

# Habakkuk 1-3 • When the works of God don't make sense

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We are going to do the book of Habakkuk (Ha-bak-kuk) or Habakkuk (Habak-kuk). Some people say both of them are wrong, so it doesn't really matter which one you say, you can do either one because you'll be wrong and it'll, but it'll still sound okay. I'll go ahead and probably just go back and forth between the both of them.

But if you happen to have one of our Bibles from here in the auditorium, and you're struggling to find this book, it's on page 457 and kind of a difficult book to find because it's fairly small. It's only 3 chapters, as are many of these minor prophets, and that's where we are.

This is the 8th of the 12 minor prophets and we're kind of cruising our way fairly quickly here on Wednesday night. We study through the Old Testament and we're getting close to the end. So many, some of you might be wondering what we do when we finish the Old Testament or the New Testament first. And in, this is our third time through the Bible and I never finish them up at the same time. I'm never, I'm not that good.

But, so we usually finish one, the first New Testament or the Old Testament quickly, and we have some slop over time. And so, what we do, once we finish Malachi; the last book of the Old Testament, we'll actually start doing some of the New Testament books on Wednesday night so that we can finish those up together. And hopefully we'll kind of come together on Wednesday and Sunday with finishing the New Testament. So that's how that works, just in case you were wondering.

So, anyway, this is a great, this is a great study. So, let me ask you, just going into this, how do you respond to God when what he's doing or what you think he's doing doesn't make a lick of sense to you? I'm sure that's probably never happened to any of you.

But I know for some people it is an ongoing issue. We look at what the Lord is doing in our lives or in the life of somebody else, and we just wonder, God, what are you doing? What are you up to? Or, if you are actually seeing what the Lord is doing and you are, and you're in disagreement with how the Lord is handling it.

Maybe the timing of how the Lord is responding is just not in the timing that you would think best. How do you respond to the Lord? Well, this book is going to have some good insights for us here tonight, so let's pray as we get into it, shall we?

Father, we thank you so much for the opportunity tonight to gather in your name. And we thank you Lord for the prophecies that you gave to Habakkuk. And we thank you Lord for the things that are written here because there are wonderful insights.

And Lord, if we're going to be honest with ourselves, there's many times that we wonder what you're doing, and why. And we have questions and we have doubts. And we are challenged by the things that we see and experience.

And so, Father, I pray tonight in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, that you would speak words of grace and clarity and insight through your word to address those kinds of questions. And I asked that you'd help us to have a greater understanding of your will and your purpose in our lives.

I thank you, my Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen. Amen.

Habakkuk is an interesting book in that it is really just a conversation between Habakkuk and the Lord. And it's a conversation that begins with, Habakkuk complaining to the Lord, and we'll get into this tonight and you'll see how he complains and then the Lord responds to his complaint.

We don't know that much about the prophet Habakkuk except what we're kind of reading here in this book. And the fact that he foretold the coming of the Babylonian army and how it would conquer the Assyrian empire. You'll remember the Assyrians are the ones who conquered or invaded and conquered the northern kingdom of Israel.

Now, this is about 80 to 100 years after that happened, and they're still kind of the big guy on the block. But the Babylonians are about to flex their muscle for the first time, and they will ultimately conquer the Assyrians and ultimately conquer the southern kingdom of Judah. All right. And so, you'll just remember that those things took place.

Now, these prophecies and this, these messages, this conversation that the Lord had between himself and Habakkuk was most likely happening just before Babylon (King Nebuchadnezzar) conquered Assyria. All right. Just before that happened.

So, Habakkuk is all about, as I've kind of said here, all about questioning God and frankly is centered around a series of complaints and criticisms that Habakkuk gave to the Lord about the way, that the way God was responding to current events. And Habakkuk wasn't very pleased with the Lord's responses about what was happening in Judah and in the rest of the world.

Now, when we get to the second chapter of this, and we will finish the entire book tonight, but when in that second chapter we will see a very familiar phrase, and that is “the righteous shall live by his faith”. And that statement alone from Habakkuk is quoted 3 times in the New Testament.

Paul founded a very important phrase to understand the idea of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and he quoted it in both Romans and Galatians. And then the author of Hebrews also quoted that phrase as well.

