interesting because he says, though I would declare it to you, you wouldn't understand it. Just as well, because when God showed Paul heaven, he couldn't declare it either.

Not one word. It's beyond our finite mind. We can't grasp it in time.

It's just, he's God. There's six billion of us on this planet, but he's the God of wonders beyond our galaxy. And he calls us to live a life of faith.

And the first lesson is to trust him with that which we don't understand. The second thing we see is a life of faith is in a contrast to the life of unbelief. And if you look at verse 4 of chapter 2, it says that the proud, his soul is not upright in him.

And I appreciate this because as God is speaking Habakkuk, he gives him exhibit A of what not to be. If you want to understand what the life of faith is, all you have to do is take the context of the verse. He gives a contrast.

Behold the proud. His soul is not right in him. What is it about the proud? It goes back to Satan.

Pride. What is about the proud? It goes to the Pharisees. Pride.

What is the one sin that is the primary root of all sin? Pride. Unbelief. I don't need to be saved.

I can save myself. I'm a good person. I vote the right way.

I don't care. More good will cancel out the bad. The scales look like this, I think.

Pride. And as we look around our world, there's incredible pride on all fronts. At the risk of offending you, and I'm an American.

I got my little American flag pin. I've worn it at times. You know, it's hard to be proud to be an American because on one hand you're totally proud of our heritage and what guys like George Washington did when they crossed the Delaware and things like this, where God's hand was on our country.

But then on the other hand, when you think of presidents committing adultery in the West Wing, it just hurts. It hurts. When you think of some of the laws coming down from the Supreme Court, and you realize how far that is from what Patrick Henry and these people had in mind.

Even agnostic minds like Ben Franklin could even think of such evil. And it hurts. It's painful to see what this country has become in the last 40 to 50 years.

And the motives were good in the name of tolerance, but we've lost our compass on right and wrong in the name of tolerance. And now the only people we don't tolerate is us, Christians. It's hard to be proud to be

American, but it's amazing how many Americans will say, God bless America, but not yield their life to the God of wonders beyond our galaxy.

And oh, you fly airplanes into their buildings. They'll sign up. They'll enlist.

They'll put the bumper stickers on their car. They'll put the flag on the thing. They'll put the flag on the overpasses.

But surrender your life to Christ, the foundation of the men who started and the women who started this country. Oh, no, no, no, that's... And we've been proud. It's just true.

And we're the only superpower, so of course we can be proud. You're the only sheriff in town. Hey, cowboy.

You know what I'm saying? We're it. We've got smarter bombs than everybody else. We've got bigger, badder bombs.

We've got daisy buster, cluster ruster, whatever, you know? And we've got a bomb for every need. But on a national level, if we aren't humbled, we're going to be in big trouble by the time the class of 2002 is having grandkids, if not sooner. Because righteousness exalts a nation and sins reproach to any people.

And the greatest reproach, and the reproach of Judah, was thinking that they were above following, falling, that they thought it couldn't happen to them. We're Judah. God bless Judah bumper sticker.

That's how we'll do with Babylon. Slap it on your chariot. God bless Judah.

Wave to Star of David, you know? Join hands in the assembly, you know? Let's do it. We're all one, right? No. Righteousness exalts a nation and sins reproach to any people, and it breaks down to the person alive.

I don't know what's going to happen, but we can look around us, and I still see a proud nation. And in one sense, there's an acceptable pride. Don't misunderstand me.

But we are... There's a reason... I live in Orange County. Listen, I'm surrounded by the UN, okay? There's a reason... There is a reason people from Arabic countries and Asian countries and South American countries and from all over the world, there's a reason they've moved to Southern California in the last 50 years by the tens of thousands. There's a reason there's tens of thousands of Laotians, Cambodians, and Vietnamese in Orange County because they had dreams of a better life.

And they have a better life. They have a better life. My Christian friend pastors in Vietnam are in prison.

And yet that generation that we fought for in the 60s, they are here, and they do have a better life, and they come to my study. I do the Arabic youth retreat. They have a better life.

When happiness family, Bushra, they fled Egypt as Coptic Egyptian Christians. They have a better life. There are things that make us a great nation.

But if we keep sanctioning sin, you'll see that we're not immune any more than Judah was immune. And we keep letting this Hollywood stuff, that sign on the 101 and what it represents, that stuff continues to dictate what goes on in this land. You mark my words from the grave.

God will have the final say with this nation. So behold the proud. His soul is not right in him.

And just know this, you don't want to be that person. Because a broken and contrite spirit, that is what the Lord is looking for. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.

And God gave Habakkuk the example of these hypocrites there in the temple and the coming Babylonians. For all that would hear him as they came, Babylon, we're big, we're big, we're Babylon. Nobody messes with us.

