

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



H A B A K K U K

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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Habakkuk

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Don't Let an Election Steal Your Song

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 10, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Habakkuk 1–3

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation”.

HABAKKUK 3:17–18

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Introduction

Today, I want to talk to some of you who may be discouraged. If you're like I am, you were disappointed in the way that the election turned out, at least some aspects of this past election. And maybe you voted, and the things you voted for did not transpire in every case. The title of the message today is this, and I want you to pay strict attention...

By the way, before I give you the title, I want you to be finding the Book of Habakkuk. That's right, Habakkuk—it's in there. Now I'll give you a little help—it comes

right after the Book of Nahum, all right? So be finding the Book of Habakkuk. It's toward the end of the Old Testament, and it's very important that you have this book open and in your hand, today. As a matter of fact, if you don't have a Bible, get, scoot over where you can look on with somebody else's Bible, or find a Bible there in the rack in front of you there in the seat, and find the Book of Habakkuk.

Now I'm going to give you the title of the message: "Don't Let an Election Steal your Song." That's the title of the message: "Don't Let an Election Steal your Song." Now books are written for different purposes. Brother Jamie, this book was written to a minister of music. Did you know that? Now go to the last verse in this book. That's Habakkuk chapter 3 and verse 19—and here's how this book ends: "*The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.*" And then, he says, "*To the chief singer...*"—this book is dedicated to the minister of music—"To the chief singer on my stringed instruments" (Habakkuk 3:19). So he's saying, "I want the orchestra to help."

Now they had an orchestra, and they had a minister of music, and the prophet Habakkuk—called a minor prophet but I'll guarantee you the message is not minor—has written a book for the minister of music in a time of national calamity. Now go back to chapter 1, verse 1, and we're going to go through this book. Just keep it open in your hands, because, folks, this is highly significant. This is written in a time of national calamity, when everything that wasn't nailed down was coming loose, and the devil was pulling nails. We live in a day just like this, a day when we have anarchy in the nations, apostasy in the churches and, God help us, apathy in the streets, and we wonder why do people do what they do?

Now Habakkuk was a man who was intensely patriotic. He loved God. He loved God's people. He loved his land. He wanted God's glory. And it seemed like nothing that he wanted worked out. And so he is faced with this question, the same question that we're faced with sometimes. We stain heaven with our prayers, we fast and we pray, and things don't get better. As a matter of fact, they seem to get worse. And so we ask this question: "Why doesn't God answer prayer? Why doesn't God do something? Where is God? Is God so weak He can't do anything?" Or, "Is God so hard-hearted that He doesn't even give a rip? Where is God? Why doesn't God do something?"

Did you know that some folks are losing their faith, not on the problem of science. Their question is not how the world began. They're losing their faith over the problem of history, how the world is ending. They say, "Why doesn't God do something? How can we have all of these problems all over the world?"

Now Habakkuk was frustrated and so he wrote this book by divine inspiration. And if you're frustrated a little bit today by the way things are going in the land, you'll be blessed by this book. I'll guarantee you, if you'll get the message of Habakkuk down in

your heart, it'll do the same thing for you that it's doing for me.

Now this book is a short book. It has three chapters, and it's a very easy book to divide. Chapter 1 deals with the problem that we're talking about. Just for chapter 1, just write down "a perplexing problem," because it starts out with the word *the burden*. Chapter 1 is a burden. Then, chapter 2—not only is there a perplexing problem, but there is a proper perspective. The man of God begins to get things in focus, and so the burden turns to a vision. Look in chapter 2 and verse 3: "*For the vision is yet for an appointed time*" (Habakkuk 2:3). So you go from a burden to a vision. You go from a problem to perspective. And then you get to chapter 3—and notice chapter 3 begins a prayer of Habakkuk. So you go from a perplexing problem to a proper perspective, and you end with a profound praise. Praise never reaches a greater zenith than it does in the third chapter of Habakkuk. So there's a problem, a perspective, and a praise. There is a burden, there is a vision, and there is a prayer. Now folks, I want to tell you something. And listen to me. This applies to me. It applies to you. It applies to us now as never before. This is God's book for today and for this hour.

I. There is a Perplexing Problem

Now let's look, first of all, at the perplexing problem. What was the problem in chapter 1? Well, it was threefold.

A. The Problem of Heaven's Silence

First of all, there was the problem of Heaven's silence. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: "*The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!*"

(Habakkuk 1:1–2). He says, "God, I have been praying, and praying, and praying, and praying. Lord, why is Heaven silent? Lord, why don't You hear my prayer?" And the word cry that is used here is two different words in the Hebrew language. The first word for cry means like "a plea for help." "O God, save us." The second word is a Hebrew word which means, "a shout." He's saying, "God, where are You?"

Have you ever shouted at God? I did one time. One time I shouted not out of disrespect, just out of agony. I was so perplexed, I shouted at God! And I can understand how Habakkuk felt. He says, "O God, where are You?"

B. The Problem of Earth's Sin

Now this is a perplexing problem. It was the problem of Heaven's silence, and it was the problem of earth's sin. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: "*Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous;*

therefore wrong judgment proceedeth” (Habakkuk 1:3–4). Heaven’s silence, and earth’s sin. The condition of Habakkuk’s day was deplorable.

Do you know who was a contemporary of Habakkuk, another prophet who lived at the same time? His name was Jeremiah. And just put these verses down in your Bible: Jeremiah chapter 5, verses 30 and 31. Jeremiah told what the trouble was, and why there was so much sin on earth, and especially among God’s people. Jeremiah chapter 5, verse 30: *“A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means;”—*that is, they were taking bribes, and they were serving only for what they could get out of it—*“and my people love to have it so”* (Jeremiah 5:30–31). The prophets were not preaching the Word of God. The priests were worldly and selfish. And the sad thing about it is the people loved it.

Do you know what has happened in America? The problem is not in the White House. The problem is in the church house. It’s in the church house. We have a generation of preachers today who preach with quote *user-friendly* evangelism, or *seeker-sensitive* services—and I believe in that, when it’s done in the right way. But what we have done is we have just somehow told people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear, and “prophets prophesy falsely,” and the priests serve for gain, and the people love it that way.

There are preachers in America today who are telling young people that sex outside of marriage is good, and fine, and pleasurable. Does that shock you? Friend, I want to tell you, that is happening in the pulpits of America today. There are pastors who are standing up in churches today, and telling you that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle. There are people who are preaching from pulpits today that it is all right to take the lives of little pre-born babies. They’re telling people that! I mean, it’s coming from the pulpit. They prophesy falsely. They serve for greed. And the people love to have it so. This last election was not a referendum on one man’s character. It was a referendum on the character of this nation. That’s what it was about. And the people love to have it so.

Now Jeremiah went on to say, in Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 12: *“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD”* (Jeremiah 8:12). Jeremiah said, “You would think they would be ashamed. Ha, they were not ashamed! They couldn’t even blush!” On the daytime talk shows, there are people who get up on television and talk about their sin, their fornication, their incest, their sodomy. They talk about this. They don’t blush; they boast. Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down main streets. It has a parade, and says, “We’re proud of this.” A generation of *unblushables*—that’s a nation on its last legs!

Now this is what is bothering Habakkuk: Heaven’s silence—“God, how long will I

pray, and You won't hear?"; earth's sin—"O God, don't You know what is happening?"; and then, he says in verse 4—look, as a part of their sin—he says, "And the law is slack." Do you see that? *"Therefore the law is slacked"* (Habakkuk 1:4). The word *slacked* literally means, "paralyzed." You see, we have more judges and more laws on the books than we've ever had, and yet, we have more lawlessness, and more crime, and more filth, than we've ever had. The law is slack; the law has no teeth in it!

C. The Problem of Hell's Success

Now here's a third thing about the problem that he had. Number one—what was it? Heaven's silence. Number two: earth's sin. But number three: Hell's success. It seemed like those who were living high, wide, and handsome were the successful ones. Notice verses 5 and 6: *"Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans"*—now another word for the *Chaldeans* is the *Babylonians*: I raise up the Babylonians—*"which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not their's"* (Habakkuk 1:5–6).

Now when God does speak, He speaks in a strange and mysterious way. He doesn't give Habakkuk, really, an explanation at all. He just says, "Habakkuk, I'm going to do something; but it wouldn't do Me any good to explain it to you, because you couldn't understand it. Habakkuk, you're wondering why I don't do something? Well, let Me tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to raise up the Babylonians. You think it's bad, Habakkuk? It's going to get worse. I am going to raise up a bitter and a hasty nation, and they're going to come in upon My people." And He says, "I am the One who is doing it. I'm the One who's doing it. I'm the One who's going to raise up the ungodly Babylonians, because that's the only thing My people would ever understand. I've tried to be good to you. I've tried to show you love. I've tried to show you mercy. I have called you with lovingkindness, but you would not answer. And now I am going to raise up the Babylonians. And they're going to come in, and they're going to invade the land, and they're going to live in a land that was not theirs. They're going to capture people that don't belong to them."

You say, "Well, Pastor, how does that apply to us today?" Well, folks, I want to tell you something. I believe that the Church is in a Babylonian captivity. I believe that we have been taken captive by the world, the flesh, and the devil. America—I'm talking about Christendom in general—we have been taken captive. And why? God does that, though we don't want Him to do that. God does this in order to sober us up and to bring us back to Him. Did you know Americans can't stand the blessings of God? We don't know how to deal with them. We have been cursed with blessings; God's gonna bless us with cursings. God is going to raise up the Babylonians against us—the world, the

flesh, and the devil.

Now that brings Habakkuk to a great problem. Look, if you will, in verses 12 and 13. He says, “Now wait a minute, Lord.” *“Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die.”* “O Lord, don’t let that happen to us.” *“O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.”* “God, You’ve got it mixed up. You’re blessing the wrong people, and You’re judging the wrong people.” *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”* (Habakkuk 1:12–13). “God,” Habakkuk says, “God, You’re confused. I mean, it’s the Babylonians! They’re the ones! It’s the liquor dealers. It’s the prostitutes! It’s the dope-pushers! It’s the perverts! They’re the ones! God, You’re all mixed up, God. You’re doing it the wrong way, God. You’re letting the wrong people have power.” This was a perplexing problem to Habakkuk. He says, “You’re of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How can You bless somebody, how can You use somebody even to chastise us, when they’re worse than we are?”

Now folks, can you identify with this first chapter? I mean, can’t you identify with this first chapter? That’s exactly where we are. It seems as though Heaven is silent, earth is sinful, and Hell is successful. They just seem to be marching on. They have taken us. They have possessed that which is not theirs. America does not belong to the humanists. America does not belong to the perverts. America does not belong to the baby-killers. It was founded for people of God, but they have invaded the land. There is a Babylonian captivity. And we have cried and prayed, and we have said, “God, why don’t You do something?” And it seems as though Heaven is brass. All right? Now that’s the first chapter.

II. There is a Proper Perspective

Here’s the second chapter. Not only is there a perplexing problem, but there is a proper perspective. And I pray God today that you and I will get that perspective. Now look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 1: *“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved”* (Habakkuk 2:1).

Now he’d been doing too much talking and not enough listening. And I think, many times, we do the same thing. We come to God in prayer, and we say, “Now listen, Lord. Your servant is speaking,” rather than saying, “Speak, Lord. Your servant hears.” And so Habakkuk said, “I’m just going to get up in a watchtower. I’m going to sit down. I’m going to be quiet. I am going to listen and hear what God says to me.”

May I suggest to you that’s what every child of God needs to do in these desperate

days: get quiet and get centered on God, and listen to what God has to say. Do you have a quiet place where you can get alone with God? Do you spend time, not telling God what to do, not asking God for what you need, but just simply learning to listen to God? You'll get a proper perspective. You'll get a vision. And let me show you what the vision was, now.

A. The Reliability of the Scriptures

I told you what the problem was. Now let me tell you what the perspective is. God showed this man three things. He showed him, first of all, the reliability of the Scriptures. Look, if you will now, in verse 2: *“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision.”* Now he wrote it, and you're studying it right now. *“Write the book of Habakkuk!”* God said to this man, *“All right now, you write it down. I'm gonna tell you what to write. You write down this book.”* And now folks, we have it, black print, white paper, leather-bound, in our hands today, what God said to this patriot so long ago in a time of moral declension. Write the vision—*“and make it plain upon tables”*—that is, upon tablets—*“that he may run that readeth it”* (Habakkuk 2:2).