As we look through the book of Habakkuk, these 3 chapters, most Bible scholars, teachers see 3 specific stages to the conversation that is going on between Habakkuk in the Lord concerning the initial questioning of the Lord, the ongoing dialogue with God, and then finally in the last chapter, Habakkuk kind of surrendering and opening his heart to the purpose and will of God, and just surrendering to a will that he didn't fully understand but chose to surrender to nonetheless.

And we'll talk about that when we get to it and how that applies to our lives. So, chapter 1, it begins simply by saying:

<sup>1</sup> *“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.”* (ESV)

And he said:

<sup>2</sup> *“O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?”* (ESV)

And what Habakkuk is complaining about here is the corruption in the evil that he's seen going on in his home area of Judah. We're not sure exactly again, when Habakkuk was written, but we believe that Habakkuk saw a great deterioration of the spiritual life of the people of Judah. That he lived during a time where there was an upswing in their religious devotion, and then he saw that deteriorate over a period of time, and he's grieved by that.

How many of you have been grieved? I'm not asking for you to respond, obviously, just how many of you been grieved by what has been happening just in your lifetime? To the deterioration of culture and society and how it's become more secular and less centered on the word of God. In fact, rejecting the word of God outright, well, that's how Habakkuk felt.

And he begins by saying how long are you going to see what's going on and you're not going to do anything about it? You'll notice there in verse 2, he says how long do I have to cry for help and you're not going to hear me? And then he says, or cry to you and say, Lord violence, violence is all around but you, you don't save.

And by the way, the Hebrew word for violence is Hamas and that's where that group gets its name: violence. And this is what Habakkuk is seeing, all the corruption and all the wickedness and God isn't doing anything.

And he says in verse 3 he says:

<sup>3</sup> *“Why do you make me see iniquity, (in other words, why do you constantly make me look at this) and why do you idly look at wrong?”*

Or as the NIV says, “why do you tolerate wrong?” And he goes on to finish that verse saying:

<sup>3</sup> *“...Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.”* (ESV)

And then he begins to talk about the consequences of all of this sin. Verse 4, he says:

<sup>4</sup> *“So the law is paralyzed”* (ESV)

In other words, the law of the land no longer is able to do anything to right wrongs. Isn't that a terrible place to be?

He goes on in that verse to say:

<sup>4</sup> *“... and justice never goes forth”*. (ESV)

At least not justice based on the word of God. He says:

<sup>4</sup> *“...For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice (if justice does go forth, he says it goes forth in a very perverted sort of a way, and that's exactly what Habakkuk is saying, justice) goes forth perverted.”* (ESV)

And this sounds very similar, to the life that we're living and the society and the culture in which we live today. So, this is essentially Habakkuk's first complaint. God, why aren't you doing anything about this now? The Lord's response beginning in verse 5, God says:

<sup>5</sup> *“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.*

<sup>6</sup> *For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans (that is another name for the Babylonians, all right. Interchangeable terms), that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.*

<sup>7</sup> *They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.”* (ESV)

That's a fascinating statement. If there is any justice or any dignity in them, they don't get it from God's word. They don't get it from any wisdom from above. It comes from themselves. In other words, they are their own source of justice and dignity. They define it for themselves. Isn't that amped description of what we see going on in our culture today as well?

People's morality is what they define. They define it, it's kind of like it speaks of Israel at the end of the book of Judges. Each man did what was right in his own eyes. And this can even become a cultural norm where cultures determine right and cultures determine wrong. And that's exactly what the Babylonians were doing.

He goes on to say in verse 8, and again, this is still the Lord responding to Habakkuk. He says:

<sup>8</sup> *“Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour.*

<sup>9</sup> *They all come for violence, all their faces forward.”* (ESV)

In other words, they don't turn to the right or even look to the left. They focus on their goal and they go for it.

<sup>9</sup> *“...They gather captives like sand.*

<sup>10</sup> *At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it.*

<sup>11</sup> *Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, (look at this last statement) whose own might (or if you will, own strength) is their god!”* (ESV)

That's what they, and your God is whatever, or whomever you serve. And they serve their own strength. And this is the Lord's description of Babylon.

