

HABAKKUK

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Habakkuk chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God. We will finish this book in one night since it is a short three-chapter book. And what I want you to see as we go through this study is that Habakkuk is going to walk by faith. Yes he does have struggles but in the end his focus is on the Lord and the Lord sees him through those struggles.

And thus, these lessons are for us as well as this prophet went through the difficulties, the disappointments, the hurts of life just as we do and the lessons he learned we need to learn. Let me show you what I mean with this story that was told by Donald Grey Barnhouse. He wrote,

An experience of this child of God may be a blessing to many. She wrote, "One very rainy night, a little over a year ago, I locked my store and started home. There was a pouring, drenching, chilling rain and high wind. An umbrella was useless. The cars were late, and I waited on the corner for three quarters of an hour. I was soaked to the skin, and chilled to the bone. Then I had to ride in two cold cars.

When I reached home there was no warm supper, the fires were banked and the house was cold. Now the Lord has been good to me, He has blessed me with a happy disposition - the 'blue devils' do not trouble me often. But they were there that night. I thought: I will feed my kitten, I will not bother with any supper, I will go right to bed and cry it out.

I began to remove my soaked clothing, and as I did, the Lord brought these words to my mind:

There is never a day so dreary,
There is never a night so long,
But the soul that is trusting Jesus
Will somewhere, somehow
Find a song.”

- Donald Grey Barnhouse

Like Habakkuk, many Christians today have lost that joy, they have lost that song. We may sing, “*There is joy in the Lord . . .*” but the reality is, as we look at the circumstances that are surrounding our lives, we become angry, frustrated, bitter, confused, and-so-on. We are singing the blues! Why do we get that way? Why is that joy missing in our lives? How can we get that back? I think we will see how as we look at Habakkuk this evening.

Let me share with you some background information so you understand what Habakkuk was up against, the period of time he was living in. The timeframe of the writing of this book seems to be around the reign of Jehoiakim, who ruled the Southern Kingdom of Judah from 609 to 598 B. C.

Jehoiakim was an evil King, ruling for 11 years and leading the nation in a downward spiral that began with the reign of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, and continued until they were finally brought into captivity by the Babylonians in 586 B. C. while Zedekiah was the King in Judah.

The only bright spot was during the reign of Josiah, but it was too little too late. The wickedness, the corruption of the leaders, the corruption of the priests and the common people in Judah was now going to be dealt with, as we shall see this evening.

Habakkuk is going to be asking God “Why?” and “How long?” and like the book of Job, the conclusion will be interesting because it does not necessarily tell us completely the how’s and why’s of God, but that we must walk by faith and not by sight!

One writer put it like this, “Habakkuk was not a self-centered person concerned only with the comfort and safety of himself and his family. As a true patriot, he was deeply distressed by the moral and spiritual conditions about him. He loved his nation, and knew it was moving ever closer to the precipice of destruction by continuing to break the laws of God. Therefore two anguished questions burst forth from his lips: How long? and Why?” (Richard W. De Haan)

I pray that this study will encourage you in whatever you are going through, have gone through or will go through in the future because, like it or not, we will all face difficult situations in our lives and the enemy loves to get us distracted and lose hope. May we learn the lesson and keep our eyes upon Jesus, may our hope be in Him no matter what we are going through!

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Habakkuk chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

HABAKKUK 1

VERSE 1

1. First of all we see that this man named Habakkuk was a prophet of God and the message he was going to bring to the nation was heavy, it was difficult because it not only affected the nation but it would also affect his life.

Now in saying that I love the name that this man has, Habakkuk because it means “one who embraces.” Now there are many things that people embrace today from jobs, to money, to relationships, to this and to that and in the end, they are left wanting more and more and it is never enough because what they embraced could never satisfy.

What we will see as we get to the end of this book is that this prophet of God will embrace the Lord, look to Him to be the strength of his life, his joy and-so-on. And think about it, as you are going through a difficult time, as you have a difficult message to present who else do you want to embrace besides the Lord because He alone will be able to see you through the situation you are facing.

And as you embrace the Lord it will be manifested in your outward actions. And if you don’t embrace the Lord it will also be seen in your outward actions and that is never good!

