



“The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion
to the Book of
Habakkuk

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By
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“Behold, his soul
which is lifted up
is not upright in him:
but the just shall live
by his faith”

(Hab. 2:4)

Introduction

Many people think these old books of the prophets are not important for us today, likely among the most unused portions of your Bible. But I understand their messages to be as vital as they are contemporary. Old language and ancient circumstances to be sure. Written to a different time and culture of course. But when you make the effort to understand what the Lord is saying through these old voices you will discover it is as if they are preaching to our modern world and dealing with very current issues. Our God still speaks through His old book, and talking to you and me.

Habakkuk is one of those unknown men in the Bible. All we have about the man is found right here in his little book of prophecy. He preached and wrote to the nation of Judah just before their fall into captivity, just before King Nebuchadnezzar came and carried them away to Babylon. Habakkuk announced the Lord's purpose to punish Judah by taking them away from their land. He spoke in the same era as the prophet Jeremiah, who saw the same threat on the horizon and wept for his people.

Now Habakkuk was a man of faith, a man of God. Yet he had some very difficult questions, for which

he sought answers from the Lord. “Why do You allow evil to continue unpunished?” “Lord, how can You be holy and yet use unholy things to accomplish Your work?” Good and fair questions.

The whole of Habakkuk’s little book turns around 2:4, “*the just shall live by his faith*”. This is the key verse, bringing the Lord’s answer to the prophet’s concerns, as well as stating the core theme of the whole Bible, the essence of God’s words to man.

The approach we will use in our study is a simple one. We will seek to understand what is *said*, and then we will seek for applications, what these truths *means* to us here and now. This is the way we are always meant to read God’s Book of books. May the Lord bless this portion of His Word to our nourishment and growth in Him.

There are three chapters in this little book of Habakkuk;

- Chapter 1 – Babylon invades.
- Chapter 2 – Babylon is condemned.
- Chapter 3 – The Lord invades & destroys all enemies.

In chapter 1 there are three sections;

- 1:1-4 – Habakkuk’s 1st complaint.

- 1:5-11 – The Lord’s 1st response.
- 1:12- 17 – Habakkuk’s 2nd complaint.

Habakkuk first expressed his great concern about the wickedness happening among his people. But with the Lord’s first answer Habakkuk was then equally concerned with the way the Lord was planning to deal with his first concern.

“Behold ye among the heathen,
and regard,
and wonder marvellously:
for I will work a work in your day,
which ye will not believe,
though it be told you”

(Hab. 1:5)

Chapter 1

1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

1:1-4 – Conditions and Petitions

Vs. 2 – “O LORD, how long shall I cry...” – Habakkuk had been praying long to the Lord, crying to Him concerning the “*violence*” of society all around him. But it just did not seem like the Lord even heard or knew. Was He even there? Have you ever felt that way?

Now here is something different. Did you notice the interesting distinctive feature of the message of this prophet? God’s other prophets usually thundered their messages from the Lord to the people, their attention aimed at the crowds, speaking to them what the Lord told them to speak. Yet Habakkuk’s book records the prophet working out questions and concerns he had with the Lord His God, his attention aimed at the heavens. Rather than speaking to men for God, this prophet spoke to God about His way with men. So this book is more like a personal diary or journal.

Habakkuk was deeply troubled before his God. He was troubled first with the question of why the Lord did not seem to care about the terrible wickedness all around them. At least He was not *showing* any concern for evil, no action that the prophet could see. As well, why was the Lord not answering his prayers about this problem? We have all struggled with the same. If indeed God hears, why does He not answer or do something in response? And if God really hates evil, why does He not deal with evil? Why does He allow it to continue? Why allow the godly to be so troubled, while the ungodly prosper in their wrong?

Now the danger is to assume things, *wrong* things;

- That because the Lord does not respond, He does not *hear*. This is a bad assumption, for He has told us He hears.
- That because he does not immediately deal with evil He does not *care* about evil or those hurt by it. This is also a bad assumption, for God has told us He hates and will most certainly judge evil. David in Psalm 73 wrestled with the Almighty over the same, until he said “*then saw I their end*” (the end of the prospering wicked), that they stand in “*slippery places*”.

1:3 *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's book moves through the same roller coaster ride of concern and questions. Yet though his book begins with such questioning uncertainty, notice the difference as he comes out end of his book in 3:17-18. All doubts replaced with confidence by the end of the prophet's message, with such rock-solid clarity and resolve.