Now some people say this means: *“Write it in big letters, so you can read it when you run past it.”* That's not what that means! It means, *“don't run till you read.”* You know—listen: *“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel”* (Romans 10:15) that are sent. We have people today who are running, but they don't have the message. He said, *“Write it. Make it plain, so that the man who reads it may then run with that message as a courier, as an announcer, as a herald of what I have said.”*

Now look at it. He said, *“Write it down, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.”* Now watch this: *“For the vision”*—that is, the book of Habakkuk—*“is yet for an appointed time,”*—and, I think folks, it's for our time—*“but at the end”*—and I believe we're living at the end time—*“it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry”* (Habakkuk 2:3).

You write down this, folks: the reliability of the Scripture. God is making some promises, and you'd better get a bulldog grip upon them. F. B. Meyer said—and to another generation—and I quote, *“If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves with sackcloth; the sun, the moon and the stars would reel from their courses; the universe would rock, and a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation the awful message that God can lie.”* But God cannot lie. So the first thing that God showed this man, that he might get a proper perspective, is the reliability of the Scriptures. And just put down the word F-A-C-T—*fact!* God's Word is true.

B. The Resources of the Saints

Now here's the second thing this man saw when he got a proper perspective: not only the reliability of the scriptures, but the resources of the saints. Look, if you will now, in

verse 4. This is chapter 2, verse 4: *“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him:”—*that is the wicked man, he’s so rotten, full of pride, his soul is leaning, however; it’s not upright. But now here it is—*“but the just shall live by his faith”* (Habakkuk 2:4). The reliability of the scriptures, that’s fact. The resource of the saint, that’s faith. That’s faith.

Now what you have to do is to put your faith in God’s facts, and that’s the way you’re going to live in this day and this age. Why? Because faith is that quality that keeps us going in dark days. Faith sees beyond the physical to the spiritual. Faith sees beyond the present to the future. Faith sees beyond the temporary to the eternal. Faith does not judge by the appearances of the hour. Don’t you lose your faith. Listen to your pastor. Faith cannot fail. Sin cannot win. And faith is the only message that will see us through, and it’s the only force that can change anything. Let me say that again. Faith is the only message that will see us through. It’s the only force that can change anything.

Did you know the Apostle Paul quotes the man Habakkuk? The Apostle Paul, in Romans chapter 1, quotes Habakkuk. He takes a verse, and he uses it. But let me show you the context in which he quotes this verse. Romans 1, beginning in verse 24. Now listen to it. Romans 1, and you can almost pick up the newspaper. I’ve already read the newspaper today, but you can pick up today’s newspaper, and any newspaper, and find out that Romans 1, verses 24 through 32, is a commentary. Listen to it. God speaks of the people that were living in Rome, and He says, *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator...”*—you know the name for that? Humanism. And who is *“the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections...”*—now *vile affections*, that’s God word for “sexual perversion and homosexuality”—*“God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly,”*—now listen to this—*“and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.”* Now people have been looking for a cure for AIDS. God gives us a cure for AIDS right in the Word of God, and that is to abstain from those things that bring such a *recompence* in one’s body. *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the*

judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:24–32).

That’s where we get our entertainment from this list of things. That’s what’s on television every night. Not only do we do these things; we have pleasure in those that do them. Every issue in modern society that is being argued today is listed in these verses.

Now but before Paul ever gave the diagnosis, he gives the remedy. Now I was reading there, beginning in verse 24; but, if you back up to verse 15—Romans 1, verse 15—notice what Paul said he was going to do about all that. See, he says, in verse 15, *“So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it”—the gospel—“is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1:15–16). Now listen to verse 17: *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith”* (Romans 1:17). *“As it is written”*—he’s talking about Habakkuk. What did Paul say that he was going to do in this situation? Paul said, “I’m going to Rome, and I’m going to preach the gospel to Rome, and it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that will honeycomb and undermine the Roman Empire. It’s the gospel.”

Listen to me, folks. Listen to your pastor. Only the gospel—only faith—will enable you to endure, and the gospel applied in faith is the only thing that can change things. If we want a better land, we have to have better lives. And the only thing that can make our lives better is the gospel. Government cannot make us better. Government cannot make us better, only the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so here’s Habakkuk. He’s saying, “O God, why don’t You do something?” God says, “I’m doing something, Habakkuk.” But He said, “Now you come up here and sit down and get quiet, and I want you to see something. Number one: I want you to see the reliability of the Scriptures—it cannot fail. Number two: I want you to see the resource of the saint—It is faith, and you will live by faith.” And folks, if you don’t have faith in these days, you’re going to go down.

C. The Retribution of the Sinner

And then, not only did He show them that, but He showed them a third thing, and that is the retribution of the sinner. Do you think that God has gone soft on sin? Do you think that God does not know what is happening? Look, if you will, here in verses 5 and 6: *“Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine,”*—he’s talking about the sinner now—*“he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people.”* He’s talking about the Babylonians now. They can’t be satisfied. They want

more and more and more. Verse 6: *“Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!”* (Habakkuk 2:5–6). He just covers himself. He’s living in camouflage, but God says this—God says, “I understand what this sinner’s like.” And He mentions here in this chapter, *woe*. He uses the word *woe* five times—W-O-E, not the *whoa* that means for a horse to stop, but “look out, it is coming.” And in these five *woes*, He categorizes three kinds of sin that America’s guilty of. You wanna hear, know what they were?

1. Material Corruption

First of all, material corruption—material corruption. They wanted more and more. Verses 5 and 6—look at it again: *“He transgresseth by wine; he is proud; he keepeth neither at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied”* (Habakkuk 2:5).

Americans *have “In God we trust” on our money, but “me first” in our hearts*. Do you know that one of the reasons that we can’t get anybody to stop killing innocent babies is that Americans are more interested in their pocketbooks than they are the lives of these little children? And a man who was a very clever man said, “I know what Americans want. I know what Americans will vote for—it’s the economy.” And you’re stupid if you don’t understand that. And that’s what people—they say, “Well, if I’ve got money in my pocketbook, if I’m doing fine...” You see, Americans say, “In God we trust,” but our creed is greed, and our god is gold, and our motto is, “Get all you can, and can all you get; sit on the lid, and poison the rest.”

We wonder why America has done what she’s done. Materialism has become the god of the land. And the gamblers today are saying, “We need more gambling in America.” America needs more gambling like a duck needs a bathing suit. It’s based on greed! It’s trying to get what belongs to somebody in your hands without them receiving anything from it. All true business is *win-win*. All gambling is *win-lose*.

I’ll tell you something that makes me—well, I don’t wanna use the right word, but if I had a barf bag you’d understand what I’m talking about. When I pick up our *Commercial Appeal*, and they have the unmitigated audacity to put a handful of people in there, and say, “These are winners!” Good night! It’d take twenty-five newspapers in small print to print the losers. Few people are winners! Why don’t they show the losers? And for every winner there is a loser; and when that man wins something, he got something that belonged to that other man. Don’t you understand, folks, that God says, “I understand this material corruption”?

2. Moral Corruption

And then, the next category is moral corruption. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verses 15 through 17: *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him,*

and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!” And by the way, drunkenness and nakedness go hand in hand. *“Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD’s right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory”* (Habakkuk 2:15–16).

Folks, the liquor people now are getting ready. The liquor people are getting ready now to advertise on television. They’re like vultures. They realize now that the moral condition in America has gotten so low, and the will has gotten so weak, that now they can begin to take their product—which is brewed with tears, thickened with blood, and flavored with death—and tell your boys and girls that they ought to drink it, and tell you that you’ll be a man of distinction, if you drink it. But the Bible says here—and here is God’s Word—that the curse of God is upon that industry. Verse 15: *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makes him [drunk]”* (Habakkuk 2:15).

3. Spiritual Corruption

Material corruption, moral corruption, and then spiritual corruption. Look in verses 18 and 19: *“What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it”* (Habakkuk 2:18–19). Now what’s that? That’s spiritual corruption.

You have got material corruption, you’ve got moral corruption, and spiritual corruption. There was idolatry in the land. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, at least we don’t have idolatry in America.” Who are you kidding? America is full of idolatry. Do you know—listen—we are worshiping things, we’re worshiping the earth. We have gone from Father God to Mother Earth. We have gone from a red gospel to a green gospel. Don’t you realize that? Don’t you realize the great sin today is not to sin against Almighty God, but to sin against a spotted owl, or an eagle, or a snail darter? I’m in favor of taking care of these things. That’s not even the point. I’m saying that we love the creature more than the Creator.

Well, I know it’s time to quit. Just give me four more minutes, because I didn’t get to the third chapter. One good thing about preaching at 9:30, I can always run this back in the shop, and come out again at 11. I’ve just got too much to say, today. But folks, listen. Just give me about four more minutes, and don’t get antsy, okay?

D. The Reign of the Saints

There was a perplexing problem. There was a proper perspective. And God said, “All right, I want you to see the reliability of the Scriptures. I want you to see the resources

of the saints. I want you to see the retribution of the sinner. And I want you to see the reign of the Savior.”

Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (Habakkuk 2:14). Do you believe that? I hope you do. Do you believe that Jesus taught us to pray: *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). Folks, it is not over yet. Believe it! God is going to put His Son upon His holy hill of Zion, and *“the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”* And

*Jesus shall reign where e’re the sun
doth His successive journeys run;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Look, if you will, in verse 20: *“But the LORD is in his holy temple”* (Habakkuk 2:20). Habakkuk was saying, “God, where are You?” God said, “I’m right up here, Habakkuk. I’m in My holy temple. There’s no panic. The Holy Trinity is not meeting in emergency session. I know exactly, precisely, what I am doing, and you had better understand this. Listen to the reliability of the Scriptures. Listen to the resources of the saints. Listen to the retribution of the sinner. Listen to the reign of the Savior. I am in control!” And you’d better remember that.

III. There is a Profound Praise

Now here’s the final thing, and very quickly—the last chapter—a profound praise. Now what does He tell him to do? Well, in verses 1 through 6, He says, “Remember My greatness.” I wish I had time to talk about the greatness of God that He talks about there; but He says, “Remember My greatness.” And then, in verses 17 and 18, He says, “Rejoice in My goodness.” Here’s where it reaches its zenith: *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation”* (Habakkuk 3:17–18). Remember God’s greatness. Rejoice in God’s goodness.

Folks, if you’re saved, if you know the Lord, it doesn’t matter if gasoline goes to three dollars a gallon. If you know the Lord, it doesn’t matter if Wall Street hits the bottom. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, it doesn’t matter if they take away your fine house. The Bible says, “You can rejoice in the Lord your God!” Remember God’s greatness. Rejoice in God’s goodness. And rely on God’s grace.

Now look in verse 19. Here’s the way it ends, and here’s the way you ought to end with it: “The Lord is my strength. He will make my feet like hinds’ feet”—that’s the young

gazelle—“He will make me to walk upon my high places” (Habakkuk 3:19).

Conclusion

Habakkuk began this book by asking, “Why? Why, Lord? Why?” God never did answer why. He just said, “I’m gonna reveal who: Me. I am your strength. I am your strength! I will make you like a sure-footed gazelle, and you can live on your high places.” And then, when Habakkuk wrote that book, He said, “It’s for an appointed time.” I believe it was for today. And then, he said: “Tell the minister of music not to stop singing.” Don’t let an election steal your song! Keep on singing! Keep on praising! Keep on believing! Keep on loving! Our God reigns! And *“The just will live by his faith”* (Habakkuk 2:4). And you better put your faith in Jesus. Would you bow your heads in prayer?

O God, I pray today that many in this place will say yes to Jesus, believe on Him, and be saved. And if you want to be saved, would you pray a prayer like this: “O God, I need You. I want You. Jesus, I believe You died for my sins. You paid for my sins with Your blood. Thank You for doing that, Jesus. Thank You for taking my place. Thank You for dying for me. I now turn from my sin, and I turn to You, Jesus. I open my heart now, and I receive You now as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Come in now, Jesus. Come in now.” Ask Him that. “Come in now, Lord Jesus, into my heart, into my life. Save me. Thank You, Jesus. Help me now; give me the courage to confess You as my Lord and Savior. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.”

Giving Thanks in Dark Days

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 17, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Habakkuk 1–3

“Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”

HABAKKUK 1:4

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Introduction

As I told the television audience, I want to tell you now, to be finding the Book of Habakkuk—a small book with three chapters—but I think, perhaps, the most pertinent book in the entire Bible for the day and age in which we live. We're living in a day in which everything that is not nailed down is coming loose. These are fearful days in many ways. There is apostasy in the Church, anarchy in the world, and, alas, alas, apathy in the pew. We just go from day to day.