VERSES 2-4

1. As I read this it seems like Habakkuk is speaking of our day. All the evil, the violence that we see today and notice in verse 4 where Habakkuk says that “**the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth.**”

And it was overwhelming for Habakkuk just as it is for us many times. And as you read this notice that this prophet is not praising God but he is complaining to God. “Hey God, where are you? I cry out to you and nothing! What’s up with that?”

Have you ever been there before? Have you cried out to God and wondered if He is even listening to you? That was Habakkuk! And like Habakkuk, we are going to learn that God is always working even though we might not see things happening the way we want. God is still in control! That is what Habakkuk will learn, that God is working and He may not be going as fast as Habakkuk liked or do what Habakkuk thought should be done, but He is God and knows what is best. He is still working!

2. Here is another interesting point in these verses. Habakkuk did not want to know what was going on. He wanted to just live his life and yet God was showing him all the evil that was in the nation.

Many Christians want to respond like Habakkuk, they don't want to see these things, but would rather bury their heads in the sand like the ostrich. But that does not do away with the problem, you end up just ignoring it! And as you bury your head in the sand what do you leave exposed? A great place for the enemy to hit with a fiery dart! Just saying!

3. So the complaint of Habakkuk is that violence has filled the land. People are taking advantage of others. Anger, fights arise for no real reason. The law is unable to deal with these matters because the law is corrupt also, the judicial system is wicked. Thus, the picture here is Habakkuk is surrounded by a sea of evil and God is not doing anything about it! But, as we shall see, the Lord is working and He is going to respond back to Habakkuk's complaint.

VERSES 5-11

1. I don't think the answer that God gives to Habakkuk is the one he was looking for. Habakkuk accused God of not working and God is telling this prophet, "Hold on son, I am working and what I am doing you are not going to believe, it will blow your mind!"

Yes, evil filled the Southern Kingdom of Judah but they were not going to get away with it. Judgment was coming and it was going to be the Babylonians that God would use to bring this judgment upon His people, the Jews living in the Southern Kingdom of Judah!

The Babylonians were beginning to gain strength, to become a world power. In 605 B. C. they will defeat the Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish. And yet, God says He will use them as His instrument of judgment against His people. And the Babylonians will rise to power, doing as they please, taking captive who they want. They will take nations and people by violence, even building siege walls to get over the walls of the cities!

2. Now verse 11 is interesting to me because I believe this is speaking of the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar. Listen again to this verse, "**Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.**" Habakkuk 1:11.

In other words, this King thought he had the power and pride lifted him up until God brought him down. God warned this King through the prophet Daniel and he did not listen and for several seasons he was like a wild animal, he went insane until he recognized that God alone rules!

And in Daniel 4:34-37 we read of this time when the King was restored. It says, **“And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.”** An amazing transformation of a pagan King!

This also can be speaking of the King's grandson, Belshazzar, who ruled when the kingdom was destroyed by the Medo-Persian Empire. And as Belshazzar had his drunken feast, the hand of God wrote on the wall, and the King, knowing it was not good, looked to Daniel to interpret it for him.

And Daniel told him **“But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.”** Daniel 5:22-23.

And that very night the King was killed and the Babylonian Empire fell for the words of God to this King were “**Numbered, numbered, to light, divided.**” Or that God has placed the King and his kingdom in the balances of God and they have come up short! Judgment was coming that very night

VERSES 12-17

1. Habakkuk was first troubled that there was no judgment against Judah; God answered by telling him judgment was on the way. Now Habakkuk is troubled by the agent of judgment, the Babylonians - who were an even more wicked people than the people of Judah.

And maybe this will make it a little easier for us to understand. Look at the evil, the immorality, the violence that is going on in America. And as we pray for God to do something He speaks to us and says, “You are not going to believe what I am going to do. I am going to send the Iranians to bring judgment upon America!”

I don’t believe it? That was the response of Habakkuk as well! God explains to Habakkuk what He is going to do and Habakkuk can’t believe it. You see, he could not understand how God could use such a wicked nation to judge His own people.

The Babylonians should be judged and not the Southern Kingdom of Judah, at least not by them! How could a nation that was more wicked than they were correct them? The answer is simple, where much is given, much is required! They were entrusted with the Words of God, and yet they turned from Him and they were being judged for that.