Vs. 3 – *“Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?”* – Here is the difficult question of “Why?”

- Vs. 2 – Why will You not hear my cry?
- Vs. 2 – Why will You not deliver us from violence?
- Vs. 3 – Why do You fill my eyes with evil and burden my heart with ache?
- Vs. 13 – Why do You tolerate and even use treacherous people?
- Vs. 13 – Why do You not step in and deliver the righteous when they are consumed by the wicked?

“Lord, I get the feeling that You do not *hear*. Or You do not *care* about people or justice or holiness on earth. Or maybe You do not even *see* it. Or You are not even *there*? Or perhaps You see and hear but are *unable* to do anything about it. It is the impression I have when You allow all of this to continue as if it always has and always will.” It is almost like Habakkuk felt that he was more jealous for God’s holiness on earth than God Himself! Though that of course could never be true. Yet it brings something out very clearly. This man of God was passionate about God’s holiness on earth! Are you? Am I? Are we with Habakkuk in his passion? I do not mean just a hatred for wrongs that hurt us personally. I am talking about a heart that hurts over wrongs that are wrong because they are against God’s pure nature, against His holy heart. Does it matter to you that we live in an evil society, like swimming in a cesspool? Does it hurt anymore? Or have we come to quite tolerate our evil society, and maybe even enjoy filling your eyes and thoughts with it? Even joining in with it? Should there not remain in us a measure of unrest until that day when *“the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”*?

Elijah was a man who was jealous for the Lord’s glory, complaining to the Lord, *“I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of*

Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away” (I Ki. 19:10, 14). Elijah mourned even to the point of despair over society’s hatred of the Lord’s things and people. Such a holy interest will exist in every man and woman who is truly godly, with heart of faith.

Now Habakkuk was probably wishing for some kind of immediate sign, not only of the Lord having heard him, but of His commitment to justice. Perhaps, as with Elijah, he was hoping to see fireballs from heaven consuming those practicing evil and violence against others. Perhaps, as in Ezra’s day, he wished for a great heart-rending national revival, where both evil and good men are touched to the core and moved to genuine repentance and joy in the Lord. Perhaps he looked for the earth-shaking thunder of God’s voice, as at Sinai, laying down the law. Or perhaps he wished for the rise of a godly leader, as David or Solomon, to deal firmly with the wicked and lead the nation to righteousness, a tough-as-nails Nehemiah type, to beat into shape those wicked ones who so desperately needed to be thumped. Oh there will be something very helpful to our hearts about seeing Jesus rule with a rod of iron in the days of His earthly kingdom, dealing swiftly and firmly with ungodliness, accommodating

no evil. It does a good heart good to see the practice of justice, and such despair when justice fails.

Some years back our dog snapped at a little girl when her family was visiting our home. I dragged that dog straight into the garage and gave her a hiding. My actions were partly out of loving concern for the dog, for I knew it was a matter of life and death for her. I knew we must have her put down if she continued in that behaviour. She never snapped at a child again. But as well, that hiding was for the benefit of the parents of that little girl, for it was right that they see justice done. This is what Habakkuk desired of the Lord. He wanted to see justice done against wrong and those doing wrong. He wished to see justice done for the benefit of those doing right. He longed for the visible, obvious assurance that it really is best to do what is right and to avoid evil, that there really are rewards. It is a common concern among men. The psalmist expressed the same in Psalm 73, wrongly concluding in vs. 13 that “*we have cleansed our hearts in vain*”. “Lord, why have we taken pains to be right and do right, when being wrong just does not seem to matter?” We can certainly understand for we have all been there.

Well the Lord would answer the prophet’s concerns soon enough. And when He did nobody would miss

the party or the point! The one thing that comes through quite clearly in the Lord's response is that He had not lost track of anything in the least, any hold on justice.

Again, it hurts the child of God, with heart touched by the Lord's sensitivity, to see others wronged, for we are grieved to see it. And if this be so with godly *people*, how much more so for *God* to look upon violence and injustice with heart-wrenching grief. And how much greater anguish when His own beloved children are the ones being so trampled!