Well, what's going to happen? We're just a few weeks away from a brand new millennium, and everybody is talking about a problem called Y2K. And many are afraid that the entire system of computers is going to collapse because of a glitch that was

built in—and nobody noticed—that will kick in as the new millennium kicks in. And some of the “experts” are predicting things like this: that the utilities will fail and will be shut down for months, and, as a result, the transportation will be completely paralyzed, and, as a result of that, food and water will be in short shrift, and perhaps unavailable for many. And then, the bank system will fail, and bank accounts will be wiped out, because records will be lost. Then, as a result of that, crime will become pandemic, and our streets will become jungles of terror, and there will be rioting in the streets. And then, some have predicted, as a result of that, that money will lose its value—it’ll have no meaning—and that people will begin to barter, and to trade, and others to rob, and hospitals will be unable to accommodate the sick and the wounded, and so forth. “Pastor Rogers, do you believe all that?” No, I really don’t. But I don’t know it’s not so. I don’t know what’s going to happen. You don’t know what’s going to happen. Every now and then, I’ll read where some calamity howler will tell us that the sky is falling, and then I’ll read where somebody says don’t worry about it at all; and all of these are supposed to be experts.

Well, what do we do in uncertain times, when it looks like we’re looking, sometimes, into the end of a muzzle of a loaded cannon? Well, we have to understand that our faith is not based upon what happens to some computer and some glitch. We’re up above that, folks. That’s what the Book of Habakkuk is all about. You see, the question that is being asked today was a question that was asked many years ago. And the question is: In all of this trouble, where is God? And in all of the crime, and all of the disease, and all of the hatred, and all of the murder, and all of the pillage, and all of the rape, and all of the perversion, where is God? Has God lost control, or is it that God just doesn’t even care? And very frankly, this is a problem that is causing many people to stumble. You know, the problem is not, in the minds of many, the problem of science—from whence did the world come? It’s the problem of history—to where the world is going; not how it began, but how it is ending.

People say, “I can’t understand history.” Now Habakkuk faced the same problem. This little book has three chapters, and we’re going to look just a little bit at all three chapters today. Chapter number one is “A Perplexing Problem.” He just looked around and he said, “God, where are You? How are You letting all of this happen?” Chapter two is “A Proper Perspective.” Habakkuk got away and he looked back, and God spoke to him and God gave him a vision. God didn’t give him an explanation, but God spoke to him and he had a proper perspective. And then, chapter three ends with “A Profound Praise.” He began just to praise God, not because the circumstances have been removed, but in the circumstances, in a dark, dark, dark day, he is giving God praise. *Peace is not the subtraction of problems from life; it is the addition of power to meet those problems.* And that’s what Habakkuk found, and that’s what you are going to find

today.

Now look in chapter 2 and verse 4—chapter 2 and verse 4—because here’s the theme of the book. You find a verse there: *“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him:”*—he’s talking about the sinner now; he’s high and mighty, but he’s leaning, he’s about to fall. “The soul that is lifted up is not upright”; he’s about ready to take a fall. But then, God speaks to all of us, and He says—*“but the just”*—the *just*, that word literally means “the upright”—*“shall live by his faith”* (Habakkuk 2:4).

Now don’t just miss that verse, and don’t gloss over it, because that verse is so important it is repeated three times in the New Testament. You’ll find it in the Book of Romans; you’ll find it in the Book of Galatians; you’ll find it in the Book of Hebrews. Three times: *“The just shall live by faith.”* And that’s what I want you to see today, because, folks, you’re going to need this scripture. As I said, rather than to fold up and give up, we can look up and stand up. And we’re going to learn three things about faith and giving thanks in dark days. And I’m going to give them to you on the screen, and I want God not only to put them on the screen, but I want God to etch them upon your heart.

I. Faith Doesn’t Live by Explanations, but by Promises

Number one: Faith doesn’t live by explanation, but by promises. Faith does not live by explanations, but by promises. Now go back to chapter , and let’s look here in chapter 1 for a moment, and find the problems that Habakkuk had. He had some real problems.

A. The Problem of Heaven’s Silence

Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: *“The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!”* (Habakkuk 1:1–2). It is not that Habakkuk had not been praying; he had been praying. And it’s not that the people of America have not been praying. This church has had days of fasting and prayer, and I’ve met with people, Christian leaders from across America—set aside days to fast and to pray and to seek God. And things don’t seem to be getting better; things seem to be getting worse.

And Habakkuk says, “O God, how long am I going to cry unto You and you don’t hear?” You don’t answer my prayer. Actually, there are two words for *cry* there in those verses. The first word is a word for *cry* that is used like a cry for help, somebody who’s sinking. Help me! That’s the first word. He’s crying out for help. But then, the second word is a word that means a shout, almost a scream. He’s shouting at God. He’s saying, “God, where are You?”

Have you ever shouted at God? I did once, not out of irreverence, but at a time of such perplexity. Driving along in my car, with a broken heart, I shouted at God. I said,

“God, where are you? Why, O God, don’t you do something?” Maybe you’ve been there. There was the problem of Heaven’s silence. One country man—one boy from the country—said, “Things are really bad. If something doesn’t happen soon, something is sure going to happen.” And I think many of us can feel that way. And so he had the problem of Heaven’s silence.

B. The Problem of Earth’s Sin

But then, look in verses 3 and 4. Not only Heaven’s silence, but Earth’s sinfulness: *“Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked,”*—and the word slacked literally means “paralyzed”—*“and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth”* (Habakkuk 1:3–4). The moral condition of Habakkuk’s day was deplorable. They’d hit the bottom.

Jeremiah, the prophet, was a contemporary of Habakkuk, and here’s what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah chapter 5, verses 30 and 31: *“A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;”—*listen to this—*“the prophets prophesy falsely,”*—that is, those who were supposed to be speaking for God were telling lies—*“and the priests bear rule by their means;”—*that is, they were lording it over God’s people—*“and my people love to have it so:”—*it would be bad enough if it were happening and the people rose up against it, but they love it—*“and what will ye do in the end thereof?”* (Jeremiah 5:30–31).

Do you know what the problem is in America today? We’ve lost our moral consensus. We literally have clergymen today telling us that sex outside of marriage is both permissible and pleasurable, that sodomy is an alternative lifestyle, it’s all right. They look upon people like myself, and like some of you, and they call us bigots. They call us fundamentalists. They call us literalists. They call us old-fashioned, because we will not go along. The Bible says that, *“the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so”* (Jeremiah 5:31). And then, Jeremiah went on to say, in Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 12, *“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush”* (Jeremiah 8:12).

Now we’ve come to that place today, ladies and gentlemen, where people don’t even blush. As a matter of fact, they get on television shows, and they talk about things that are ungodly, unseemly, unspeakably filthy; and, as Dr. Vance Havner said, “Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down main streets.” A generation of unblushables. That’s what happened in Habakkuk’s time. And he said, in verse 4, that *“the law is slacked”* (Habakkuk 1:4). That means it’s paralyzed. Never have there been more lawyers, more judges, more courtrooms, in history, and yet, less justice. And we

have more lawlessness than ever before.

C. **The Problem of Hell's Success**

Well, first of all, Heaven's silence; secondly, Earth's sin; thirdly, Hell's success. Look in verses 5 and 6: *"Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans,"*—that's just another word for the Babylonians—*"that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not their's"* (Habakkuk 1:5–6). Now listen. He says, "Not only have I cried, and, God, You didn't hear me; and, not only is there wickedness and violence and quarreling; but now, it gets worse. These Babylonians, they don't know You; they don't love You; they are wicked, they are cruel, they're gross, and they're going to come against God's people, and they're going to conquer the land. They are going to be successful. God's people will be in retreat." You see, he's saying, "God, why don't You speak?" And when God finally does speak, what He said seems worse than His silence. He says, "You think it's bad now; it's going to get worse."

Folks, this is perplexing to Habakkuk, because Habakkuk can't understand it. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days"*—God is speaking—*"which ye will not believe, though it be told you"* (Habakkuk 1:5). God said, "What good would it do for me to tell you what I'm going to do? You wouldn't believe it. You couldn't understand it." Now folks, all of this is under the heading—are you listening?—we, as God's children—listen—we do not live by explanations, but by promises. Faith does not live by explanations. God says, "If I told you, you wouldn't believe it."

Now if you're wanting God to explain everything to you, forget it. God is not going to explain everything to you. Number one: you couldn't understand it, if He did explain it to you. Jesus said, in the Gospels, "I have many things to tell you, but you're not able to bear them" (John 16:12). God says, in Isaiah: "My thoughts are as high above your thoughts as the Heavens are above the earth." (Isaiah 55:9). No more than I could explain to an ant thermodynamics could God explain His marvelous, wonderful ways. Romans chapter 11, verses 33 and 34: *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"* Would you put that in your margin? His ways are past finding out. *"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"* (Romans 11:33–34). He won't go to you for advice. Therefore, faith does not live by explanations, but by promises. If you want God to explain everything to you, forget it. Number one: you couldn't understand it. Number two: God's not going to limit Himself to what you could understand.

I had oatmeal this morning for breakfast, and Joyce put some milk on it for me. I couldn't have that if I'd needed understanding. How can a brown cow eat green grass and give white milk that churns yellow butter? I don't understand that. You don't understand that. Folks, even the simplest things we don't understand. We don't live by explanations.

Jesus said, *"I have many things to tell you, but you are not able to bear them"* (John 16:12). And if God did explain it to us, and we did understand it, we'd say, "Now Lord, I want to tell You there's a better way. You could have done it—now, that's not the best way, Lord." *"Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"* (Romans 11:34). Folks, just because it doesn't make sense to you doesn't mean it doesn't make sense. And just because it doesn't make sense to you now doesn't mean that it will not make sense later on.

But Habakkuk is stunned when he gets the answer, because here's what God says. He's saying, "God, how long am I going to see all this violence—how much, all of this sin, all of this perversion?" And God says, in verses 11, 12, and 13: "Listen. It's going to get worse; it's going to get worse. I'm going to raise up a bitter and a hasty nation, and they are going to come against you" (Habakkuk 1:6). And Habakkuk says, "Lord, how can You do this—how can You do this? How can You, God, let the Babylonians come against us, Your chosen people? Lord, You are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. You are a righteous God. How can You do this? It doesn't make sense."

Look, if you will, in verse 13: *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that..."*—watch this—*"that is more righteous than he?"* (Habakkuk 1:13). Old Habakkuk thought God graded on the curve. That's what America—listen, let me tell you what Americans think. Americans say, "Well, hey, look, we are bad; but we're not as bad as they are. Therefore, God's on our side." Hmm. We Republicans are bad, but we're not like those old Democrats. We Baptists—but we're not like those old *ta-da ta-da ta-da ta-da*. We think, you know, that God just somehow grades on the curve.

He said, "God, how can You do this? Lord, You are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How can You let the Babylonians come against us? How can you do that?" "Well," God said, "I told you, you wouldn't believe it if I told you—you wouldn't believe it." Put it down big. Put it down plain. Put it down straight. The just will live by his faith; but faith does not live by explanations, but by promises. You'd better get some promises, and I mean, get a bulldog grip on those promises.

II. Faith Doesn't Live by Appearance, but by Providence

Now let's go to the second point. First point: Faith does not live by explanations, but by

promises. Number two: Faith does not live by appearances, but by providence. Now if you get your faith from appearances, you're going to be riding a roller coaster all of the time. Now look in chapter 2, and see what Habakkuk did, the same thing you need to do in these desperate days: *"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved"* (Habakkuk 2:1).

Now what Habakkuk said was this: "I'm going to stop shouting at God, and I'm going to get quiet, and I'm going to begin to listen to God." Habakkuk had a place where he could get alone with God. He had some little prayer tower. He got up in that prayer tower, and said, "I'm going to shut up, and I'm going to start listening." And when he did, that's when his sighing turned to seeing, and he saw there the providence of God. In spite of all of the appearances, in spite of all that he could see with his eyes, he saw now by the eye of faith the providence of God—what God, in providence, has promised and provided.

A. The Reliability of the Scripture

The first thing he saw—and I want you to get this—was the reliability of Scripture, the reliability of Scripture. Look, in verses 2 and 3: *"And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables,"*—that is, upon tablets—*"that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry"* (Habakkuk 2:2–3). He says, "Habakkuk, now that you've quit shouting at Me, now that you've begun to listen to Me, get out your pen. I want you to write a book. We'll name it after you. We'll call it the Book of Habakkuk. And I want you to write it for times to come. There will be some folks down there in Memphis, Tennessee who will need this. Write it so that he that readeth may run." We have a problem, many times; we have, today, people who are running without reading. They don't know what they're talking about. They have not gotten into the Word of God. And God is saying, "Habakkuk, you write a book, because generations to come are going to need what you say."

That's what He says in verse 3. If there were ever a day, a time, when we need to hear a clear word from God, this is the day; this is the hour. The Word of God is of supreme importance, the Word of God is paramount; but, we have a generation today that's moved by subjective personal experience—an emotional encounter with their inner self, rather than a sure word from God. *There used to be a time when preachers would stand in the pulpit and say, "The Bible says." Then, they started saying, "The church says." Now they just sort of scratch their head, and say, "Well, it seems to me."* People are not interested in that; at least, they shouldn't be. They need to have a sure word of God. And we're not to run until we read.