2. And here is where we get ourselves into trouble, like Habakkuk did. Habakkuk is trying to understand the how's and why's of an infinite God with his finite mind. And you will not be able to fully understand all that God is doing. And he is right about this, God cannot look down upon wickedness with approval. He will deal with the wicked, they will not get away with anything.

Remember as Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary and God laid upon Him the sins of the world and Jesus cried out, **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”** Mark 15:34.

Now that does not seem right, why in the world did God the Father turn His face from Jesus when Jesus was doing the Father's will? The reason the Father turned His face from the Son as the sins of the world were laid upon Him is because God cannot fellowship, approve sin. And as the sins of the world were placed upon Jesus, the Father turned from Him for those three hours!

Now don't come to the conclusion that God is not aware of evil, of sin because He cannot look upon it! Of course God see's sin, He see's wickedness, but He can't look upon it with approval, there is no fellowship with the wicked, and I believe that is the thought here in Habakkuk.

3. And as you read through verses 14 through 17 you see the picture of how brutal the Babylonians were. The picture here is of Babylon fishing for people, for nations and taking them captive easily, their nets overflowing.

And in their victories they are worshiping their god's who have enabled them to gain these victories, or so they thought. And Habakkuk just couldn't understand how God could use this wicked, godless nation as an instrument of judgment against Judah. It just didn't seem right to him; it didn't seem fair in his eyes.

But remember what the Lord said to Habakkuk, “**Look among the nations and watch - Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you.**” Habakkuk 1:5. And what is Habakkuk saying? “I don’t believe it!” And keep in mind that judgment would come upon the Babylonians, they were not going to get away with anything!

HABAKKUK 2

VERSE 1

1. Now it does seem that Habakkuk knew he went a little too far and was now going to be reproved by God. So he is just going to sit and wait until God speaks to him, possibly thinking of how he will answer God back after God speaks to him. Listen to what God tells Habakkuk.

VERSES 2-3

1. God is saying this will occur, Babylon will be defeated, but not yet, down the road, in a few years it will come to pass. Thus, Habakkuk was to write this message down so those who read it can flee for their life, for once the judgment starts, it will come quickly and they won’t be able to stop it.

And that is also true as we read the Word of God, it causes us to go into action! No, we are not running away but what the Lord is showing us we apply to our lives, we do those things that He wants us to do. God is working in our lives to make us more like Him, that His nature will flow from our lives and that will only happen as we spend time with Him and in His Word allowing the Spirit of God to speak to us!

VERSES 4-8

1. Notice the contrast here. First the proud, it is all about them, there is no room for God and thus his life reflects where his heart is at. It is as Psalm 10:4 says, “**The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.**”

Spurgeon put it like this regarding the proud and keep in mind this is an issue all of us deal with, ***PRIDE!*** Spurgeon wrote, “If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world, and you shall find it there; and then go and search amongst the poorest and the most miserable, and you shall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar’s rags as in a prince’s robe; and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel [hut, shack]. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?”

Then, on the other end of the spectrum you might say we see that the just are living by faith! It is not about them or what they are doing to appease God but by faith they are trusting in Him! And this is exactly what Habakkuk was going to need, what he was going to have to do, and we must do the same in our life.

You see, it is walking by faith, not by sight. It is trusting in God even during the toughest, the blackest, the most discouraging times. And we see these same words repeated in the New Testament, in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38, and it was the push of the Reformation, “**The just shall live by faith.**”

2. Not only is pride an issue but alcohol is also an issue. Why is that? Because alcohol causes us to do things we would not normally do, and it can be very destructive, as we have all seen over the years maybe from friends, spouses, relatives.

Proverbs 23:31-32 tells us the dangers of alcohol, **“Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.”** And yet, in this country we promote drunkenness, for most people don’t drink just for the taste but for the effects, to get drunk!

And alcohol, drunkenness causes us to do things we would not normally do and that is not a good thing. For us as Christians do we want to be controlled by this drug or by the Spirit of God? That is what it boils down to.

And for this nation that God was going to use to bring judgment upon His people, they were no different, they loved to party. In fact, the night that Belshazzar was killed and the nation destroyed, they were in the midst of a drunken bash that could have lasted weeks! And here we see the Babylonians become proud, the alcohol has clouded their minds, and they keep gathering peoples and nations unto themselves, never being satisfied and building the nation up from the spoils of their victories, but God is going to bring them down.