“For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention”, says the grieving man of God. Again the mention of violence, as in vs. 2. *“Spoiling”* is something we see a good bit of in this land. From the lower theft of hijacker and necklace snatcher, to the “higher” theft of exorbitant taxes and pilfering bank charges, or government officials dipping into public funds. Man taking from man, or withholding more than his due, more than is necessary or appropriate. The answer is not to turn hermit or emigrant (Jer. 9:2). The answer is not to become like them. The answer is to *wait*, looking to the Lord for that day when it will be another world. We look for a day of justice and purity and love, when God again shall “intrude” into the affairs of men, where no longer we will see

1:4 *Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.*

spoiling and violence and injustice and corruption, when Jesus Christ at last comes to His kingdom. We wait on God because that is what faith does. It is what we see in this prophet. He was confused, frustrated, concerned, yet he just continued to trust (3:17-18). We will most certainly one day have all that God has promised us.

Vs. 4 – *“Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth”* – It was a day when nobody was speaking up for the Word of God or for His right way. It was a day when every man was doing that which was right in his own eyes, whatever each had the power to get away with. Few were humbly turning to the law of God for guidance, but rather read His words through the lens of their own opinion. It was a day like our own in so many ways. How many in our world today genuinely give thought to the details of what God has spoken? How many hammer out their beliefs on the anvil of God’s Word? The common view so often expressed is that, “Since doctrine divides but love unites, we do not feel it is important to make an issue of the details of

Bible truth. We rather see *Christian unity* as the important thing”. Or, “Our primary interest is in spiritual experiences. Put away your Bible man! Stop asking questions and just step into the way the Spirit is moving right now”. But God works and leads through His eternal words.

“Therefore the law is slacked” – As if God’s law had gone limp, no longer a living, breathing, pulsing, powerful part of society. It was as in the days of Eli and Samuel when the word of the Lord was rare (I Sam. 3:1).

“Judgment [justice] doth never go forth” – Not sometimes, or seldom, but “never!” Never are things honestly handled according to what is fair and right. Never are crimes properly dealt with. Never is justice done upon criminals as it should be. Those who are right are condemned, and those in the wrong are excused or justified. Laws are twisted by those in power so that evil wins, and those who are evil get away with it. Good is squashed to silence, such that the appropriate way of dealing with a complaint turns to absolute disaster. When those who are right try to press for what is right it is turned onto them, and they are made out to be the one in the wrong. It was as in our modern unjust world, where criminals are often painted up to be more the victims than the true victims. Those

standing against the sins of society are considered the sinners against society. Try condemning immorality or homosexuality or any lying religion on Facebook and see what happens. It is gone so back to front.

“The wicked doth compass about the righteous” – Everyone daring to stand up for right soon finds he is a minority. He is surrounded and shouted down by the majority of fools around him. When taken to court the wrong side wins the case, by fraud, through bribery or favours or back-handers. Results are not based upon what really happened or fairness, but on who you know or how much you passed in an envelope. It is what every honest child of God can expect in this world, and all the more as we approach the end of this age. It is what every truly righteous soul is sure to face at times, a circle of harassing enemies. O for that coming day when it will be quite the other way around. For Jesus will return to His earthly kingdom, and from Jerusalem He will reign over all the earth. His rule will be a righteous rule, in complete justice. He will rule with a rod of iron, with unbending firmness of fairness, so that no ungodly purpose will win in that day. He will rule with the wisdom of Solomon, indeed a greater than Solomon. None will be able to outmanoeuvre Him, for He knows the very hearts of all men. Nobody will get far with evil in Christ’s

kingdom, for it will be a day when the godly will be in the majority. And all will be quick to rise up and “*compass about*” one practicing ungodliness.

How blessed the church where it tends to be this way even now. Happy the church where those who want to cut others down or work their own godless plans are soon surrounded by a circle of saints, with Bibles in hand, ready to point out wrong. It is the way it should be, with evil quickly confronted. Every Bible-believing church should be a little reflection of what Christ’s righteous kingdom will be, giving no opportunity for any to forward their divisive purposes, chasing such unrepentant troublemakers off to more permissive churches. Our purpose as a church is not to keep everybody by any means, but either to win or to purge out those who will not be won to the Lord’s heart.

Remember the Lord’s assurance that vengeance is His and He will repay (Rom. 12:19). When He does not repay right away when we are faced with wrong, when He seems to not care, it might move us to thoughts of taking vengeance ourselves. But to react so is only to deny faith in the Lord’s assurance that He will indeed handle all things appropriately.