Now, Habakkuk knows what God is saying here because God is responding to his complaint that he's not doing anything about the evil that's going on in Judah.

And so, he knows what God is saying. He's, God isn't just saying, by the way, if you notice the Babylonians, they're pretty cool. They're really strong and they're really ungodly. No, no, no, goes way beyond that. Habakkuk knows that God is saying, I am raising up this country to come and bring punishment and correction to my people.

Habakkuk understands exactly what the Lord is saying here about the Babylonians. So now we're going to see Habakkuk's response to the Lord's reply.

Verse 12, He says:

*<sup>12</sup> “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.” (ESV)*

That tells you right there in that first verse that Habakkuk new and understood what God was talking about as it relates to the Babylonian army. But now he's going to ask his question:

*<sup>13</sup> “You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?” (ESV)*

Now you can see what Habakkuk is dealing with here. He's struggling to make sense of God using the Babylonians as his spanking spoon for Judah, because he's thinking to himself, he's kind of working this thing out in his own mind, and he's thinking, now, wait a second here. I mean, I'm with you. I, like I said to you, Lord, Judah's in a bad spot. And I have seen a great deterioration of our spiritual life and wickedness abounds, but the Babylonians? They're worse.

So, why God would you call upon a nation that is worse than your people and use them as your instrument of correction? That doesn't make a lick of sense to me. Now, as I asked you at the beginning of our study here tonight, have you ever gone through a time when what you saw God doing didn't make a lick of sense to you?

Well, that's what's happening to Habakkuk and he's questioning, and I love the fact that the Bible records a prophet being just like you and me questioning God.

Sometimes we think about these Old Testament prophets, and we put them up a little bit on a pedestal. But when you kind of read through their prophecies and you talk you see the kind of lives they led, and you see men like Elijah who slipped into depression, and serious depression.

And you had other prophets who very much looked very human. And we see here, Habakkuk, who's questioning and complaining. God, what are you doing? Why would you do that? That doesn't make any sense to me God, I don't get it.

So, he's going to go on and kind of talk a little bit about what he sees that doesn't make any sense.

Verse 14:

<sup>14</sup> *“You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.”* (ESV)

And so that's kind of just his view on mankind in general.

But then in verse 15, you'll notice it begins with the word he, and that refers to the wicked man.

<sup>15</sup> (The wicked man. I'll, and it's, I'll just put that in there, but it's) *“He brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad.”* (ESV)

Now, it's interesting, he obviously, Habakkuk is using illustrative language of the various rulers that have risen to power and done all kinds of horrific and cruel things to the people they conquer. But you'll notice he's using this picture of all of mankind humanity being fish in the sea, who are dragged away with a net and caught. Well, it's interesting, all the things that he's talking about here aren't that far from reality.

We have actually discovered ancient drawings that some of these peoples did in the rocks that and particularly in the region of Mesopotamia that actually depict prisoners of war being hauled off in nets. Isn't that interesting?

So, they, that's, they would do that actually sometime, throw a bunch of people in nets and drag them along the ground and take them wherever they felt the need to take them. So, this isn't necessarily all metaphorical, of how these men treat those they conquer.

It goes on in verse 16 to say:

<sup>16</sup> *“Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.”*

<sup>17</sup> *“Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?”* (ESV)



And then verse 1 of the next chapter (chapter 2) is the conclusion of Habakkuk's response, where he says:

<sup>1</sup> *“I will take my stand at my watchpost 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.”* (ESV)

So, he lays it all out before the Lord and then he says, and now I'm going to just wait and I'm going to wait and hear what the Lord says in response. And is the Lord going to respond? Yes, he does.

Verse 2 of chapter 2:

<sup>2</sup> *“And the Lord answered me: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.”*

<sup>3</sup> *“For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.”* (ESV)

So, God begins by telling Habakkuk, first of all, the things I've told you are yet in the future, but they're going to come quick. And I want you to know that they are definitely going to happen.

He says here at the end, it will not delay, it is going to happen. Even if it seems to be taking time, it will take place and these things will be fulfilled.