B. The Resource of the Saints

And so the very first thing He's showing him now, provided by God's providence, is the reliability of Scripture, and then, the resource of the saints. Look again, in verse 4. It's the verse that we started with—he says here, in verse 4: *“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him:”*—whether he be an Israelite or a Babylonian—*“but the just shall live by his faith”* (Habakkuk 2:4). And that's the only way that you're going to make it. Your resource is faith. It is faith that looks beyond the physical to the spiritual. It is faith that looks beyond the present to the future. It is faith that looks beyond the temporary to the eternal. Faith can't fail; sin can't win. And faith is the only thing that is going to change America today. We live by faith.

You know, I said that this verse was quoted—verse 4 was quoted; chapter 2, verse 4, is quoted—three times in the New Testament. One of the most significant times is when Paul quotes it in the Book of Romans, in chapter 1. And I want you to see the context in which Paul quoted this, because the context in Romans chapter 1 is so very important. Paul is looking to a nation at the last rung on the ladder down, and he says, in Romans chapter 1, beginning in verse 24, speaking of these sinful people: *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator,”*—Mother Earth rather than Father God—*“who is blessed for ever... For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections...”*—now, listen to this carefully—*“vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.”* That means which is fitting. *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”* (Romans 1:24–32).

This becomes the theme of our entertainment. Every issue being argued today is addressed in the verses I just read to you. But Paul, before he gave these verses—before he gave these verses—gave the remedy; and, it's in Romans 1, verses 15 through 17. I want you to listen to it: *“So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel”*—I love that. Do you know what I want to be known as? A gospel preacher—“I

am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:”—now, watch this—“as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:15–17).

Paul said, “Let me tell you what Habakkuk said—let me tell you what Habakkuk said: ‘The just shall live by faith.’” What is our resource? There’s the reliability of the Scripture. There’s the resource of the saints, which is faith. And then, he showed Habakkuk something else. Not only—and by the way, let me say *the most powerful force on earth is faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The government can’t make us good; only Jesus can do that. And changed lives are the only hope for America, and the gospel is the only thing that can change lives in America.*

C. The Retribution of the Sinner

So what is the providence that he has? There’s the reliability of the Scriptures—truth; and there’s the resource of the saint—faith; and, there’s the retribution of the sinner. Look, in chapter 2 and verse 5. Look at it. He begins to talk about the judgment that’s going to come: “*Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say...*” (Habakkuk 2:5–6).

Now get this in context. Habakkuk is saying, “God, how can You let these ungodly people do what they’re doing?” God says, “I know what I’m doing. There’s coming a judgment,” and He mentions the word woe—w-o-e—five times. Now if you’ve got your Bibles open, follow along. Look, in verse 6, the middle of that verse: “*Woe to him that [getteth] that which is not his!*” (Habakkuk 2:6). Look, in verse 9: “*Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness*” (Habakkuk 2:9). Look, in verse 12: “*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood*” (Habakkuk 2:12). Look, in verse 15: “*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him [drunk]*” (Habakkuk 2:15). Look, in verse 19: “*Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach*” (Habakkuk 2:19). Woe, woe, woe, woe, woe. He’s talking about the calamity that’s going to come. “Don’t think for any moment, Habakkuk, that I am soft on sin. I know what I’m doing.” The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine.

1. Material Corruption

He thunders out against material corruption. He says in verse 6: “*Woe unto him that getteth that which is not his*” (Habakkuk 2:6)—people who are getting that which doesn’t

really belong to them. You know, that's what's wrong with gambling. Everybody says, "What's wrong with gambling?" Here's a verse that tells you what's wrong with gambling: "Woe unto him that getteth that which is not his" (Habakkuk 2:6). You see, when you gamble, you get what belongs to somebody else into your possession without giving him anything for it. We have these business people here with us today, and I'm glad that we do. I think it is a very honorable business. All true business is *win-win*. I give you the service, you give me the money; I give you the widget, you give me the dollar, whatever it is. I win; you win. All bad business is *win-lose*. In gambling, you cannot have winners without having losers. I'm glad that Alabama turned down the lottery. There are those who want us to have a lottery in Tennessee. Tennessee needs a lottery like a duck needs a bathing suit. "Woe unto him that increaseth that which is not his" (Habakkuk 2:6).

2. Moral Corruption

He speaks of material corruption. He speaks of moral corruption. Look, in chapter 2 and verse 12: "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!" (Habakkuk 2:12). Do you know what some of the politicians are running on? Do you know their platform? Pro-choice. Elect me—I'm pro-choice. Do you know what that means? If you elect me, I'll pass laws that make it legal to kill babies. You say, "Well, we've decided not to have this child." No, if a mother's pregnant, there'll be a birth. The only question is, Will it be a live baby or a dead baby? You're going to have a baby. "Woe unto him that buildeth a town by blood" (Habakkuk 2:12). America is soiled, stained with the blood of precious little babies, and God says there is a woe upon it.

And then, look, if you will, in verse 15: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Habakkuk 2:15). God here speaks of the liquor industry, and the curse of God is on it. There are people who say, "Well, you know, I think that liquor is fine. We can get some revenue out of liquor." That's a terrible thing! That's a horrible thing! America, our highways are become slaughter pens, our homes have become hell holes, our—so many people are zombies, walking death, alcoholics, and yet we think that it's a wonderful thing. The liquor industry is brewed with tears; it's thickened with blood; it's flavored with death. And by the way, if this makes you angry, come up and apologize to me after the service. I'll forgive you. The curse of God is upon it: "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink....that maketh him drunken" (Habakkuk 2:15). That's what God says.

3. Spiritual Corruption

He speaks here of spiritual corruption. Habakkuk 2, verse 9: "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach" (Habakkuk 2:19). America now is filled with cults and false religions.

D. The Reign of the Savior

But then—we're talking about God's providence—look: there's the reliability of the scripture; there's the resource of the saints; there's the retribution of the sinner; and, there's the reign of the Savior. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 14. I love this: *“For the earth shall be filled...”*—underscore it; mark it—*“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (Habakkuk 2:14). Then, look down, if you will, at verse 20: *“But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him”* (Habakkuk 2:20).

Shut up, Habakkuk! God is God. Habakkuk was saying, “O God, where are You?” God says, “I’ll tell you where I am. I’m in My holy temple, and I’m doing exactly what I have proposed to do, and what I will do; and I have not lost control. And Habakkuk, I want to tell you something: ‘The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters that cover the sea.’ Understand it. I’m in control. There’s no panic in Heaven.”

III. Faith Doesn't Live by Circumstances, but by Praise

Now here's the third thing I want you to see. Faith doesn't live by explanation; it lives by promises. Faith doesn't live by appearance, but by providence. If you can't see God working, it doesn't mean He's not working. Number three: Faith doesn't live by circumstances, but by praise. Faith does not live by circumstances, but by praise.

Now go to chapter 3, and we'll take just a minute. First, he starts out sighing; then, he's seeing; and finally, he ends up singing. And, by the way, Brother Jim, this book was written for the Minister of Music. Read the last verse in the whole book. It's written for the Minister of Music. And he says, “Look, we need to remember God's glory; here's what we praise God for.” Look in verse 1: *“A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.”* That means, “with deep feeling and praise.” *“O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran...”*—that's from the south where the law was given—*“and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah.”* That means, “just think about that.” *“His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise”* (Habakkuk 3:1–3).

A. Remember God's Glory

What do you do in dark days? Number one: remember God's glory. Habakkuk had been asking for a reason, and what he got was a revelation. We don't need to know why; we need to know Who. And then, rejoice in God's goodness. Look, in verses 17 and 18 of this third chapter. Look at it. I love it. I wish I had more time: *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the*

fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.” What if everything goes caflooeey with Y2K? That’s what he’s talking about right here. I’m not saying that it’s going to happen; I’m saying, if it does happen. That’s what he’s saying, “if it happens”: *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet”*—underscore it—*“yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* (Habakkuk 3:17–18).

B. Rejoice in God’s Goodness

Now listen. Remember God’s glory. Rejoice in God’s goodness. What does it take to make you happy? If your bank account is wiped out, what’s it going to do to you? If your goods are confiscated, what’s that going to do to you? If they commandeer this church, and take away this property, what’s it going to do to our church? I’ll tell you. God is in Heaven.

How do you know where you’re getting your joy? Habakkuk said, “I will rejoice in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:18). What are you going to rejoice in? If your joy is rooted in anything that can be touched or tampered with, you have an unstable joy. Where are you getting your joy? You say, “From God.” How do you know you’re not getting your joy from your job? Take away your job, and let’s see if you have your joy. How do you know you’re not getting your joy from your health? Take away your health, and see if you have your joy. How do you know you’re not getting your joy from your church buildings? Take them away, and see if you still have your joy. Friend, we may never know that God is enough until God is all we have; and, when we find out that God is all we have, we’re going to find out like Habakkuk found out, that God is enough. Remember God’s glory. Rejoice in God’s goodness. It may get bad, but God is on His throne. That’s the reason I’m telling you, folks, that we need to learn to praise in dark days. We need to give thanks, as Habakkuk did, in dark days.

C. Rely on God’s Grace

And then, last of all—and I wish we had more time. Rely on God’s grace. Look, in verse 19: *“The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.”* And then, He says, *“To the chief singer on my stringed instruments”* (Habakkuk 3:19). That fits, doesn’t it? Just praise God, just praise God. Here’s a song, here’s a song that we can sing:

*If the fields refuse their harvest,
And the trees no longer bear,
If the flocks forsake the shepherd
And my head be bowed with care.*

*Yet I know His ways are wondrous
With this man made out of dust.
And these lips of clay shall praise Him
Though the world be turned to rust.
If the roses lose their fragrance,
If the birds no longer soar,
If the rivers cease their flowing,
And the bells refuse to ring.
Still I know that God is in Heaven,
And I know that all is well.
So my lips will sing His praises,
And the gospel story tell.
I will praise Him, I will praise Him.
There will be a brighter day.
There will be a bright tomorrow,
For God will never pass away.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN*

Conclusion

Do you know what chapter 1 tells us? Chapter 1 tells us that we don't live by explanations; we live by promises. Do you know what chapter 2 tells us? Friend, we don't live by appearances; we live by providence. Do you know what the third chapter tells us? The third chapter tells us that we're going to praise God. We're going to praise God, no matter what the circumstances are.

That's a great book, and the Bible says that "The just shall live by his faith." If you don't have faith—I'm telling you—if you don't have faith, you've got nothing to hold on to. It's going to get worse; there's going to be chaos and turmoil. I don't know what Y2K is going to bring, but I know this: that the situation in this world today is going to get increasingly clamorous. The Bible makes it exceeding clear, "*In the last days perilous times shall come*" (2 Timothy 3:1). What I want you to do, I want you to know Jesus Christ—not know about Him; I want you to know Him. I want you to be able to say that, "No matter what happens, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation."

Let's bow our heads together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Begin to pray for those around you who may not know the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you're not certain that you're saved, I want you to pray this prayer: "Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. I'm a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Pray that prayer. Pray it. Lord Jesus, save me. I bow my head before You. I

acknowledge You as Lord. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now like a child, once and for all, now and forever, I receive You now—right now—as my Lord and Savior. And Lord Jesus, because You died to save me, I will live for You—not in order to be saved, but because I have been saved—and I'll make it public. I will not be ashamed of You, my Lord and my Savior. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Giving Thanks in Dark Days

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 17, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Habakkuk 1–3

“Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”

HABAKKUK 1:4

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you find the Book of Habakkuk? It’s a little difficult to find—it’s on page 1372 in my Bible, but that may not help you. But find the Book of Habakkuk, and the second chapter, and, in just a moment, we’re going to look at the fourth verse in the second chapter of the Book of Habakkuk. But let me tell you that the Book of Habakkuk is one of the most pertinent books in the Bible for these desperate days in which we live. The theme of our message today, in keeping with Love Offering, is giving thanks, but “Giving Thanks in Dark Days.”

Now it’s easy to praise the Lord when everything is going well. When the sun is shining, we’re happy, our health is good, we’re prosperous, and our family’s around us, then we can say, “Thank you, Lord. You’ve been so good.” But the Bible says we’re to be giving thanks always, for all things. And sometimes that is difficult, and, especially in dark days. And dark days are all around us—and I don’t want to discourage you, but it may get darker.