It is all aspects of the very same question. Will you just believe God and wait *on Him*? Will you believe that He does hear the righteous when they cry to

1:5 *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.*

Him? Will you believe that He is mindful of injustice, and is concerned about it? Will you believe that He is there and aware and quite able, though He does not do things in the way and when we wish? Will you believe that *it will be worth it all when we see Jesus?* Heart-sore we may be, and rightly we should be in this adulterous and sinful generation that so runs against our own new nature in Christ. But the answer is to wait and see, to just believe (James 5:7-8).

1:5-11 – The Lord’s Surprising Answer

The Lord now comes to Habakkuk with an answer. But it is an answer God’s prophet is not going to appreciate. God’s answer was that He was going to bring an incredible, unbelievable thing upon His rebellious people. He was going to bring the nation of Babylon against them and carry them away into captivity. Understand that the Lord had said it centuries before Habakkuk’s time, that He would amaze the surrounding nations with what He would do to His people if they *should turn from Him*. It was His warning from the beginning in Deuteronomy

29:24-28, and confirmed to King Solomon in I Kings 9:6-9. The nations would be shocked with the crushing blow the Lord would bring upon His own people, people He was specially bound to in a covenant relationship, people He had done so much for and poured so much into. Understand as well what would be the really jarring aspect for the nations looking on. If God will do that to *His own people*, what will He do to we who do not belong to Him? It was something of that awareness that finally penetrated my own unsaved heart so many years ago. God is so holy and so deadly serious about evil. What would He do with one so unclean before Him, one who was not right with Him? Unless I find cleansing of my sin and am put right with Him, I have *no hope in the world!*

Now look closely here. Had the Lord forgotten His ancient warnings? Had that threat that He had made long centuries before slipped from His mind? Even one little bit? Is He like us faltering parents, who give warnings and then fail to keep our word? You know how it is. Make a promise of good to a child and he will never let you forget it. Warn a child of bad, and never a peep when you later fail to follow through. Is the Lord at all like we who so easily forget? *Not at all!* The danger with such faulty parenting is that a child may think the Lord is forgetful like his parents. Or perhaps He never

really meant His fearful words in the first place. *Not so! Not so with the Lord!* Believe it! Though His words were spoken centuries before, and though it may look to all the world as if He has surely forgotten in His long silence, yet the Lord will do what He said He will do! Once His word has been given you can live by it and swear by it and trust your life to it. Though His timing may be different from what we would expect, though centuries slip by since He spoke it, though He does not repeat His threats in the interim, though He said it only once or twice, yet as He has spoken so He will do!

Hear His words spoken so many long centuries before our own days;

“He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides [is abiding] on him” (Jn. 3:36).

Now let me ask you something. Does it make any difference that this promise was spoken centuries ago? Does time, even a lot of it, somehow dull the sharpness of the promise or warning, or soften its punch? Will you hear such words of God to you? Paul quotes from Habakkuk 1:5 in Acts 13:40-41, apparently to warn the Jewish people of the grave danger in refusing the gospel message in Jesus Christ.

1:6 *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 theirs.*

As well, see how from the Lord's first words to His prophet it is a message of searing judgment. Other prophets such as Isaiah, Hosea, and Nahum come right in on that same theme with never an ice-breaker. Even so was the *entire thrust* of Jonah's message to Nineveh, a completely negative threat. God comes with His words meaning business, and we are wise to hear Him most carefully. Though the Lord endures long He does not endure *always* with provoking people. Do you see here how the day of vengeance was already in His heart? His plans were already made and even then coming together. He never was, He never will be disinterested in the affairs of life on earth. He never misses anything.

Vs. 6 – “*For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans*” – So the Lord now tells His prophet that it would be “*the Chaldeans*” or Babylonians who would come. The prophet Jeremiah also warned of the same, calling Babylon “*the hammer of the whole earth*” (50:23). Now listen. “***I raise up the Chaldeans***”. Do you hear it? It would be the Lord doing it, that hammer in His hand. And such a hammering they would bring. They would come as a “bitter” and “hasty” people.

1:7 *They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.*

All that was coming would be so difficult to bear, cruel and fierce, coming with the most insensitive passions and fury. History now records the truth of these prophecies in the coming of those Chaldean conquerors. They would do their will without mercy or regard for pain. There would be no United Nations regulations to keep them from fully doing all that was in their dark hearts. Their every whim they were free to practice. How *utterly miserable* the plight of Israel when what God threatened at last arrived! Fulfilled literally and completely!