Now the Lord is going to begin to speak to Habakkuk about the King of Babylon. And the reason the Lord is going to do this is because Habakkuk has been complaining and saying, why in the world would you use Babylon to ultimately spank your people when they themselves are evil?

And God is going to respond now to Habakkuk and say, I know what's going on in Babylon and I've got their number too, and don't think that I don't see what's happening in that nation, just like I see what's happening in your nation.

And he begins by saying in verse 4,

<sup>4</sup> *“Behold, his soul is puffed up; ...”*

And he's referring to the king of Babylon here. And we know this to be true from the Book of Daniel. We know that Nebuchadnezzar was a very puffed up man.

And we know that, in fact, his pride led to a downfall of his, precipitated by the Lord, where God literally took his sense away and made him like an animal for 7 years. And so, God is speaking now and he's saying, I know all about this man.

He says:

<sup>4</sup> “...*it is not upright within him* (speaking of his soul), *but the righteous shall live by his faith.* (ESV)

And that's an interesting statement to make at right after talking about the king of Babylon and how puffed up he is, what happens when people get puffed up? What happens when people get conceited? What happens when people start thinking more highly of themselves than anything? Will they start trusting in themselves do they not? They begin to lean upon their own understanding, right? They begin to trust in their own ability to solve issues, work out problems, and all that sort of a thing.

Well, that's the character of somebody who's puffed up and vain and pride. What is the contrast to that? Well, the contrast is what he gives in the latter part of verse 4 by starting the word with the word, but, and that word but always shows a change and a contrasting statement that's going to be made and that is the righteous shall not live by his wits, the righteous shall not lean upon his own understanding, the righteous shall not turn to his own wisdom and his own ways or delight in his own strength, but the righteous will live by faith, right? He will literally trust in the Lord, and that's not faith in himself, it's faith in God. The righteous will put his faith in God, and that's such an important statement. And again, it's so important, it's echoed multiple times in the New Testament.

Verse 5:

<sup>5</sup> “*Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. ...*” (ESV)

What an interesting depiction of the pride of Nebuchadnezzar? He says it's as wide as Sheol. In other words, the depth of his pride is like Sheol.

And that might not mean a lot to you, but remember, Sheol is the Hebrew word for the grave. And people are constantly dying and going to the grave, and yet it never fills up.

And that's the way the Jews thought about it, they thought about Sheol as this place that was ever widening ever burgeoning, ever growing because it never fills up. People keep dying, but, and, they don't go anywhere. They just, they're just there and yet God says of this man's pride, it is as wide as Sheol.

It says in the end of verse 5:

<sup>5</sup> “... *He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples.*” (ESV)

In other words, he integrates them into his own nation.

Now, beginning in verse 6, God is even going to begin to speak a series of woes over Babylon. And again, this is God's way of responding to Habakkuk and saying to him, Habakkuk, I know what's going on with Babylon. I understand these things. Don't think that I have overlooked these things. Don't think that these things get past me, I know what's happening. And he even begins to speak these woes to bring Habakkuk into a place of understanding that judgment will stand for Babylon as well, nobody gets a free pass. Okay?

Verse 6:

<sup>6</sup> “*Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, “Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own—for how long?—and loads himself with pledges!”*”

<sup>7</sup> *Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them.*” (ESV)

And we know that ultimately Babylon was conquered, they were conquered by the medo-persian army eventually. We actually read about that in the latter part of the book of Daniel. But God is saying here, will not his own debtors suddenly arise and that's a way of saying is not someone else going to arise to hold him accountable.

He says in verse 8:

<sup>8</sup> “*Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.*”

Again, the Lord is responding to Habakkuk here, saying, the king of Babylon will one day himself come under judgment for all that he has done.

<sup>9</sup> *“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!”*

<sup>10</sup> *You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life.*

<sup>11</sup> *For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond.” (ESV)*

And yeah, so the second woe is pronounced on Nebuchadnezzar for his longing for wealth, the wealth of others and his pride. And, God declared that all the things he took from others would eventually cry out against him.

<sup>12</sup> *“Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!” (ESV)*

That's what this next woe is about.