We’re looking at a situation that the computer experts—I’m putting the word *experts*

in quotation marks—the computer experts are telling us about a situation that may arise when we roll over to a new millennium called the Y2K. If you haven't heard about that yet, you've been asleep for the last year and a half. But they tell us, due to a computer glitch, when these computers that we've come to rely on so much cease to function, many of them—and millions of them—may cease to function. Then, we're going to have the kind of problems that I outline here.

For example, the utilities may be shut down for months—you can't get light, water, gas. Transportation may be paralyzed—the planes, and the trucks, and the trains may not be able to roll from place to place and to give us the goods, and the food, and services that we may want. And then, as a result of that, food and water will become almost unavailable, and there are many people who will be hungry, and will not know where to get food. And then, because of the record systems, the banks may fail. There may be a run on banks, and your account may be wiped out electronically, and they won't be able to retrieve your records, and you won't be able to buy. And then, as a result of that, crime will stalk the streets, and people will barricade themselves behind their doors, and people will begin to barter and trade rather than buying and selling. Hospitals will not be able to take care of all the sick and the wounded, and even the hospitals themselves will not have enough auxiliary power or medicine to take care of the people.

"Pastor Rogers, do you believe all that will happen?" No, I really don't. "Do you know it won't happen?" No, I really don't. I don't know. And you don't know. You don't know how much of it may happen. We simply don't know. But we need to be prepared for whatever may happen. We do know this—we know this—the Bible says, "*In the last days perilous times shall come*" (2 Timothy 3:1). And that word *perilous* is only used twice in the Bible. One time, used about those demoniacs who came to Jesus, out of the tombs, and they were called "*exceeding fierce*" (Matthew 8:28) and that's the same word that is translated "perilous."

Well, Habakkuk was a prophet, and his days were like our days—they were dark days. He looked around, and he saw crime, and violence, and hatred, and debauchery. And he began to ask God to do something about it. And it seemed as though the heavens were brass. And he would cry to God, and God wouldn't hear him. "Where is God? Is God too weak to do anything about it? Or, does God simply not care?" Like so many of us today, we've been praying, and it seems like things are getting worse rather than getting better. And very frankly, this is causing some people to stumble. You know, it's not primarily the problem of science that's causing people to stumble—not how the world began—but the problem of history, how the world is ending. That's what's causing so many people to stumble.

I was in Israel and I talked with the curator of one of the largest museums there. As

a matter of fact, he was my guide, a very intelligent, brilliant man. I asked him, “Do you believe in God?” He said, “No, I don’t believe in God.” I said, “Why don’t you believe in God?” He said, “Because of the Holocaust.” He said, “It’s impossible for me to believe in a God that will allow that to happen.” It’s the problem of history that is causing so many to stumble and say, “Where is God?”

Now that’s what Habakkuk was facing in his day and, very frankly, it’s what we are going to be facing in our day. So I want you to learn how to give thanks—to give thanks in dark days. There are three propositions that come out of this Book of Habakkuk, and I’m going to build these propositions around the three chapters.

Three chapters in this book: Chapter 1 deals with what I would call a perplexing problem. He looked around, and he saw things that perplexed him. Chapter 2 deals with a proper perspective. He finally began to see the situation from God’s point of view. And chapter 3 deals with a profound praise. Here he begins just to praise God, not in the absence of problems, but in the very midst of these problems, because peace is peace that passes understanding. *Peace is not the subtraction of problems from life; it is the addition of power to meet those problems.* So let’s look at the Book of Habakkuk, and admittedly, we’re just going to touch the high points.

I. A Perplexing Problem

But look in chapter 1, for example. Just begin, now, in chapter 1, or let me just say, even before we get there, go to chapter 2 and verse 4, and look at that. Habakkuk is talking about these people who are wicked and it says, “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him” (Habakkuk 2:4). Hmm, now if you see somebody who is up very high and is leaning, you know he’s about to fall. “His soul is lifted up,” but he’s like a man walking a girder on a skyscraper that’s being built, and he’s beginning to lean. You know he’s about to fall. That’s the way he’s describing the wicked. But he says in this verse also, “But the just”—the just—“shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). Now that’s not incidental. As a matter of fact, this one verse is quoted three times in the New Testament—in the book of Romans, in the book of Galatians, in the book of Hebrews. It is such a key verse, “The just shall live by his faith.”

Now keep that in mind, because when these dark days come—and they’re coming—you’re going to need something to hold onto, you’re going to need something to live by—and it’s faith. It’s faith. Now faith is not smoke and mirrors. Faith has spiritual steel and concrete in it, and you need something rock solid. You don’t need to be walking around on Jell-O and eggshells. You don’t need to be blown about by the storms of calamity, and the winds of circumstances, and the floods of distress. You need a sure place to stand. You need something to live by. And I’m telling you, if there were ever a book for this day and this age, it is the Book of Habakkuk that tells us that “The just shall

live by his faith.”

Here are three propositions that I have for you from the Word of God. Number one: concerning faith, faith doesn't live by explanations, but by promises. Now most of us want God to explain things to us, don't we? "God, why did you let this happen? Why did you do it this way?" But faith does not live by explanations, but by promises.

Now let me show you the problem that Habakkuk had, why he wanted God to explain a few things to him. He says, in verses 1 and 2: "*The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention*" (Habakkuk 1:1–3). "God, look at all this. Just look, God, look at the violence, look at the spoiling, look at the strife, look at the contention. God, I have prayed, I've prayed, I've prayed, I've prayed, I have prayed, and you don't hear! How long, Lord, shall I cry unto you?" And by the way, he uses the word *cry* here twice in that one verse, verse 2. The first cry is like a cry for help; if you're sinking, you say, "Help me, save me!" That's the first cry. The second word *cry* is a shout, almost a scream; it'd be like saying, "God! Where are you?"

Have you ever shouted at God? I did one time. So perplexed. Not out of irreverence—a lack of respect—no, but at a time of great anguish. I literally shouted, "God! Why? Where?" That's where Habakkuk was. There was Heaven's silence, and Heaven's silence was compounded by earth's sin. Look at verses 3 and 4: "*Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slackened, and judgment doth never go forth*" (Habakkuk 1:3–4). Read the word *slack*. Do you see it? It literally means *paralyzed*. We have more judges, more courts, more jails, more prisons, than ever before, and yet there is no justice in the land. And Habakkuk's day was like our day.

And by the way, Jeremiah was a contemporary of Habakkuk. Jeremiah said, in Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 12: "*Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush*" (Jeremiah 8:12). Sin today is absolutely arrogant as it stalks through the land; we have a generation of unblushables. It's incredible—is it not incredible what people will get on television, and say and do? Incredible! "*Neither could they blush.*"

The late, great Vance Havner said, "Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down main streets." And Habakkuk says, "God, where are you?" By the way, this is the last stage of any civilization, when that civilization begins to boast of its sin.

Heaven's silence, earth's sin, and Hell's success. It just seemed like the devil was having a heyday. Verses 5 and 6, God says to Habakkuk—"You want to know

something?” *“Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you.”* “You want me to give you an answer? Son, if I were to give you an answer, you wouldn’t believe it. You couldn’t understand it. I’m going to do something”: *“For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans,”*—now, the Chaldeans were the Babylonians, a cruel, fierce, ungodly, pagan nation—*“that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not their’s”* (Habakkuk 1:5–6). “You want me to tell you what’s going to happen, Habakkuk? It’s going to get worse. It’s going to get worse.” He’s looking for relief and release, and he sees Heaven’s silence, earth’s sin, and hell’s success.

“Good night, Lord! What is happening? Where are you? God!” If you’re not careful, you’re going to feel the same way in these days. This Book of Habakkuk is written for you. Now folks, I’m telling you, we do not live by explanations. We want God to explain it to us.

Well, friend, if you and I had to have everything explained that we enjoy, we wouldn’t do anything. I wouldn’t have had milk on my cereal this morning. How can a brown cow that eats green grass get white milk that churns yellow butter? I don’t understand that. I mean, the simplest things you don’t understand. I couldn’t have flown on an airplane last week. I don’t understand all that—what makes that work?

Don’t ask God to explain things to you. Don’t ask God to cram his plan into your puny little mind, because then, God would be limited by your understanding. Jesus said, in John 16, verse 12: “I have many things to tell you, but you’re not able to bear them” (John 16:12). That is, you don’t have the capacity to understand these things.

Thomas Watson said, “Where reason cannot wade, faith must swim.” Must swim. But there are the things we just don’t understand. Don’t get the idea that because it doesn’t make sense to you it doesn’t make sense. God said, “Habakkuk, I’m going to show you a marvel and a wonder.” In verse 5: “and you won’t believe it if I tell you.” Why? Because My ways are above your ways, My thoughts are above your thoughts (Isaiah 55:9).

The Apostle Paul got into this thing of reason. The Apostle Paul finally had to write, and he just threw up his hands in Romans 11. I can see him, just writing, he throws up his hands, and he says, *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?”* (Romans 11:33–34). If God did explain it to you, you’d say, “Now Lord, let me tell you a better way.” Who’s going to counsel God? Who’s going to tell God what to do, or how to do it?

No, here’s Habakkuk. He has a problem. Heaven’s silence, earth’s sin, Hell’s success. And he says, “God, I just don’t understand.” And then, he’s stunned, when he

does get the answer. God says, “I’m going to raise up the Babylonians. They’re going to march through the land. You think it’s bad now, son; it’s going to get worse.” Habakkuk says, “Now wait a minute, Lord.” Look in verse 12: “*Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die.*” See how he’s arguing with God? “*O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment;*”—not us, God, it’s the Babylonians—“*and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.*” They’re the guys that need to get it in the neck. “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them*”—that is, the Babylonians—“*that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked*”—now watch this—“*devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?*” (Habakkuk 1:12–13). “How can you do this, God? Now wait a minute God, I want you to listen to me, God. Now listen. You’re saying you’re going to send the Babylonians over here? Now God we may be bad, but we ain’t like them.”

You see, he had the idea that God grades on a curve, that God sort of grades on the curve. I mean, we do the same thing. We say, “Yeah, I’ll admit America’s a bad nation, but boy, we are not like the Red Chinese.” If you’re a Democrat, you may say, “We’re bad, but we ain’t like those Republicans,” or if you’re Republican, “Well, we’re not like those Democrats.” If you’re a Baptist, “Well, we’re not like them *da-da-da-das*.” “You know, I may be bad; but I’m not like my neighbor.”

We love to lie out in the gutter and stretch ourselves out alongside some hypocrite, and measure ourselves by that hypocrite, and say, “Well, we’re a little longer than he is; so, therefore, we must be all right.” And “God we’re bad, but we’re not as bad as they are.” Very frankly, that is the hope of America. It’s a false hope. But we print “In God We Trust” on our money and have “Me first” in our hearts, and we think that somehow God’s just going to overlook our sin.

Well, what you have to understand is this about faith—and folks, it is so very, very important that we understand this—that *faith doesn’t live by explanations, but by promises*. God’s not going to explain everything to you. If he did explain it to you, you couldn’t understand it, and if you could understand it, you probably wouldn’t agree with it. You’d better get some promises. You’d better get some promises and get a full-blown grip on those promises. That’s what chapter 1 is all about: that faith does not live by explanations, but by promises.

II. A Proper Perspective

Now here’s the second thing I want you to see: faith doesn’t live by appearances, but by providence. You see, you need to see the promises of God and look beyond explanations, and you need to see the providence of God and look beyond appearances, because, if you’ve put your eyes on things as they appear, you’re going to

get awfully confused.

Go to chapter 2—this is chapter 2—Habakkuk says, *“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me,”*—now, boy, that’s, he’s finally coming to some sense now—*“and what I shall answer when I am reproved.”* When people get on to me, and say, “Habakkuk, aren’t you His prophet? Why are these things happening?” He said, “I’ll have an answer.” *“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time,”*—boy, I love that, an appointed time—*“but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”* (Habakkuk 2:1–3).

Now Habakkuk says, “Look, I’ve been shouting at God, I’ve been arguing with God, I’ve been telling God how to do it. I’m going to shut up. I’m going to sit still. I’m going to listen.” Habakkuk had a prayer tower. He got up in his prayer tower. He said, “All right, I’m going to watch. I’m going to listen. I’m going to shut up, God, so you can speak.” *So many of us, when we pray, say, “Listen, Lord, your servant speaks, ”rather than saying, “Speak, Lord, your servant listens. ”*

Do you have a place where you get alone with God? Do you? You ought to. Where you just be quiet—*“Be still, and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10). And when Habakkuk got quiet, he began to see the providence of God—not things as they appear. Things are not as they appear to be. He saw God working providentially in the following ways.