We're the only superpower. You thought you were the superpower. We're the superpower.

You come with us. And that's what happened. And as Daniel and his friends were marched off, they could hear the words of Habakkuk.

Behold the proud. His soul is not right in him, but the just shall live by his faith. The same is ours today.

Humility and brokenness on the individual basis. Because you know what? God preserves his people, even when everything unravels morally and socially. He will preserve his people who live the life of faith.

He gives us contrast of unbelief and pride versus faith. And we do well, as painful as it is to look in the mirror, that funny-looking 41-year-old, we do well to examine ourselves and be sure that we're not deceiving ourselves in pride. But we have that brokenness.

And that is the life of faith. And then finally, the last thing, and I'll wrap up on this very quickly. The life of faith embraces that plan of God.

And I think when you look at what Habakkuk said, though there's no fig tree, there's no fruit, there's no olive, there's no food in the field, there's no flock, and there's no herd. You know, he said, well, it's like Jeremy Camp's song, Take My Life. Take my life.

He said, Habakkuk says here, whatever, you know, if I got nothing, I mean, I'll break it down for where I live in Orange County. Though I lose the house at 909 Tanana Place, though I lose the quest, though I lose the, you know, the civic, though I lose all my clothes, though I lose my job at Costa Mesa, though I lose the food in my refrigerator, though they chop down my plum tree, though I lose everything, though I'm just reduced to being destitute and wandering and have no hope, but my hope in Jesus Christ, which by the way, is the way tens of thousands of Christians are living their lives right now, this day, who've already gathered in the name of Jesus across this world in hundreds of different languages. Many of them are living their life just that way.

Though I can't have a daughter because I have a son and I live in China, I will yet praise thee. You see, faith is able to embrace with totality. Faith doesn't have to understand the plan.

Faith has a contrast to what it is, pride, but then faith is capable. The triumph of faith is to embrace with totality that plan of God and just say, whatever, whatever. This is my flag.

I fly under the cross. My king died. He is risen.

He is at the right hand of the father. He makes intercession for me and when I breathe my last, I will go to see him and to be asked him from the body to be present with the Lord and I will see him face to face and I will see him as he is and I will be like he is and this to him who said, to him who overcomes, I will grant to

sit with me on my throne as I overcome and sit with my father on his throne. He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the spirit says.

That is faith. Faith embraces fully triumphantly the perfect plan of God with everything it has and though we be smitten and wounded of the Lord, we will cling to him for he is our life and he is the length of our days. That is what it means to live the life of faith and you know you're living it because when you lose your wife, you can write a song like Jeremy Camp wrote, I will walk by faith.

When your wife is dying in front of your eyes, you can still climb to that high hill with the Lord Jesus Christ and you can write that song, I will walk by faith to the chief musician on a string instrument and it may be a song of mourning, it may be a song of brokenness, it may be a song of triumph, but when your heart can still sing a new song to the Lord, no matter what's going on around you, you have come to the place of a mature faith and trust me, in every generation, this is the life that the Lord invites his people to live. As it was then, so it is now. Father, we come before you and we thank you for your word and its application to our lives and Lord, we just, the life of faith is, it is a, it's a different life and Jesus, I just thank you that you're the author and the finisher of our faith, that we place our faith in you, we look to you, we cling to you, you begin it, you undergird it and you sign and seal and deliver it and Father, I pray for this congregation and this church and especially here at Second Service that maybe, and I'm sure this is the case with me, it's been a battle trying to live this life of faith, we want to take control, we want to formulize it, we want to understand it, but not so and I pray Lord, that where there's been just a defeated discouragement, are you the one, do we look for another where there's been doubt? I pray Lord, that you would strengthen the faith of your people here this morning, though they don't understand, they're not gonna live like the world, but they're gonna embrace you because you're the good shepherd and you lay down your life for the sheep and you are worthy to be trusted, surely Lord, we'd be fools to put our faith in the entertainment industry, in the governments of men, the arm of flesh cannot save, some men will trust in chariots, but we will trust in the name of the Lord, our God, our faith needs to be in you and father, I just pray, that's where it would be this morning and father, I pray a special prayer for any here this morning who maybe have never given their life to you, they don't know the life of faith, behold the proud, they know that one, they can be proud to be a street person, they can be proud to work minimum wage, they can be proud to own their own company, they can be proud because they're good looking or strong, but let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, the rich man in his riches, but let him who boasts, boast in this, that he knows me, the Lord, so father, I pray that hearts would turn to a life of faith, even this morning, April 7th, 2002, we ask it all in your mighty name, Jesus, amen.

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