3. In verses 6 through 8 of Habakkuk chapter 2 we see the first of five woe’s pronounced upon Babylon. This is dealing with the taking of what was not theirs and in the end, all these possessions they took from others will be taken from them, taken by another nation, the Medo-Persian Empire. It is as Morgan put it, “The immediate value of the word was that Habakkuk learned that God’s employment of the Chaldeans did not mean the permanent power of this evil people.”

VERSES 9-11

1. The second woe deals with covetousness or desiring and taking what someone else has to build yourself up. And God is saying they will not get away with this evil either.

VERSES 12-14

1. The third woe deals with using their captives as slaves to build their nation. And these slaves gain nothing from all their blood, sweat and tears, all their labor. And the picture here is a wicked, ruthless leader oppressing the people and letting evil flow throughout the land. The **LORD** is not only displeased with the greedy, He also pronounces a woe against the violent.

But we see that this is not the end of the story. God shows Habakkuk of a time in the future, the Kingdom Age when the knowledge of God, His glory, will fill this land, it will cover the earth. It is a picture of hope in the midst of this dark judgment. It is as Isaiah 11:9 says, **“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”** We wait for that day! And as you can see, evil, violence taking advantage of others for your gain will not be seen in the Kingdom Age!

VERSES 15-17

1. Here in this fourth woe against Babylon we see the idea of not only drinking and getting drunk, but encouraging others to do the same and in doing so you can take advantage of that person. And the Lord is saying that He will judge them for their actions.

And please understand that we are no different today. People drink to inhibit their natural inhibitions so they can do things they would not normally do. Or, we push alcohol on others so we can take advantage of them. This is a no brainier, bar's, parties are used in that manner and for some, it is not enough, not fast enough, so they slip a pill into a girl's drink so they can take advantage of her. My how wicked we have become and yet we think God approves of our actions or can't do anything about it, or doesn't care what we do. Make no mistake about it, He will judge the evil!

And make no mistake, the effects of alcohol are very costly in this country. Listen to this one article where we are told,

Excessive alcohol use is a leading cause of preventable death. This dangerous behavior accounted for approximately 88,000 deaths per year from 2006 - 2010, and accounted for 1 in 10 deaths among working-age adults aged 20 - 64 years. Excessive alcohol use shortened the lives of those who died by about 30 years. . . .

- <http://www.cdc.gov/features/alcohol-deaths/>

VERSES 18-19

1. In the fifth woe we see idolatry. The amazing thing is these objects of worship can't hear, they can't speak, they can't move or do anything. And yet they are worshiped. And these words here are almost sarcastic in nature, saying to the wood "**Awake!**" Or to the stone, "**Arise! It shall teach!**" It is, in a sense, a mocking statement against those who hold onto these things.

Make no mistake about it, people do worship idols even today. Listen to this article and you will see what I mean. We are told,

A false god is any god other than God as described in the Bible. This god can be just about anything, from a statue to money to a living person. Anything that is given the highest worship of a person is a false god. Many religions describe many different gods. Buddhism has Buddha and other gods; Islam has Allah; Hinduism has 300 million different gods from which to choose . . .

Any god that is different than God Himself is a false god, and there are many in the world today. The list and descriptions of false gods that pervade the world today are nearly endless. As mentioned above, religions of this world follow false gods, but there are also false gods that have little to nothing to do with an organized religion. Money is one of these. There are more millionaires in the world today than there have been in the previous century combined.

Money has always been a false god that people chase after. Power and fame are also false gods of this post-modern era. There are now more CEOs, executives, and celebrities than there were at any time in history combined. Another false god of this information-age is materialism. If the neighbors have the latest fashion or techie toy, then it seems we just have to have them, too, and better.

More and more advertisements in media today are aimed at material desires in one way or another. Further is the growing trend of credit card debt, which, in the technologically advanced nations especially, has skyrocketed in the last 30 years alone. More people are paying down debt from credit cards than ever before. The race to be better than the Jones's is heating up to meltdown proportions.

Sex, as well, is another god of this world that, though having been around for a long time, is more and more popular than ever. Cases of extra-marital affairs, single mothers, couples living together before marriage, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, people having multiple sex partners, people choosing homosexuality, and the break-up of the family are all growing at alarming, even astounding rates and percentages. . . .