<sup>13</sup> *“Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?”*

<sup>14</sup> *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (ESV)*

And this woe is speaking of, how Babylon was focused on the king of Babylon was focused on a massing glorious splendor, not just wealth for the sake of being wealthy, but that it might, that he might appear more splendid and majestic. And he wanted these visual signs of nobility and elegance, that fed his soul.

And the Lord is, but the Lord tells him, but it was all founded on inequity. It was founded on cruelty and violence. And so, you ended up forfeiting all of the things that you earned by founding your dynasty on these sinful activities.

Now I'll grant you verses 13 and 14 can be a little challenging to understand. Well, particularly verse 13, where the ESV says:

<sup>13</sup> *“Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?” (ESV)*

Actually, the NIV does a little better job of making this understandable for an English audience. Let me put it up on the screen for you. It goes like this:

**(slide)**

**Habakkuk 2:13 (NIV)**

“Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people’s labor (or in this case, Nebuchadnezzar’s labor) is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?...”

Right? In other words, they are trying to gain glory for themselves but it’s all going to come to nothing. And then the Lord makes this contrasting statement. There’s coming a day when:

**Habakkuk 2:14 (NIV)**

“...For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

That’s in contrast to man’s feeble attempt to gain his own kingdom of glory. He’s trying to, in fact that’s what Nebuchadnezzar did, he tried to make Babylon a reflection of his own glory.

In fact, that’s what he said right before God turned him into an animal, or at least with an animal sense. “Have I not, is this not Babylon that I have done and so on”? And, the Lord struck him right there. But that’s what he was searching for, that’s what he was longing for. But and frankly, in terms of human effort, ancient Babylon was pretty glorious.

The problem is Nebuchadnezzar believed that it was all because of him, but God comes back and he says, but I am going to do something so far beyond that. In fact, the whole Earth, not Babylon, not even just Israel, the whole Earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

So yeah, verse 15 goes on the next woe:

<sup>15</sup> *“Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!”* (ESV)

So, this forth woe focuses on the foul and corrupt ways of the Babylonians toward the peoples they conquered and the Lord is charging them here with not only harshness and cruelty, but also depicting them as a person who himself habitually drinks and then give strong drinks to those he conquers in order to

intoxicate them for the purpose of some shameless and perverted actions. And the implication there is of a sexual nature.

He says in verse 16:

*16 “You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!” (ESV)*

So, the Lord will turn your glory into shame.

*17 “The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.”*

*18 “What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols!*

*19 Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.*

*20 But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” (ESV)*

Notice that final statement is once again that contrasting statement that begins with the word, but, and the Lord outlines how ridiculous pagan idolatry was from the standpoint of trusting into something that you yourselves created and then ends with that contrasting statement but the Lord is in his holy temple and all let all the earth keep silence before him. Yeah, powerful.

All right, so this is the Lord's response that is really kind of taken up in chapter 2. So now we come to chapter 3, and after the lengthy reply of the Lord that is given to us there, fairly lengthy and in, in chapter 2, Habakkuk now gives his final response to the Lord.

And you'll notice as we go through this chapter, he's no longer complaining, he's no longer protesting what the Lord is doing. In fact, this chapter reads very much like a Psalm. And many portions of it, like a Psalm of praise. It's definitely a Psalm of exaltation of the goodness, mercy, and power of the Lord, which you'll see here.

And it even uses that familiar element of Selah that you read in the Psalms that we came across many times through our study of the Psalms. Which we noted at that time is probably a reference to stopping and pondering to what has just been said.

But it begins this final chapter (chapter 3) by saying:

<sup>1</sup> *“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.”* (ESV)

And honestly, the meaning of Shigionoth is somewhat vague. It appears to be some kind of a musical slash possibly liturgical notation. But, honestly, we're not sure. It could have been something that would guide the reader in terms of how they would use it in public worship.

Verse 2:

<sup>2</sup> *“O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; ...”* (ESV)

So, Habakkuk is starting by saying, I remember when I was young, hearing about the actions and works of the Lord, the mighty things that the Lord did. And he's talking about how the Lord moved powerfully in the wilderness to his people.