Vs. 7 – *“They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves”* – *They* would decide what is justice or dignity. Oh how strongly the Lord warned of the gruesome nature of what was coming. It would be bad for them, *very* bad! The Lord was right up front with His people. It is the way He is with people. Though some might think in their hearts, “Agh, even if it does happen, how bad could be? Life can get pretty heavy sometimes, but there is always a bright side to every dark cloud”. Yet it is the God of heaven speaking here, bringing vengeance upon those He Himself is against. That is just no place to

1:8 *Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.*

ever find yourself! The only One who is in a position to know what it will be like is saying, “No my friend, but you have no idea how *very bad!* There will be no bright side to that dark day!”

Even so it is with the Lord’s warning of hell. Some might say, “Agh, no man, now you are just trying to scare me. Even if there is a hell, how bad can it really be? I have a lot of friends who will be there”. Will you trust the One who knows? *Terrible and dreadful!!* One will wish to be anywhere else when at last it falls upon him!

Please understand how the Lord is the very best Friend to those who love Him and seek His pleasure. But oh He is *the most terrible enemy* to those who despise Him, who refuse to fear Him! It is a fearful thing indeed “*to fall into hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31).

Vs. 8 – “*Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves*” – Eish! Even their horses are fierce and fast as leopards. What is His point? There would be no

1:9 *They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.*

running from such speed, such stealth! There would be no hiding from those who “*spread themselves*” everywhere. **No escape!** There could be no standing against them. When they come there will be absolutely no hope of even the least mercy, in the same way that you could expect no mercy from a pack of hungry wolves!

Even so when the Lord closes the curtains on a soul’s opportunity for life eternal. There will be no hope, no escape, no reasoning, no hiding, no mercy! God is describing the way of His judgment when it at last comes.

Vs. 9 – “*They shall come all for violence*” – Such a terrifying motto they would carry with them. **“All for violence!”** Everything would be swallowed up before them, as a tornado violently consumes all before it. And the number of their captives would be as countless as the sand of the seashore.

Vs. 10 – “*And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them*” – Here is their attitude when they would come. “*Scoff...scorn...deride*”. They would come with such irresistible

1:10 *And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.*

strength that they would laugh at every human authority or power. They would come as a law unto themselves, recognizing no other law. They would smile at every fortress, as a grizzly bear might smugly grin at the thought of wrestling with a rock dassie. As Goliath arrogantly snorted as young David stepped out to meet him, saying, “What is this! A child!” But this time the Lord would be on the giant’s side. He would not give the victory as He did with David. For this people had long since left walking with God as godly young David did. The Lord had called Babylon His hammer, and so they would smash every defence as if no defence at all, as if candy-floss armour and eggshell walls. Any walled city that tried to make a stand, the Chaldeans would just *“heap up dust and take it”*. They would heap up dirt against the wall and flow right over it. It is a picture of hopeless defence!

Even so at the last, it will be the Lord laughing at every human fortress (Ps. 2:4). He will come with overwhelming, unquestioned power to bring His true justice to earth.

It is an absolutely horrifying picture the Lord painted for the prophet. But understand it! The Lord was paying Judah in the very same coin they had minted. Would they deal with each other in violence (vs. 2-3)? They did not know the meaning of violence! Babylon would come “*all for violence*”. Would they deny justice (vs. 3-4)? Their coming captors would rewrite justice according to their own definition. Would they show no mercy to each other? Mercy would soon fade to a distant memory for these people.

The moral of the story, told so many times throughout history and throughout God’s words, is this – ***You do not mess with God!!*** “Agh nee man, but that is *ancient* history! God would not handle people that way in our day? We do not need to worry about that sort of thing anymore?” Yet is it not the same Lord of glory, strong to punish those who despise Him in ways “*terrible and dreadful*”? As the Lord has warned, “*they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed*” (I Sam. 2:30). Please, please consider where you stand with the Lord!

“Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD’s anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek

1:11 *Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.*

righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger" (Zeph. 2:2-3).

With vs. 11 the Lord now begins to speak of Babylon's stumble. Their successes would go to their head and they would "*pass over*" or step over the line and "*offend*" God, the One allowing their success. Why would Babylon fall? Because they would impute "*his power unto his god*". They would think their success due to their own false god.

It happens all the time with the people of earth. They see some success, because the Lord allows it for a time, and it moves them only to self-confidence. So it was with Assyria (Isa. 10:13-15), and with Israel, and with King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30), and with Satan (Isa. 14:12-14). Success tends to deceive we created beings. It has a way of turning hearts away from humble dependence on God.