A. **The Reliability of Scripture**

Number one: the reliability of Scripture. Write it down: the reliability of Scripture. Look, if you will, in verse 2: *“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it”* (Habakkuk 2:2). When he said, *“Write the vision,”* he’s saying, “Write the Book of Habakkuk.” This is where he got his commission to write the Book of Habakkuk. He said, “All right now, Habakkuk, write the vision. I’m going to give you a vision. Write it down so he may run that reads.”

What does it mean? We’re in a race. You need to get your instructions, and so you can run. The problem with many preachers is that they run before they read. And many Bible students—so-called Bible students—we’re talking about things we don’t understand, because we’ve not gotten the vision that has been written upon tables—tablets, that is—the recording instruments, so that we can read it.

And notice what it says about reliability of the Scripture in verse 3: *“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it”* (Habakkuk 2:3). What He’s saying is this: “I’m going to give you something, Habakkuk, that people in later years can use. I’m going to give you something those

people in Memphis, Tennessee need; so write it. Make it clear for these people, that they can trust the Word of God.”

Now in these shaky days in which we live—listen to your pastor—you’d better get a grip on the Word of God—you’d better get a grip on the Word of God. What has happened today is we have gone off in subjectivism, and emotional feelings, and ecstasies, and thoughts, and philosophies, rather than standing on the Word of God.

There used to be a time when preachers used to say, “The Bible says…” Then they started saying, “The church says…” And now they just scratch their head and say, “Well, it seems to me.” No, get the reliability of the Scripture. God, in His providence, has given us a word. We don’t have to stumble like a ship at sea without a mast or rudder on a dark and stormy night, and no compass, when the skies can’t be seen. We have a sure word, a word from God.

B. The Resource of the Saint

But not only did He give him the reliability of the Scriptures, but He gave him what I’m going to call the resource of the saint, which is faith. Look in verse 4, the last part of that verse: *“The just shall live by his faith”* (Habakkuk 2:4). Now in these dark days, when you have faith, you look beyond the physical to the spiritual, you look beyond the present to the future, you look beyond the temporary to the eternal; don’t judge things by appearance. Live by faith.

Faith is really the only resource that we’re going to have in these days, and it is so important that you live by faith. The most powerful force on earth is faith. That’s the reason, when the Apostle Paul quoted this verse, you know I quoted it, Romans chapter 1, verse 18. He says, *“So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written,”*—as it is written, as Habakkuk said—*“The just shall live by faith”* (Romans 1:15–17).

We sang *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*; Jim has reminded us. That’s the verse that convicted Martin Luther, caused the Protestant Reformation. Faith in dark times, in the dark ages. Martin Luther read this scripture: *“The just shall live by faith.”* And in these days, in these end times, you need to live by faith. It will transform.

C. The Retribution of the Sinner

Not only did he see the reliability of the Scripture, not only did he see the resource of the saint, but he also saw the retribution of the sinner. Now Habakkuk was afraid that the Chaldeans were going to get away with their sin, that God had gone soft on sin. No, no, no, no!

He lists five woes. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“Woe to him that increaseth that*

which is not his” (Habakkuk 2:6). Now he’s talking about the grasping materialism of that day, when people would get out to cheat, and to gouge, and to take that which is not theirs. This one verse is enough against gambling. People say, “What’s wrong with gambling?” Read it right there: “*Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his.*”

Gambling is an effort to get what belongs to somebody else into your possession, by luck or fate—and by the way, neither one of those should be in the Christian’s vocabulary. Gambling is an economic fraud. It is against all honest business. All honest business is *win-win*. All gambling is based on *win-lose*. You can’t have winners without losers. In legitimate business, everybody wins. In illegitimate business, somebody is cheated, somebody is rooked, somebody is stolen from, and there is *win-lose*. Aren’t you glad that Alabama in a referendum turned down gambling? I’m glad for that. There are those people want to put gambling, the lottery, into Tennessee. Tennessee needs the lottery like a duck needs a bathing suit.

Look, if you will again, in verse 9: “*Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house*” (Habakkuk 2:9). That is, people who are materialistic, people who can’t be satisfied, and “*coveteth an evil covetousness to his house.*”

Look in verse 12: “*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!*” (Habakkuk 2:12). You know what he’s talking about here? Murderous ways, in order to gain power. You say, “Well that doesn’t happen in America.” It is happening in America. There are those politicians that stand up and say, “If you will vote for me, I will see to it that it is legal to kill babies in America.” They call that *pro-choice*, but they never finish the sentence. It is *pro-choice* to kill a baby, that’s what the choice is all about. And “*Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!*” I’m telling you that America’s soil is stained with the blood of little unborn babies, and God says, “Woe—woe to a nation that does that.”

Look in verse 13: “*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also*” (Habakkuk 2:15). The curse of God is on the liquor industry. The curse of God is on it. *Liquor is brewed with tears, flavored with death, thickened with blood.* There’s the judgment of God upon it.

Look in verse 19: “*Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach*” (Habakkuk 2:19). He’s talking about idolatry. You say, “Well, Pastor, we don’t have idols in America.” Of course we do. Our idols—some of them are made of chrome and fiberglass—but now we’re going back to the nature gods. We don’t have Easter celebrations, we have earth days, so we can go out and worship dirt. And we’ve gone from Father God to Mother Earth, and back to the most primal debaucheries of idolatry in America.

D. The Reign of the Savior

Five times he says, “Woe, woe, woe, woe”—one more—“woe!” Why? Because God says, “Look—look at my providence.” There’s the reliability of the Scripture; there’s the resource of faith—I’ve given you a word, you believe it; there’s the retribution of the sinner—I am going to judge. And here’s the sweet part of it. Now watch this—there is the reign of the Savior.

Look in chapter 2 and verse 14. Do you have the *heebie-jeebies* and *headline hysteria*? You want to know how it’s going to end? Go back to chapter 2 and verse 14, and just look at it. Boy, what a great, great, great verse. I love this. This is one of my favorite verses in all the Bible: “*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*” (Habakkuk 2:14). Now that has not yet happened; but it will happen.

Jesus taught us to pray what? “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10). And He made a promise, Brother Mark: “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5). And “*The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*” (Habakkuk 2:14).

The next time you look at the mighty ocean, just remember this passage of scripture.

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth His successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

And then, look down in verse 20: “*But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him*” (Habakkuk 2:20). What’s he saying? Habakkuk is saying, “God, where are you?” God says, “Habakkuk, I’m up here in My holy temple. Just shut up, just shut up.” “*The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.*” God is God, and there’s no panic in Heaven. God is in His holy temple, and this earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters that cover the sea. Folks, faith looks beyond appearances to providence.

III. A Profound Praise

Now here’s the third thing. Faith doesn’t live by circumstances, but by praise. Now if you live by circumstances, you’re going to ride a roller coaster, but if you begin to praise God—even in circumstances—you’re going to find out that your life is going to be transformed. What, how, why did he praise Him? Three reasons.

A. Remember God’s Glory

First of all: for just His sheer glory. Look in chapter 3, verse 1: “*A prayer of Habakkuk*

the prophet upon Shigionoth” (Habakkuk 3:1). Boy, that’s a word we don’t use a lot—*Shigionoth*. What does it mean? It means “with deep feeling and emotion”—powerful praise. “*O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid:*”—God, I didn’t know what was going to happen—“*O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.*” Please, O God, send a revival. “*God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran.*” He’s talking about where the law was given, that means the south; and, he says, “*Selah*”: “just think about this.” “*His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise*” (Habakkuk 3:2–3). When things get dark, and you want to praise, and you need to pray, just think of God’s glory.

Now you see what Habakkuk was saying was, “Lord, give me a reason.” God didn’t give him any reason at all. God gave him a revelation. God just gave him a revelation. Not why, but who. So remember God’s glory.

B. Rejoice in God’s Goodness

Number two: rejoice in God’s goodness. Skip down to verse 17. This is one of the greatest passages in all of the Bible. Look at it: “*Although the fig tree shall not blossom,*”—now just imagine Y2K right here, if it happens; I mean the worst scenario Y2K. Put the worst scenario of Y2K in your mind, and then read verse 17. This will cause you to want to shout and just praise God. “*Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd*”—that is no cattle—“*in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,*”—in the Lord!—“*I will joy in the God of my salvation*” (Habakkuk 3:17–18).

What is Habakkuk saying? You better get a grip on this verse. He is saying, “Look, I don’t know what’s going to happen, but I know this much: that God is on the throne, and my standard of living may change, but not my standard of life.” I want to say that again: Your standard of living may change, but not your standard of life—not if you rejoice in the Lord.

Now we don’t need this world’s goods to make us joyful. Things are not evil in themselves, but they should never be the source of our joy. Our joy has got to come from the Lord. That’s the reason that in everything we can give thanks. It doesn’t mean that everything is good, but it means that God is good and God overrules all things. You know, you may never know that God is enough, unless God is all you have. And finally, when God is all you have, you may wonderfully discover that God is enough. Not only necessary, but God is enough.

I love the song that says:

If the fields refuse the harvest and the trees no longer bear,

*If the flocks forsake their shepherd and my head be bowed with care.
Yet I know His ways are wondrous with this man made out of dust,
and these lips of clay shall praise Him, though the word be turned to rust.
If the roses lost the fragrance, if the birds no longer sing,
If the rivers cease their flowing and the bells refuse to ring.
Still I know that God is in Heaven, and I know that all is well,
so my lips will sing His praises and the gospel story tell.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

I will praise him. There will be a brighter day, there will be a bright tomorrow, for God will never pass away. That's what Habakkuk is saying. You see, praise does not look to circumstances; praise does not look to appearances; praise does not depend upon explanations. It praises God for who He is. And so Habakkuk is no longer asking why. Now he is discovering who.

And notice how it ends. Look in verse 19: *“The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet,”*—that's the sure-footed gazelle he's talking about—*“and he will make me to walk upon mine high places”* (Habakkuk 3:19). If you've been to Israel, as I have, and you've seen the gazelles up on those rocks—they're climbing from rock, to rock, to rock, and they get up there in the blue sky where they can breathe the rarified air. Down beneath them in the valley are all the predators, and the troublemakers; and, that gazelle is up there where no one can reach him, looking into the very face of God. He says—and here's what Habakkuk says: *“The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.”*

And then, you know who this is written to? Look at it—to the minister of music. Jim, this is for you: *“To the chief singer on my stringed instruments”* (Habakkuk 3:19). Here's something that could be played on the harp.

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I think this is a wonderful book. I think that Habakkuk chapter 3, verse 17, is one of the...—it is the paragon, it is the apex of faith. Dark days may come—no, I take it back—dark days *will* come. Pretending is not going to make them go away. I refuse to be an irrational optimist. I refuse to be a morose pessimist. I stand on the Word of God, and I will live by faith. And I hope you will too. Faith doesn't live by explanations, but by promises. Faith doesn't live by appearances, but by providence. Faith doesn't live by circumstances, but by praise. Let the chief singer sing that.

Conclusion

Now Paul says—Paul just picked this up, and he says, “This is the gospel message. You will live by faith, when you believe the gospel of Jesus Christ.” As a teen, I was

convicted of my sin. By God's grace, I heard the gospel, and I put my faith where God had put my sin—on the Lord Jesus. And God saved me, when I was in my teens, and He radically, dramatically, eternally changed my heart and my life. And the only thing good about Adrian is the grace of God in him. And you know, I would never have made it thus far—never, had the God who saved me not kept me. But He has kept me by his grace all of these years.

How to Stay Together When the World Comes Apart

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 26, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Habakkuk 1–3

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

HABAKKUK 3:17–18

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word, please, and find the Book of Habakkuk. I’ll give you about five seconds to do that. I’ll give you a hint: It comes right after the Book of Nahum, so that ought to make it very easy for you to find.

Now we call Habakkuk a minor prophet, I want to say there’s certainly nothing minor about the message of Habakkuk. So I want you to turn to this book, and keep it open there in your hands, because we’re going to be referring to it. As a matter of fact, there are three chapters, and we’re going to look in all three chapters today.

We’re speaking today on this subject: “How to Stay Together while the World Comes

Apart”— “How to Stay Together while the World Comes Apart.” Now let me tell you something, friend: This world is unraveling. This world is coming apart. This world is winding down. The end of all things is at hand, and it’s going to end in calamity. I’m talking about this world system; and we live here, and we’re a part of it.

Now you know, we know that Jesus is coming again—amen? And we know that we’re going up in the rapture—amen? We know that. And we know that, after the rapture of the Church, there’s going to be a period here on earth known as the Great Tribulation. But let me tell you something. Many of us who live in America have the idea that we are God’s darling, and that, because we’re Christians, and also, because we’re Americans, we’re not going to know any real trouble; that we are just going to live our lives with a certain degree of tranquility and peace, and then the rapture is going to come and take us away; and, therefore, we’re not going to know any trouble, any tribulation. That we, as God’s children, are not going through that Great Tribulation which is going to be hell on earth, when Hell has a holiday, and when the Antichrist comes to reign.