And when he was giving the law through Moses and he says, Lord, in the midst of the years, revive it, revive the way you worked. Revive that work of power among your people, make it known, make your presence and your power known like you used to. That's the first thing he says. But he also knows that God is going to punish Judah. He knows that God is going to use the Babylonians to punish Judah, and that's why he ends verse 2 by simply saying:

<sup>2</sup> *“... in wrath remember mercy.”* (ESV)

Because he knows that Judah deserves the wrath of the Lord and the correction of the Lord. But even so, he prays that God would be merciful even in his wrath.

Verse 3, he begins now to talk just about the splendor of the Lord and that's what several of these verses speak of.

<sup>3</sup> “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. (Referring to his appearances to the nation of Israel) *Selah*

*His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.*

<sup>4</sup> *His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power.” (ESV)*

Interesting that as glorious as his appearances were to Israel, Habakkuk mentions the fact that God was forced to veil his power among the people of Israel, lest his glory consume them.

Verse 5:

<sup>5</sup> *“Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels.” (ESV)*

Speaking of how he moved among the Egyptians to set his people free.

<sup>6</sup> *“He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.*

<sup>7</sup> *I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.*

<sup>8</sup> *Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation?” (ESV)*

And these answers are given, I guess I should say, these questions are given with no answer expected. No response is replied, a no response is implied. God wasn't displeased with nature, he was simply using nature to reveal his power and majesty.

<sup>9</sup> *“You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah You split the earth with rivers.*

<sup>10</sup> *The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high.*

<sup>11</sup> *The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear.*



*<sup>12</sup> You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger.*

*<sup>13</sup> You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah*

*<sup>14</sup> You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret.*

*<sup>15</sup> You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.” (ESV)*

This is all very poetic and Habakkuk is simply kind of going back in time and visiting in his mind, the works and glory and wrath, mercy of God poured out and using all of this poetic language to describe the actions of the Lord and the power of God and the glory of God. And all of this is something that just, I believe is bubbling up from Habakkuk heart, because he has reconciled himself to something that I think every Christian ultimately has to reconcile themselves to, and that is that God knows best and I don't, and it's really that simple.

But it takes humility to come to terms with that sort of a conclusion. Say, God, I don't know, I don't know what you're up to, but I submit. You've revealed certain things to me and what you've revealed, I thank you for, but I don't even begin to believe that I have the whole story because I don't think I could comprehend the whole story.

But what I know and what I know about your character, leads me to believe that I can trust you and I can surrender. And I want you to see what he says here in verses 16, 17, and 18 where he says:

*<sup>16</sup> “I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. (And then look at this) Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.” (ESV)*

Now, I want you to, I want you to really take note of that. This is now the voice of what the Bible calls patient endurance. It's the very thing the Apostle John spoke about as he began to write the letter that we call the Revelation of Jesus Christ. “I, John, your brother and companion in suffering and in the patient endurance that are ours in Christ Jesus.” (Revelation 1:9)

John was on the island of Patmos. He was literally in a place that was a penal colony and there was nothing he could do about it. And so, he learned to patiently endure. Because when you're dealing with this difficult circumstances of life and you can't figure out what God's doing and you don't like what God's

doing in any way, shape or form, you really have a choice. You can get all upset and all lathered up and worked up and frustrated and angry and bitter, and believe me, a lot of people do.

Or you can sit back and say, Lord, you know, I don't, but you know, and I will wait. Whatever it is. Now in this particular case, in verse 18, he says, I'm going to wait, or excuse me, verse 16, he says, yet I wait. I will quietly wait for the day when you bring about justice for your enemies. I will quietly wait. I will quietly wait.

Do you guys ever find yourself getting upset at people who rage against God and all of the stupid things they do in our culture today? Do you ever watch the news and come away just kind of boiling and thinking to yourself, (angry noise), which is probably a really good time to turn off the news. But, do you ever come away from that and turn off the TV or close your computer or whatever and just say, Lord, I will wait. I will wait for your justice to appear. I will wait because you have told me in no uncertain terms that we will all stand before your throne. So, I'm going to wait and I'm not going to get upset, and I'm not going to become vengeful, and I'm not going to get angry, and I'm not going to throw things, and I'm not going to get on social media and make a fool of myself by saying all kinds of stupid things that are unbecoming of a Christian. I'm going to wait. I will wait.