Do you remember Belshazzar's feast in Daniel 5? They were mocking God, drinking themselves drunk from the sacred cups taken from the temple in Jerusalem. They were praising the gods of silver and gold, because of the great strength and success

of their glorious city of Babylon. But the Lord was even then organizing their downfall. That very evening in fact the city fell to Cyrus of Persia. It just never occurred to Babylon that they were great because the true God of Israel allowed them to be great for a time. They would have been wise to recognise that. It was for *God's* purposes, not for theirs. He raised them up and carried them along as His rod of correction against His wicked children.

O how we must ever watch our heart lest it rise up in pride. Our every success is all *from* the Lord, *for* the Lord, *through* the Lord, *to* the Lord – *all of God!* And all for the glory of God! Do not mess with God. Do not mess with His glory. The only way of success into eternity is all for the glory of God.

So the Lord had made His stunning announcement to His prophet. His wrath would be poured out on Judah through the Chaldeans. Faithful Habakkuk was now faced with another concern. In vs. 12-2:1 is the prophet's response to this most frustrating news.

Vs. 12 – *“Lord, would You actually allow Babylon victory over Your people?!”* This is now all of Habakkuk's concern, and he pleads his concern to the Lord. He is questioning the Lord's plan. Yet see how the Lord hears complaints from His children. Speaking our concerns to the Lord is not a problem.

1:12 *Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.*

It all depends on the attitude with which we come to Him. We are not wise to harbour any hard thoughts toward the Lord. Though we may not understand the what, why, and wherefore of His purposes, yet always we cling to Him in love. This we see in the humility of Habakkuk's approach, "O LORD my God, mine Holy One". Can you say that? Habakkuk knew God was his God – "O LORD my God". Never a question there. Nor did he begin to question the Lord's perfection of purity – "mine Holy One". The Lord was not offended by His prophet's earnest concerns, but gave him answer.

The heart of faith will never leave the Lord! Again, though the disciples at the end of John 6 were in complete confusion, yet they clung by faith. Jesus had said some very hard things, such that people began walking away. In fact He was actually driving them away with His hard words, because they could be driven away in their unbelief. It just did not make sense to the disciples! Yet still their grip held in their anguished response, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*" (vs. 68).

See here how the child of God may be shaken by his uncertainty, but he cannot be shaken loose and driven away from his God.

“Art Thou not from everlasting?” – Habakkuk first pins his hope on the eternal nature of God. The *eternal nature* of God is the right way to think when temporary things no longer make sense. With our hopes pegged to such an Everlasting One, we know with Habakkuk that *“we shall not die”*. A people with such eternal promises from the Eternal One can never be destroyed. History has proven the truth of Habakkuk’s words. Nations come and go. Babylon rose and fell and is no more. But Israel remains! And though there be times in history when the Lord’s true church seems to be under great threat, yet the Lord is still calling out those who are His. And all who are His will be with Him when time is no more. It is that eternal perspective that carries us through our trials, and even gives joy in them. Even as Jesus assured His trembling followers in John 14:19, *“Because I live, ye shall live also”*.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things

which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:17-18).

Habakkuk understood it was the Lord who "ordained" and "established" the Chaldeans "for judgment" and "correction". So he understood that they were on the end of God's leash. A hammer they might be, but in God's hand. As the evil one with Job, they could do no more than the Lord allowed. So it actually was the will of God they were facing, not the whim of man or random events. With this thought in mind how can we really fear anything in life, even death itself? It is God who ordains and establishes all of these things. You and I simply cannot die until the moment it is *God's will* that our life should end. It is not the car accident or bullet or bad heart. It is God who is Lord of life and death. Do I resist or fight God's will? No! Has He ever given cause to fear His will? Of course not! Ok, then if my death is what He considers best then so be it. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, both in my life and in my death. To see my God as the Author of every eventuality is to know sweet rest!

Vs. 13 – "*Thou are of purer eyes then to behold evil*" – Though Habakkuk knew God's promises ran right into eternity, yet he also had a serious question. How could one so pure, so holy as the Lord use an unclean nation like Babylon? It is a hard one. Certainly the Lord must stop those who were wicked

1:13 *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?*

in Judah, but would He accomplish this by giving victory to wicked Babylon? Still it is the wicked winning through their wickedness, is it not? With the added concern that the Lord's hand seemed to be in it! Would that not in a sense make our holy God complicit with the wicked? But the Lord is "*not a God that has pleasure in wickedness*" (Ps. 5:4). In fact, He "*hates all workers of iniquity*" (Ps. 5:5). The "*holy One*" cannot be accused of joining with evil. But He *uses* wicked choices as deftly and wisely as He uses faithfulness. He does not cause evil choices, yet He so amazingly takes up man's choices, bad or good, and wisely weaves them into His righteous purposes.