But let me tell you something else: The Bible teaches that coming events, many times, cast a shadow ahead of time. What do you mean by that? Well, when Jesus was talking about the Great Tribulation, he mentioned certain terrible things, and he said, “*These things would be the beginnings of sorrows*” (Mark 13:8). That is, these are the birth pangs. And we’re going to go into that period known as the birth pangs, the beginning of sorrows. And even though we will not enter into the Great Tribulation, I want to tell you, the people who are living in this age and in this day may see tribulation like we’ve never, ever seen or known before. I’m talking about national and international.

And then, I want to say also that, many of us, whether we live in a period of tribulation where God comes to judge the world in pestilence and famine and war, we all have our own private tribulations, don’t we? I mean, we all know financial problems. We all know a heartache. We all know sorrow. We all know sickness and trouble and distress. Now if you’re not careful, when trouble comes, and you pray and you ask God to do something about it, and God doesn’t do it, you’re on the threshold of stumbling. Your mind is going to start to work.

You’re sick and you’re hurting, and you say to God, “God, I want you to heal me, in the name of Jesus.” And God may not heal you; and then, your mind’s going to start to work. And the devil’s going to whisper to you, and this is what the devil is going to say to you—he’s going to say, “If there is a God, he doesn’t care about you.” Or, on the other hand, “If there is a God, and He cares about you, He’s not able to do anything about it.” Now you see, he’s going to say, “Even if there is a God, He’s a God that doesn’t care, or, if He does care, He’s too weak to do anything about it.” Well, is that true? You’re

going to be tempted to think that's true. Sometimes, you're going to be in such deep trouble that you're going to cry out and you're going to say, "Where is God? Why doesn't God do something?"

Now it used to be God's people had difficulty believing the Bible—some people—because of what we call the problems of science. That is, they were trying to rationalize, bring together science and the Bible. Well, that's not really the problem with many today. The problem today is not science and the Bible—and by the way, there is no contradiction between true science and the Bible. But with many people today, it is not the problem with science and the Bible—it is the problem of history. Why is the world in such a mess? I mean, if God is God, look at it! Read the newspapers. How can I believe in God, when I see so much war and crime and rape and strife and murder and hunger and pride? Where is God? Is He a God who doesn't care? Or, is He a God who's weak? Or, is there a God at all? Hmm?

Now that's the problem with some people. That's what the Book of Habakkuk answers. So I want you to stay attuned to the Book of Habakkuk and keep it right here in your laps, because you're going to see that even in dark times, God is God. God is in His Heaven. God is on His throne. God has not lost control of this world. God cares about you. God has a plan for you, and you need to learn it today.

I. A Perplexing Problem

Now the book has three major divisions. The first division is chapter 1, and I want to call that "a perplexing problem." As a matter of fact, I've already discussed the problem a little bit. Chapter 2: "a proper perspective." Chapter 3: "profound praise." Okay? I want you to look now, and we're going to tell you today, how to hang together, how to stay together, while the world comes apart, and while everything seems to unravel around about us.

Now the book begins with a burden, with a problem, beginning in chapter 1, verse 1: "*The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see*" (Habakkuk 1:1). A man with a crushed heart, he has a deep, deep burden.

A. God's Seeming Indifference

Now what was his burden? Well, first of all, it was God's seeming indifference. Look in verse 2: "*O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!*" (Habakkuk 1:2). Now there had been a great problem in the land, a lot of violence, and Habakkuk says, "I'm going to pray about it." And he prays, and he prays some more; and there doesn't seem to be an answer. Rather than the situation getting better, it seems to get worse. And he says, "God? How long am I going to have to cry to You?"

And in verse 2, he uses the word *cry* twice. I want you to look at it. The first word *cry* means a cry like a plea for help; but, the second word *cry* is a different Hebrew word, and it means, “a shout” or “a scream.” He’s quit asking—he’s started screaming at God. He thinks God is deaf. “God! Why don’t you do something?” I mean, he’s almost angry. He’s screaming out. He’s pleading for God to help. But it seems like the heavens are silent.

Has it ever been that way with you? Have you ever had a problem, and oh, you cry, and you get to the place where you just almost start to shout to God? You want to argue with God a little bit? Say, “God, why don’t You do something?” There doesn’t seem to be an answer. You say, “Lord, how long am I going to have to pray about this?”

B. God’s Seeming Inactivity

Now the second thing: Not only God’s seeming indifference, but God’s seeming inactivity. It just seems like God is up there, with His arms folded, and He’s not doing a single thing with the situation in the world. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: “*Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth*” (Habakkuk 1:3–4). He’s saying, “Lord, haven’t you noticed lately? Haven’t you looked down here? This world is in a mess, and there’s violence everywhere.”

Jeremiah was a contemporary of Habakkuk, and Jeremiah said, in Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 12: “*Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush*” (Jeremiah 8:12). Jeremiah and Habakkuk lived with a generation of unblushables. They were proud of their sin. And we live in the same kind of a generation. And we pray. We say, “God, what is happening to America?” And we see the murderous ways, where the streets have become swamps of discontent—where the mosquitoes of crime and hate breed by the millions. We see racism. We see pornography. We see the spread of liquor, and dishonesty, and greed, and materialism. And we cry out to God, and we say, “O God, God, you’re the only one who can do anything about it! Please God, do something!” God doesn’t seem to do anything. Habakkuk says, “Lord, where are you? Don’t You care? God, why do You seem to so indifferent? God, why do You seem to be so inactive?”

C. God’s Seeming Inconsistency

Then, the third thing that was a part of his burden was not only God’s indifference and God’s inactivity, but God’s inconsistency—what he thought was God’s inconsistency. God’s seeming inconsistency. God finally does speak to him, and this is what God says, in verses 5 and 6: “*Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously:*

for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not their's" (Habakkuk 1:5–6).

God finally does speak, and Habakkuk doesn't like what he hears. God says, "All right, you want to know what I'm doing? You don't think that I'm doing anything? You think that I ought to come in here and I ought to stop this rape, I ought to stop this crime, and this greed, and this violence? I'll tell you what I'm going to do. It's going to get worse. As a matter of fact, Habakkuk, I'm right now raising up a nation: the Chaldeans." Another word for the Chaldeans is the *Babylonians*. "And their armies are going to come; they're bitter,"—that is, they're very cruel—"they're hasty,"—that means they're very swift—"and they are going to march upon the land of Israel, and they are going to take this place captive, and you're not going to be able to stop it." Now he said, "You won't believe it, even if I tell you."

And sure enough, he didn't. He began to argue with the Lord. And look, if you will, in verse 12—he says, in verse 12: "*Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD*"—in other words, "Lord, You didn't just get here yesterday"—"*my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die.*" That is, "Lord, You've got it all mixed up; it isn't Israel that needs to be punished. "*O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment;*"—now, he's talking about the Babylonians—"*and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction*" (Habakkuk 1:12). "Not us, Lord. You're picking on the wrong crowd." And then, here's his rationale, in verse 13: "*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?*" (Habakkuk 1:13).

Now notice what his argument is: He's saying, "God, that's inconsistent." He's saying, "God, when I ask you to do something about the violence in our land, and ask you to do something about the crime in our land, and ask you to do something about the sin and the sickness in our land, then you tell me, God, that you are going to bring the Babylonians to invade us, now, God, that doesn't make sense. How can you do that? I mean, God, we're bad, but we're not as bad as they are. How can you use the wicked to devour the man that is more righteous than he is? Now God, that is absolutely inconsistent. Lord, I just want to tell you how you ought to be running your business."

God said, "I told you, you wouldn't believe me, if I told you. That's the reason why I haven't told you before. You couldn't understand it." Jesus said, "I have many things to say unto you. You're not able to receive them. You're not able to bear them" (John 16:12). And by the way, *we do not live by explanations; we live by promises*. God is not bound to explain to us things we couldn't understand and wouldn't receive anyway. God knows what He's doing. And God says, "*I am raising up these Babylonians to bring*

them against you” (Habakkuk 1:6).

Now again, remember the argument: “Now look, God—wait a minute. We’re bad; I’ll admit we’ve sinned. But they are worse than we are.” Now is that philosophy an old philosophy? I want to tell you it’s a modern-day philosophy. Let me tell you how most Americans feel? Most Americans feel this way: We are bad, we have our liquor, we have our crime, we have our abortion, we have our rape, we have our robberies, we have our pride, we have our materialism; but, at least, we also say, “God bless America.” At least, we also put “In God We Trust” on our money. At least, we do have our churches; we’re not like those old Russians. We may be bad, but we’re not as bad as they are; and, therefore, we’re going to be safe. We’re going to get us a good president who believes in a strong national defense, and were going to have a little economic revival, and we’re going to make it on through until the rapture, and we’ll be taken out of here. That’s the way most Americans feel; at least, that’s what they hope is going to happen. They’re just hoping that everything’s going to be fine, until the rapture gets here, and then, we go on out. But we don’t ever think that the Russians could take us over, because God is on our side. Isn’t that the way we feel?

Now be honest folks. “God’s on our side”—that’s the way we feel. So we don’t ever think the Russians could take us over. We don’t ever think the Soviets, or the Chinese, or someone like that, could take us over. You read your Bible, and read it well, and read it carefully, and you’ll not find, so far as I’m concerned, one shred of Scripture that speaks of American superiority in the last days. Not one. It may happen. I pray, God, the Russians don’t take us over. I’m working against it. I’m preaching against it. I’m standing against it. And I want to believe God for national revival, and national deliverance. But I tell you—if revival does not come, if people do not get right, if they do not repent, if they do not trust God, there’s not one promise in the Bible that says they cannot, even though we may be a so-called *Christian nation*. The Bible says, “*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*” (Luke 12:48). And God did allow an ungodly, perverse, degenerate nation that was worse than Israel to come in and to bring Israel to her knees.

Do you know that America needs something like that? I hope we don’t have to have it, but let me tell you about America. America has been cursed with blessings. One of these days, perhaps, we will be blessed with cursings. What do you mean? Do you know, dear friend, we pray, and we ask God to bless us, and we have a little economic upturn, and what happens? Do we get right with God? No. The liquor begins to flow, the immorality, the divorces, all of these things. When God blesses our nation, we don’t turn to Him, we become independent from Him, and we get further and further away. There may be only one thing that this nation can understand, and that is some total disaster that will drive us to our knees. God is not necessarily protecting the American economy

and the American way of life. God is in the business of getting glory to Himself—did you know that? You say, “Preacher, I don’t like that kind of preaching.” I don’t like it, either.

Now I want to tell you somebody else who didn’t like it: Habakkuk didn’t like it. Habakkuk didn’t like it. He said, “God, I’ve been praying, ‘Lord, why don’t You do something? Why are You silent?’” God said, “I’m doing something. I’m doing something. You want to know what I’m doing? I am raising up the Chaldean army, and they’re going to come in, and they’re going to take you over.”

Now that was the burden of Habakkuk the prophet. Number one: God’s seeming indifference—I cry, and God doesn’t hear me. Number two: God’s seeming inactivity. Number three: God’s seeming inconsistency—that God is blessing the wrong people.

II. A Proper Perspective

Now chapter 2—I want you to move from chapter 1 to chapter 2, what we’re going to call “a proper perspective.” Look now, in chapter 2. Habakkuk said, *“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d”* (Habakkuk 2:1).

Now thank God for this man. He now stops shouting at God and he starts listening to God. He has a watchtower out in a field, somewhere that is the place where he has his quiet time. Some tower he would climb up in to and get alone with God. And so he went out there, now, to stop telling God how to run the universe, and to listen to God. He says, “Well, I’m just going to shut up, now, for a while. And I’m going to listen to God. I’ve given God enough instructions, I’ve argued with the Lord enough, and evidently the Lord’s not in the mood to argue with me. So I think I will just sit down, sit still and listen, and see what God will say to me.” And when he did that, God gave him a proper perspective. And God showed him three things that I want God to show to you today. And I want to burn them into your heart—three things that he should never forget, and that you should never forget.

A. The Reliability of the Scriptures

The first of these is the reliability of the Scriptures—the reliability of the Scriptures. Now look in verse 2: *“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision,”*—just write it down—*“and make it plain upon tables,”*—meaning tablets—*“that he may run that readeth it”* (Habakkuk 2:2). Now what He said to Habakkuk was this: “Habakkuk, I’m going to show you something. I’m going to give you a vision. And when I give you a vision”—that is, when I give you a revelation—“I want you to write it down. Get some tablets, and just write it down, and make it very plain, so that someone can read it and run with the message.” And what Habakkuk wrote was the Book of Habakkuk that we have right here, that we’re reading. This is what he wrote. This is what he wrote in that

high tower. Just get it out, and write it down.