The most popular false god in the world today is not money, power, fame, materialism, nor sex (though these are all vying hotly for second place); the most popular false god in the world today is self. The false god of self can be found in just about every corner of the world, every society, and every culture, and it knows no bounds. Even in the church of Jesus Christ, the false god of self often raises its ugly head. If we take a serious look at our post-modern, information-age world, we can easily see that selfishness and satisfying self is the most popular false god in the world today.

In fact, self has been the most popular god ever since the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve first sinned, giving in the temptation to “. . . be as gods . . .” (see Genesis 3:5). Ever since that day, self has been on the throne of peoples’ lives, replacing God, and ruling the life of the individual with dictatorial and tyrannical power. If one were to look at the majority of crimes today, it would be easy to see that all of these crimes were undertaken to please the false god of self in one way or another.

People who follow false gods and serve idols will see some success . . . but ultimately, that success will be short-lived. Egypt in ancient times was one of the most idolatrous nations on the face of the earth, and exerted much power for centuries in the Ancient Middle East. However, today, Egypt is almost a third world nation, and hasn't been a world-wide power since her collapse in Ancient times. The same can be said for Persia, Greece, Rome, and every other nation that has given in to idolatry and the worship of false gods. In modern times, we are seeing the same patterns of rise and fall happening in countries and nations that have replaced God with something other.

The United States of America, blessed by God over her short, two centuries plus of history and national life is quickly becoming a place of idolatry, from the worship of the famous and celebrated to money, power, and self-centeredness. None of these false gods, when tough times come, will be around to save, to help, and to rebuild when disaster strikes. Just as the ancient world suffered when false gods were worshipped, so now will false gods of this day and age be found wanting. False gods and idols will not help, and do not offer comfort, when the tough times come. . . .

“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10:14).

- <https://www.raptureready.com/soap/L30.html>

2. Now here is a good question. Why do we see wickedness growing so much today? I think Paul hits the nail on the head when he says in Romans 1:24-25, **“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”** When you turn from God you will try to fill that void in your life with all kinds of things and God will give you over to these evil passions, for it is what you want! Thus, we see immorality, wickedness on the rise not only in America today but throughout the world.

3. So this judgment is against Babylon, the instrument that God was using to bring judgment upon His people, the Jews. They did not get away with their evil, no one does. Judgment will come and it was either paid on the cross of Calvary and received by faith or it is paid when you stand before the Lord and then enter into eternity apart from Him, paying the debt for your sin. And the debt of sin will never be fully paid apart from Christ!

4. Now this chapter does not end here but it does end with a contrast, something so much better to worship than idols, the living God!

VERSE 20

1. Keep in mind that this is in contrast to the lifeless idols, the Lord is living, He responds to our needs! It is as Psalm 46:10-11 says **“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”**

2. Now we need to keep in mind that the picture here is the Lord preparing for this judgment, not only upon the Babylonians but upon the earth dwellers in the last days when God will pour out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world! And no one will be able to say a word against His righteous judgment.

HABAKKUK 3

VERSES 1-2

1. First of all let's deal with this word, "**Shigionoth.**" Many believe that Shigionoth has something to do with a musical instrument or a musical thought of some kind. We are not sure but that seems very logical for this book was a worship song. You see the very last verse tells us, "**To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.**"

2. Secondly, this is a prayer of Habakkuk to God. You see, as Habakkuk heard all these things that would take place, he was afraid. Thus, he calls upon God to keep His work going in them, don't stop, keep it alive.

And yes, he didn't understand all that was going on so he had to take a position of faith, of trusting in God. That is important for us to understand, when we are confused, don't know why these things are happening to us or around us, we need to give it to God! He will not stop working, He will keep things going in us. He will not leave us alone. And Habakkuk just reminds God that when He does pour out His wrath upon them, that He would be merciful!

I like what Spurgeon wrote, “O God, have mercy upon thy poor church, and visit her, and revive her. She has but a little strength; she has desired to keep thy word; oh, refresh her; restore to her thy power, and give her yet to be great in this land.”

3. And notice what Habakkuk is praying for – ***REVIVAL!*** Man does not bring about revival, God does and thus, Habakkuk is interceding for his people, for his nation to return to the Lord! Now the key to this is “**revive Your work**” and not “*revive my work!*” That may not seem like a big deal but it is!