Imagine one who is carving a man's face into a block of wood. And as he is taking off shavings he comes to where the mouth will be, and there he discovers a flaw in the wood. So he stops and studies it carefully for a while. And he decides to use that flaw in creating a very different expression on the face than he had planned. But the creative difference makes it a priceless masterpiece for its peculiar

1:14 *And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?*

1:15 *They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.*

uniqueness. So with our God in His ability to so deftly use the choices of people for their best and His glory.

Many have wondered why the Lord does not restrain evil and evildoers, why He allows it to exist. The truth is that God accomplishes His purposes *through* the wicked, and then *on* the wicked, weaving folly together with faithfulness to form the fabric of His eternal purposes. But never does He initiate evil or allow the stain of evil to touch Him.

In vs. 14-17 Habakkuk continues his complaint to the Lord. He was concerned that men as evil as the Chaldeans kill people like fishermen kill fish. In fact it is like they do not even think of it as killing. Even as fishermen “*take*” fish and “*catch*” fish and “*gather*” fish (vs. 15), as if killing them is a non-issue. “Lord, men like that will think nothing of slaughtering Your people! And think about how they will rejoice and boast in their catch, as men do when returning from a good day of fishing. But then they will actually honour their nets, as if the nets

1:16 *Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.*

1:17 *Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?*

are gods who fed them with fish! Lord, how can you use men like that?”

Now there are only three directions you can go when glorying in benefits you receive. Either you glorify God, or you glorify yourself and your own great abilities (as Sennacherib in Isa. 10:13), or you give credit to some other item here on earth for helping you, as these, bowing to their successful nets (vs. 16). It would be like the #1 Seed in tennis in an interview saying, “Well, I owe it all to this most incredible tennis racquet! Yessir this racquet has given me victory time and again. I just turn it lose and it always knows what to do!” Superstitions are the same, just a form of idolatry, thinking some earthly thing (like nets) has power or ability. As the cricketer or the golfer doing or wearing certain things, in just a certain way, to bring a better chance of success. The lucky hat or shoes or socks or bat. A look here, a tap of his bat in this special way before stepping up to the pitch. We knew some folks who were planning a long road trip. The wife announced that she would certainly be wearing her

lucky necklace. They had never had any troubles while travelling when wearing that special item. She was thinking that *thing* can do what only God can do. The candles and crystals and incantations and charms for “good luck” and keeping the St. Joseph chain letter going, catholic and Hindu icons and danglies, etc. All shades of the same. Superstitiously thinking success or protection comes through the power or ability of something here on earth.

We see the same lie ascribed to the Ark of the Covenant in I Samuel 4:3. They thought “*it*” had power to give Israel victory in war. Of course the Lord let Israel be defeated in that circumstance, and let “*it*” get taken by their enemies. No “*it*”, like no man, living or dead, or any other creation, has true power over the living. Only the Lord of glory has power! Only Him do we honour. Babylon thinking their success was through some other power besides God’s was the beginning of the end for them.

So we have considered the mistake of thinking that God does not hear or does not care or is not there or does not reward our faith. We have considered the grave danger of messing with God. For He speaks warning, and then He does what He said He will do. The number of years between warning and

doing simply does not matter. We have considered the offence to God of giving credit to any item or being or creation besides our one and only gracious Creator.

Chapter 2

2:1 *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.*

Vs. 1 – *“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me”* – In Habakkuk’s great concern he determined to just wait for God’s answer. It was a wise decision, an excellent response! He was willing even to be *“reproved”* if the Lord saw fit, willing for whatever God might bring. Habakkuk shows a healthy attitude here. He was happy to hear what was best, even if it hurt. *“Though He reprove me like He did Job, I want to hear from Him”*. It is the kind of honest attitude people do not have when they are not willing to expose themselves to God’s words or to biblical preaching. *“Lord, bring it. I am willing and waiting to hear from You. Wherever I have turned from the very centre of Your will show me from Your Word, and show me the way back”*. How very different those who are willing to hear *if* they are happy with what they hear. This is the way people too often handle the Lord. But not this godly man. *“Lord, You are God! Indeed, ‘My God, my holy One’*. And though I do not understand, I will wait

2:2 *And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*

to hear what You want me to understand and believe and do”. Just a humble servant heart, ready for his Master’s orders. I hear the willing spirit of Samuel in Habakkuk’s words here, saying, “*Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears*”. As well, there is a sweet note of resolve in Habakkuk’s words. “I will sit right here until I have an answer from Him”. How quickly the Lord rewarded that holy resolve in His child.