Verse 17.

*<sup>17</sup> "Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls," (ESV)*

People, you know what he's saying? If everything dries up, everything goes away. This is their livelihood, right? This is their livelihood. He says, if it all goes away, verse 18:

*<sup>18</sup> "yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation." (ESV)*

Very similar thing to what we read in the Psalms where the psalmist prays and says, Lord. Restore to me the joy of my salvation. (Psalm 51:12)

Sometimes that's all you got, sometimes that's it. And Habakkuk, who is not even in this time of judgment yet, but he's been made very aware from the Lord that it's coming upon his nation. And so, he begins to recite all of the things that will happen at a time of the Lord's punishment. Such as the fig trees, the vines,

the olive trees, the rest of the fields yielding no food. The flock literally being cut off from the fold, no herd, yet, I will rejoice. I choose, and that's what is really going on here is that, whereas, Habakkuk chose to complain and criticize earlier, he has now met with God and it has changed his perspective, and now he says, I choose to rejoice even in the face of things I don't understand, and I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

And finally, he says:

<sup>19</sup> *“God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. (And he ends it by saying) To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.”* (ESV)

Well, if there's any companion scripture in all of the Bible, that goes along with this study of Habakkuk.

It's got to be Isaiah 55, verse 8 and 9. You know it well, up on the screen:

**(slide)**

### **Isaiah 55:8-9 (ESV)**

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

I get several questions every week from people who just can't figure out God. Who just can't figure out what God is doing. And they want me to explain it to him, and I can't explain it to him. I don't know what God's doing any more than you do. I mean, all I know is what you know and what God has revealed in his word. And so, I even had somebody say to me just, today, what do you think we're going to be doing in Heaven? Or actually, it came out in our Q&A. What do you think we're going to be doing in heaven?

Do you know that God hasn't told us? He didn't say, well, why didn't he say? Yeah, well, if he tried to describe it, it would probably be beyond our ability anyway. The point is he wants us to trust him. He wants us to trust in his character. Because when you know someone's character, it puts you at ease about the things you don't know about what they may be doing or not doing in your life.

If I know somebody really well and I would trust them with my life, and something happened that kind of seemed a little bit off or a little weird, I would say, well, I don't really know what they're up to, but I know them. I know

they're trustworthy and he or she is a godly person, and so you know, I'm going to give him a benefit of the doubt. Well think how you can do that with God. I mean, we do that with human beings. Think of how you can do that with God. How do I know..., etc.? Well, do you know God? You know that?

Do you understand that that's the answer to most of the questions that we have? What's going to happen to such and such? Do you know God? Do you know what he's like? Do you know his character? If you know his character, you're going to come back and say, well, I don't know what he's going to do in that thing, but I do know this, He's good, He's righteous, He's true, He's faithful, He's just.

Like Abraham said to God while he was speaking to him about Sodom and Gomorrah, will not the judge of all the Earth do, right? Yes, the judge of all the earth will do right.

Let's close in prayer.

Lord, we sit in the shadow of your glory and goodness and we are hushed. We put our hand over our mouth. We've spoken in ignorance, we've complained in stupidity, and we've spoken of things that are too wonderful for us to know.

Forgive us Lord, when we look upon the works of your hand, and like Habakkuk, we voice our complaint.

I thank you, Lord, also for the reminder from this book of what it takes to get our perspective changed, and that's to meet with God. I thank you Lord for the example of Habakkuk and this one thing, he took his complaint to you. He didn't take it to his fellow man. He didn't just sit and simmer on it and get, become bitter and angry and turned dark inside. He brought it to you and you met him at the place of his desire and understanding and thirst for knowledge.

But Lord, even when you hold back and you choose not to reveal further details about whatever we are going through or perhaps what someone else is enduring. I pray my father, that we would respond like Habakkuk and say, yet I will wait. I will be patient and I will rejoice in the goodness of God and the joy of my salvation.

Thank you for this word tonight. Thank you for this reminder. Thank you for the little book of Habakkuk and the reminders we've gotten from it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.