May we be about the work of the Lord in all that we do and not our ideas, our ambitions, but His! And this revival we want to see so much in our nation begins in our own heart as we surrender our lives to Him, it begins with us!

VERSES 3-15

1. Habakkuk was getting his eyes refocused upon God instead of the situation that was before him. What a great thing to do! And notice what he is doing. As Habakkuk prays for revival he begins to praise the God who brings revival. In this song of praise Habakkuk glorifies the power and majesty of God. We see this picture painted for us of God coming forth and seeing His glory and power that comes forth as He does.

Not only will God come forth in glory but He will bring judgment upon the wicked and this judgment will not only affect the wicked but also the land will face cataclysmic changes as we see in the book of Revelation!

And I do believe that this is speaking of the Great Tribulation Period or that last seven-year period of time where God is pouring out His wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. The word **“indignation”** found in verse 12 is often used as an Old Testament word that speaks of this period of time, the Great Tribulation.

And we have to remember that God does not lose His cool and just fires His judgment out. God is patient, He is longsuffering but there comes a day of reckoning and I believe that day is very close. God is going to put down the wicked and preserve the righteous. The Tribulation Period is a picture of that when we see the judgment of God come upon a Christ rejecting world and the wicked will be cast out, not allowed to enter the Kingdom Age, while the righteous will enter into the Kingdom Age with Christ.

And keep in mind that the only righteousness that God will accept is perfection. And thus, it is the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed into our lives by faith that makes us righteous, not our good works which are like filthy rags!

2. Keep in mind that God has been speaking of the judgment that is coming upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah for their wickedness and their refusal to repent and return to the Lord. This is going to happen and I think that Habakkuk has reconciled this in his own mind because he has focused himself back on the Lord. How do I know that? Because of the response of Habakkuk and we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 16-18

1. Just as God told Habakkuk, **“Look among the nations and watch - be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you.”**

Habakkuk 1:5. Now all this was going to come to pass and he was overwhelmed. He was astonished by what the Lord told him. But something has changed. The prophet has grown since the book first opened up or this song began. And that is what God wants in our life, to grow in Him, to trust in Him more and more.

And listen again to his response, **“Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”**

He knows judgment is coming and that things will be bad. The food supply will be cut off. Starvation will take place. In Lamentations 4:8-10 Jeremiah tells us of this Babylonian invasion and the things that took place as he said, **“Now their appearance is blacker than soot; they go unrecognized in the streets; their skin clings to their bones, it has become as dry as wood. Those slain by the sword are better off than those who die of hunger; for these pine away, stricken for lack of the fruits of the field. The hands of the compassionate women have cooked their own children; they became food for them in the destruction of the daughter of my people.”**

It was so bad that they were eating each other, cannibalism! I know that my response in that situation would not be good, but did you notice how Habakkuk was able to rest in the midst of all this devastating judgment that has come upon them. **“Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”** Habakkuk 3:18. That is where true rest, true peace is always found, even in the midst of a storm, the ***LORD!***

And the idea here is that the just shall live by faith. That is where Habakkuk has come to. In the midst of this storm he will jump up and down and spin around in the Lord. That is what the Hebrew words **“rejoice”** and **“joy”** speak of. J. Sidlow Baxter put it like this,

The literal is “I will jump for joy in the Lord; I will spin around for delight in God.” Here is the hilarity of faith! – joy at its best with circumstances at their worst! What a victory! May it be ours!

- J. Sidlow Baxter, Explore the Book, p. 212

Now please don’t misunderstand this and miss the point that is being made here. Habakkuk is not rejoicing in the circumstances, but in the Lord! Think about that for a minute. Can you praise the Lord ***FOR*** everything? Obviously not! You are not going to say “Praise the Lord. I just got fired. My wife left me. I lost my house. My kids ran away from home. Isn’t the Lord good?” I know, it sounds like a country and western song. But that is not what God is saying.