So he's sitting up there in the high tower and he's writing. Why? Because he knew that one day, in Memphis, Tennessee, there would be some people like you are and like I am, who would need this message today. For this is not just what God has said—it is what God is saying. And so he wrote the message for us. Now listen to what he said about the message. Listen to what he said about the prophecy, in verse 3: *“For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry”* (Habakkuk 2:3). That is, it will not continue to tarry.

Now what does that mean? It means, dear friend, that God has made some rock-ribbed, eternal promises that are absolutely, totally sure, and you can trust the Word of God. Now in between the beginning and the end, things are going to look very confusing. Many times, we're going to want to question God, and shout at God, and tell God how and why, and all of these things. God says, “Look, Habakkuk, you just write it down. Make it big, make it plain, make it straight, that God's Word is true, and you can trust God's Word, whenever it seems to be coming apart, and when even you don't understand it.”

F.B. Meyer said this, and I love what F.B. Meyer had to say—he said, “If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves with sackcloth. The sun, moon and stars would reel from their courses. The universe would rock, and a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation the awful message that God can lie.” But He cannot lie, and friend, I want to tell you, I am so grateful to have this book in these days in which we live. I am so grateful to be able to turn through the pages of this book, the Book of Habakkuk—and every other book—and know that the message cannot lie. Though it tarry, I'll just wait for it. There are things that I don't understand. If I can't understand it, I'll stand on it. And I'll just wait.

*Have faith in God; He's on His throne.
Have faith in God; He watches o'er His own.
He cannot fail; He must prevail.
Have faith in God, I say, have faith in God.*

—B. B. MCKINNEY

The reliability of the Scriptures. Do you understand that? Have you come to the place where you're going to say, “I'm going to take God's Word, regardless of appearances?” Have you? I hope so. I hope so. Don't you get appearances and circumstances, and say, “There must be something wrong with the prophecies. Things are out of whack. Maybe God's not going to keep His word. Maybe the earth shall not be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Habakkuk 2:14). Maybe the meek shall not inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). Maybe Jesus won't reign.” Habakkuk said, “Look, if it

doesn't seem to be happening on time, wait. God cannot lie. He will not fail. That's the first thing He showed him—Number one: the reliability of the Scriptures.

B. The Retribution of the Sinner

The second thing that He showed him was the retribution of the sinner. Now perhaps Habakkuk thought that God was soft on sin. And Habakkuk thought he was going to lecture God about how God ought to go ahead and punish those Babylonians. Well, if you look in chapter 2, beginning in verse 5, He begins to talk about the sinner, and He says, *“Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him...”* (Habakkuk 2:5–6).

And then, in verse 6, you have that word *woe*. In verse 9, “woe to him.” In verse 12, “woe to him.” In verse 15, “woe to him.” In verse 19, “woe to him.” In verse 6, he speaks of dishonesty; in verse 9, of greed; in verse 12, of violence; in verse 15, of immorality; in verse 19, of idolatry. And God says, “Habakkuk, listen to me, son. I know about all these sins, and I'm going to judge them everyone.” Are you listening to me today? If you're a sinner here, without Christ, don't you ever think—don't you ever think, because God is not judging your sin now—that God will not judge your sin. Don't you ever think that God has let sin get by.

Suppose these Babylonians, coming down there, high, wide and handsome, they said, “Well, if there's a God, he doesn't judge sin. Look what we're doing to His people.” But God says, “I have a record of every one of them.” *“As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God”* (Romans 14:11). And I'm here to tell you, as your pastor, and as your friend, and as God's anointed preacher this morning, there's not one half of one sin that will go overlooked. Did you hear that? Somebody said this, “The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine.” (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

C. The Reign of the Savior

When this man finally got quiet, He showed him first of all the reliability of the Scriptures—you can bank on it. Number two, He showed him the retribution of the sinner, God will punish every sin. The third thing He showed him was the reign of the Savior. That Jesus Christ, indeed, is going to rule. And indeed, He's going to reign. Look, if you will, in this wonderful chapter, in verse 14, chapter 2 and verse 14. What a promise! Put a star by it. And I thank God for it. *“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”* (Habakkuk 2:14). Isn't that a beautiful promise?

I tell you, we look around in Memphis, Tennessee—we see the crime and the hate. We look around in our nation—we see the disorganization and the disintegration. We look in our world, and we see the war and the strife. I tell you, as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers, as surely as I stand in this pulpit, as surely as there's a God in Heaven, Jesus is going to be victorious. Good place for an *amen*. Jesus is going to be victorious. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as water that covers the sea. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5). Jesus taught us to pray, "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10). And all of the forces of Hell, and all of the powers of sin, and all of the doubts of the people, will not stop the enthronement of our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Jesus shall reign, where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more. (Isaac Watts)*
*Just wait for it. Though will tarry, it will come.
Some golden daybreak, Jesus will come.*

—CARL A. BLACKMORE

Might be today. We're going to be caught up to meet Him in the air. It'll come. Wait on it. It cannot lie.

The reliability of the Scriptures—it shall be done. Do you believe that? Now if you believe that, friend, that's something you can hold on to. Because there are going to be a lot of things you don't understand. There are going to be a lot of things you don't know. We just need to get off in our high tower, sit down, stop shouting at God, and let God start speaking to us.

III. A Profound Praise

Now the third thing I want you to see—the third thing I want you to see... The first thing was a perplexing problem. The second thing: a proper perspective. He got in his high tower, and God showed him some things. Now the third thing: His profound praise. The third chapter of the Book of Habakkuk reaches the highest pinnacle of praise. I don't believe there's any higher praise in all of the Bible than you'll find here in the third chapter of the Book of Habakkuk. It is absolutely, totally profound.

Notice how it begins: "*A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth*" (Habakkuk 3:1). Now since you all know what *Shigionoth* is, I'm not even going to comment on that, and go to the next verse. What, what does he mean by that—"A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk upon *Shigionoth*"? Well, *Shigionoth*, some people feel, means some kind of musical instrument. But I think most commentators have agreed

that's not what it means; but it is a Hebrew word which means, "with deep feelings." And the word *upon* may also mean not only "upon," but "according to." That is, it's a prayer, *according to deep feelings*.

What has happened is here is that the wellsprings of joy and praise have burst loose in the heart of this prophet, Habakkuk, and he's saying, "This is not just an ordinary prayer. This is a prayer that is upon *Shigionoth*. It is prayer with deep, deep feeling. God has shown me something, and my eyes are brimming with tears, and my lips are bursting with praise, because of what I've seen—what I've seen."

Now you want to learn how to praise in dark days? You want to have victory when you don't seem to understand, where there's a lot that doesn't make sense to you, and it seems like Heaven is brass, and it seems like God is inactive or indifferent? You better learn this third chapter.

A. Praise is Rooted in Revelation

Let me tell you about this praise. The very first thing about this praise: It is rooted in revelation. God gave to Habakkuk a revelation of Himself. Not what God is doing, but just who God is. You see, that's far more important. God couldn't explain to us what He's doing anyway. Why? *"His ways are not our ways, and our thoughts, His thoughts. As high as the heavens are above the earth are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts"* (Isaiah 55 8–9).

So it's better to know who than why—isn't that right? I mean, so many times when we get in trouble, what do we say? "God, why?" We think, if God explained it to us, then we'd feel better. Friend, I suppose, if God explained it to us, we'd feel worse. A lot of times, we say, "No, God, you've got it wrong. That's not the way to do it. You know, Lord. No, Lord, I don't want this. I don't want that." And so God doesn't explain it to us—He just shows Himself to us. And you see here, this prophet got a revelation of God.

Now let me show you something here, very, very sweet and beautiful. Look in verse 3: *"God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah"* (Habakkuk 3:3). Just draw a circle around the word *Selah*. That's a strange word, isn't it? *Selah*. What does it mean? All right, look in verse 9: *"Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah"* (Habakkuk 3:9). Draw a circle around the word *Selah* there. And then, look, if you will, in verse 13: *"Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah"* (Habakkuk 3:13). What does that word *Selah* mean? Did you know this is the only book to use that word except for Psalms—the only place in the Bible you'll find that word *Selah*? What is *Selah*? Why does David, when he's writing a psalm, all of a sudden say, *Selah*? Well, that is, to the psalm, like a rest is in music. And what it means

is just “pause and think about it.” Just pause and think about it. Just think about that! *Selah*—meditate on that.

Now what happens is this. Here’s this prophet, he said, “I’m going to praise God with such deep emotions. I am so excited.” You see, what God did in verse 3—there was a revelation of God’s majesty. How God came from Paran from Teman. That’s where the Law was given. Where the thunderings, where the quakings were, on Mount Sinai, that speaks of the majesty of God. And then, in the next verse, it speaks—the next time he says, “*Selah*,” it speaks of God’s mercy. In verse 9, he mentions the rainbow. That speaks of God’s mercy—that the God of majesty is the God of mercy; He keeps covenants. And then, in verse 13, it speaks of God going forth to make war on His enemies and bringing salvation through His anointed to the people. That speaks of God’s might.

You see, what happened is this: that Habakkuk forgot the answer or the question *why*, and he turned his attention to *who*. A God of majesty, a God of mercy, and a God of might. Now you’re reasonable people, aren’t you? If God is a God of majesty—that is, He rules over all. And He’s a God of mercy—He loves you. And He’s a God of might. Don’t you think you ought to think about it? *Selah. Selah.* Just think about it.

Do you know why people don’t praise the Lord? They just don’t know the Lord. I mean, they get their eyes on circumstances. They don’t know God. You see, praise is rooted in revelation. It understands that, even though you don’t understand, He understands. *There’s no panic in Heaven, only praise.*

Notice how chapter 2 ends, “*The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him*” (Habakkuk 2:20). You see, God is in Heaven; there is no panic in Heaven. The Babylonians may invade the temple down here; they can’t invade the one up there. Quit arguing with God. Quit trying to tell God how to run His universe. God is in control. He’s never lost control. Listen. The very hairs of your head are numbered (Matthew 10:30). There’s not a blade of grass that blows in the wind but that God doesn’t know about it. There’s not a grain of sand upon the seashores of all the earth that God does not know the exact size, shape, dimension, and location of that grain of sand. He’s in His holy temple. Think about His mercy. Think about His majesty. Think about His might.

B. Praise Recognizes Reality

Praise is rooted—listen—praise is rooted in revelation, and praise recognizes reality. You say, “Well, you Christians, you’re always praising. You just act like there’s nothing wrong. You don’t know the situation that I’m in.” Well, you look in verse 16 of this chapter. You ought to see something else here. He says, “*When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I*

trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops” (Habakkuk 3:16). You know what that means? I’ll tell you what that means, Habakkuk said, “I’m scared stiff. I am scared stiff.” He said, “When I think about what’s going to happen, my stomach churns. When I think about what’s going to happen, my lips tremble. When I think about what’s going to happen, my bones turn to water, to rottenness.”

A Christian who praises is not Pollyanna. Let me tell you what a Christian is—he’s a realist. He is not some sentimental optimist; nor is he a morose pessimist. He sees it exactly as it is. Dark days may come; but, now, watch. Over here, he’s seen God in all of His glory. Over here, he’s seen the world in all of its misery.

C. Praise Results in Rejoicing

And now I want you to see where praise comes. Praise roots in revelation. Praise recognizes reality. Are you ready? Between these two—now watch it, watch it—praise results in rejoicing. Verses 17 to 19: *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet”—and, oh, friend, put a big circle around that word yet—“I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places”* (Habakkuk 3:17–19).

Do you know what he’s saying? He’s saying, “If my standard of living changes, my standard of life is not going to change.” Amen? It doesn’t make any difference. I mean, he says, “If the stock market tumbles in, and there’s nothing on the shelves of the supermarket—and, if there were something on the shelves of the supermarket, we wouldn’t have any money to buy it; and, there are no jobs listed in the want ads; and, war is imminent, and the Russians are camped at the border.” Praise God! Hmm? You’ve got that kind of faith? Praise God. You see, where is your joy? “Yet, will I joy in the God of my salvation.” He did not get his joy from circumstances. He had a revelation of God’s greatness. He had a realism about the mess the world was in, but he said, “My joy—my joy is in the Lord.”

Conclusion

Now folks, if you’ve learned a lesson in the Book of Habakkuk, you have learned a mighty lesson. Amen? “You make my feet like hinds’ feet” (Habakkuk 3:19). That is, I’m going to be like a sure-footed gazelle, and I’m going to be on the mountain peak, shouting “Glory!” all the way. No matter what happens—because this is my Father’s world. *“...the Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence...”* (Habakkuk 2:20).