You see, you can praise the Lord *IN* everything! The reason being is your focus is the Lord, not the circumstances. There are things we will go through where we will weep. We will be broken. But we can also rejoice in the Lord knowing He is there with us even during the darkest times. That is what Habakkuk was doing and it is what Romans 8:28 tells us, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”**

And again, don’t miss how bad things were for Habakkuk and the nation. And yet, his joy is in the Lord, who is unchanging! It is as Paul said in Philippians 4:19, **“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”** You see, look to Him to be your strength, He will supply you with what you will need, even during the darkest of times! It is what Habakkuk found out and it is what we need to understand and apply to our lives! And if you are still struggling with this, listen to how Habakkuk closes this song with.

VERSE 19

1. Notice that Habakkuk is not going to trust in himself or anything else except the Lord, *YAHWEH*, that is where his strength comes from.

It is as David said in Psalm 61:1-4, **“HEAR my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.”**

You see, God wants to lift us up above the calamities of life. Make no mistake about it, the plan and purposes of God will come to pass whether we like it or not. His Kingdom will be established on this earth as it is in heaven and the glory of the Lord will fill this land as righteousness flows from His throne as our God reigns! The lesson we need to learn is to walk by faith, trusting in the Lord and not by sight, not by the outward circumstances, as Habakkuk learned to do!

2. And we are told that this is ***“To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.”*** This was a song that was sung and God puts those songs in our hearts and many times these songs are born out of difficult times as we see here with Habakkuk.

3. As I close this evening let me leave you with this. We must get to the place in our walk with the Lord where we will no longer trust in self, we no longer will trust in our own resources, but we will trust in the Lord, place our full weight upon Him, where it should be and the heavy burdens of life will be lifted from us and placed upon Him!

If you don't you will rob yourself of the joy, the blessings that God has for you. Doubt that? Listen to this true story and I think you will see what I mean. It goes like this,

It may well be that something was sown in the heart of Saul that day as he watched Stephen die, something that bore fruit later on. As a result, scores of churches were planted across the Roman Empire, thousands of people came to salvation in Christ, and half the New Testament flowed from his pen to benefit us all to this very day.

Back in 1921, a missionary couple named David and Svea Flood went with their two-year-old son from Sweden to the heart of Africa - to what was then called the Belgian Congo. They met up with another young Scandinavian couple, the Ericksons, and the four of them sought God for direction. In those days of much tenderness and devotion and sacrifice, they felt led of the Lord to set out from the main mission station and take the gospel to a remote area.

This was a huge step of faith. At the village of N'dolera they were rebuffed by the chief, who would not let them enter his town for fear of alienating the local gods. The two couples opted to go half a mile up the slope and build their own mud huts.

They prayed for a spiritual breakthrough, but there was none. The only contact with the villagers was a young boy, who was allowed to sell them chickens and eggs twice a week. Svea Flood - a tiny woman only four feet, eight inches tall - decided that if this was the only African she could talk to, she would try to lead the boy to Jesus. And in fact, she succeeded.

But there were no other encouragements. Meanwhile, malaria continued to strike one member of the little band after another. In time the Ericksons decided they had had enough suffering and left to return to the central mission station. David and Svea Flood remained near N'dolera to go on alone.

Then, of all things, Svea found herself pregnant in the middle of the primitive wilderness. When the time came for her to give birth, the village chief softened enough to allow a midwife to help them. A little girl was born, whom they named Aina.

The delivery, however, was exhausting, and Svea Flood was already weak from bouts of malaria. The birth process was a heavy blow to her stamina. She lasted only another seventeen days.

Inside David Flood, something snapped in that moment. He dug a crude grave, buried his twenty-seven-year-old wife, and then took his children back down the mountain to the mission station. Giving his newborn daughter to the Ericksons, he snarled, "I'm going back to Sweden. I've lost my wife, and I obviously can't take care of this baby. God has ruined my life." With that, he headed for the port, rejecting not only his calling, but God himself.

Within eight months both the Ericksons were stricken with a mysterious malady and died within days of each other. The baby was then turned over to some American missionaries, who adjusted her Swedish name to "Aggie" and eventually brought her back to the United States at age three.

This family loved the little girl and were afraid that if they tried to return to Africa, some legal obstacle might separate her from them. So they decide to stay in their home country and switch from missionary work to pastoral ministry. And that is how Aggie grew up in South Dakota. As a young woman, she attended North Central Bible College in Minneapolis. There she met and married a young man named Dewey Hurst.

Years passed. The Hursts enjoyed a fruitful ministry. Aggie gave birth first to a daughter, then a son. In time her husband became president of a Christian college in the Seattle area, and Aggie was intrigued to find such Scandinavian heritage there.

One day a Swedish religious magazine appeared in her mailbox. She had no idea who had sent it, and of course she couldn't read the words. But as she turned the pages, all of a sudden a photo stopped her cold. There was a grave with a white cross - and on the cross the words SVEA FLOOD.

Aggie jumped in her car and went straight for a college faculty member who, she knew, could translate the article. "What does this say?" she demanded.

The instructor summarized the story: It was about missionaries who had come to N'dolera long ago . . . the birth of a white baby . . . the death of the young mother . . . the one little African boy who had been led to Christ . . . and how, after the whites had all left, the boy had grown up and finally persuaded the chief to let him build a school in the village. The article said that gradually he won all his students to Christ . . . the children led their parents to Christ . . . even the chief had become Christian. Today there were six hundred Christian believers in that one village . . . all because of the sacrifice of David and Svea Flood.

For the Hursts' twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, the college presented them with the gift of a vacation to Sweden. There Aggie sought to find her real father. An old man now, David Flood had remarried, fathered four more children, and generally dissipated his life with alcohol. He had recently suffered a stroke. Still bitter, he had one rule in his family: "Never mention the name of God - because God took everything from me."

After an emotional reunion with her half-brothers and half-sister, Aggie brought up the subject of seeing her father. The others hesitated. "You can talk to him," they replied, "even though he's very ill now. But you need to know that whenever he hears the name of God, he flies into a rage."

Aggie was not to be deterred. She walked into the squalid apartment, with liquor bottles everywhere, and approached the seventy-three-year-old man lying in a rumpled bed.

"Papa?" she said tentatively.

He turned and began to cry. "Aina," he said. "I never meant to give you away."

"It's all right, Papa," she replied, taking him gently in her arms. "God took care of me."

The man instantly stiffened. The tears stopped.

“God forgot all of us. Our lives have been like this because of him.” He turned his face back to the wall.

Aggie stroked his face and then continued, undaunted.

“Papa, I’ve got a little story to tell you, and it’s a true one. You didn’t go to Africa in vain. Mama didn’t die in vain. The little boy you won to the Lord grew up to win that whole village to Jesus Christ. The one seed you planted just kept growing and growing. Today there are six hundred African people serving the Lord because you were faithful to the call of God in your life. . . .

“Papa, Jesus loves you. He has never hated you.”

The old man turned back to look into his daughter’s eyes. His body relaxed. He began to talk. And by the end of the afternoon, he had come back to the God he had resented for so many decades.

Over the next few days, father and daughter enjoyed warm moments together. Aggie and her husband soon had to return to America - and within a few weeks David Flood had gone into eternity.

A few years later the Hursts were attending a high-level evangelism conference in London, England, when a report was given from the nation of Zaire (the former Belgian Congo).

The superintendent of the national church, representing some 110,000 baptized believers, spoke eloquently of the gospel’s spread in his nation. Aggie could not help going to ask him afterward if he had ever heard of David and Svea Flood.

“Yes, madam,” the man replied in French, his words being translated into English. “It was Svea Flood who led me to Jesus Christ. I was the boy who brought food to your parents before you were born. In fact, to this day your mother’s grave and her memory are honored by all of us.” He embraced her in a long, sobbing hug. Then he continued, “You must come to Africa to see, because your mother is the most famous person in our history.”

In time that is exactly what Aggie Hurst and her husband did. They were welcomed by cheering throngs of villagers. She even met the man who had been hired by her father many years before to carry her back down the mountain in a hammock-cradle.

The most dramatic moment, of course, was when the pastor escorted Aggie to see her mother’s white cross for herself. She knelt in the soil to pray and give thanks. Later that day, in the church, the pastor read from John 12:24: “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” He then followed with Psalm 126:5: “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.”

- Fresh Power by Jim Cymbala, pp. 115-120 (from Chapter 7 / Unqualified?) UNFORESEEN FRUIT

Do you want to miss out on what God is doing, being angry at Him for the rest of your life because of the situation you find yourself in? This man did, and look at what He missed. I am not saying that it is easy, but we must learn to trust in the Lord, to walk by faith and not by sight.

Because, **“Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.”** Habakkuk 3:17-19.