Vs. 2 – “*And the LORD answered me*” – The Lord does not disappoint the believing expectation of His servant. James promised the same in the first few verses of his book. If a man should lack wisdom, let him set his face toward God with unwavering confidence and he will have what he needs from the Lord.

“*Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables*” – Habakkuk was told to write it “*plain*” or large, with letters easy to read, so those carrying it might run with a clear message. So the Lord’s answer is to be carried to all, pointing up the huge importance of what our God was about to say here.

2:3 *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.*

Vs. 3 – *“For the vision is yet for an appointed time”* – It was the Lord’s assurance to His prophet (and to us) that all was running according to the Lord’s *“appointed time”*.

“But at the end it shall speak, and not lie” – God’s promises are sure, for *“at the end”* they will prove true. And everyone who runs with His true message will be found speaking the truth *“at the end”*, while every other so-called prophet or sacred writing will be shown to be lies after all.

“Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” – God’s appointments are not necessarily on *this* month’s calendar page. *“Though it tarry”* or be delayed from our way of looking at it, *“it will not tarry”* from God’s perspective. There are no delays or hold-ups in the Lord’s timing. “Delays” are only in the thinking of men. Though God’s promise may seem to be exceeding long in coming, *“wait for it”*.

“It will not tarry” – There are no actual delays with God. For here is how the righteous show their faith,

by their patience to faithfully wait on the promise of God, though it is long in coming. In fact, though the fulfilment is beyond the years of our life, yet God said it and He will do as He said. We accept and believe the promises of God as true and trustworthy, He who “*shall speak, and not lie*”. We live by faith in His promises, as if the actual fulfilment has already come to pass. For that is how the righteous live, “*by his faith*” (vs. 4), as if already holding “*things hoped for*”, as if seeing “*things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1).

The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews picked up on these words to Habakkuk and did something very interesting with them. He made them speak of Jesus Christ in His return. For he quotes the prophet in this way in Hebrews 10:37-38, “*For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*”. In the original Greek behind the English translation there it distinctly refers to “*the one coming*”, not to an “*it*”, as in an event. The Lord spoke to Habakkuk of “*it*”, “*though it tarry, wait for it*”, speaking of all that is promised by God. But in the book of Hebrews He speaks of “*He*”, “*He that shall come will come*”, applying the words particularly to the promised Messiah. I find it exceedingly interesting that the littleness of the “*while*” is so greatly underscored in this Hebrews quote. Again, in the Greek behind the English it is

2:4 *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*

mikron hoson hoson – literally “a little, how very, how very”. A double underline! “The very least little while”. How very, very soon that One coming will come. When one day we stand in eternity looking back to these days, how incredibly brief the days of our life will appear!

Vs. 4 – “*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith*” – Here is the key verse of Habakkuk’s message, and of the Lord’s answer to the prophet, and to us through him. Indeed this is the key verse of the Lord’s message throughout the whole Bible!!

“*The just shall live by his faith*” – This phrase is in fact quoted 3 times in the New Testament. Paul quoted these words in Romans 1:17 to demonstrate *how* men become “*just*” or justified. We are justified or made righteous before God “*by faith*”. See also Romans 3:22; 4:2-5. Paul then quoted the same words again in Galatians 3:11 to show how the righteous *keep* eternal life. Not by law-keeping, but “*by faith*”. A salvation that is received from God by faith cannot be lost. True salvation is neither gained by works nor kept by works. And then the

writer of Hebrews used these words again in 10:38 to show the way to an overcoming Christian life. We conduct our lives in a way pleasing to God by faith (11:6). Hebrews 11 is a list of those who did what they should because they believed God. Faith continues seeking God's pleasure even if that does not make good sense as the world sees it. Faith is what gives solidity to a soul. It is what causes one to not "*draw back*" or turn away from the Lord or His will. The one who has not truly believed in Jesus will draw back and give up on the Lord when the way gets too hard. He bails out like Judas Iscariot when he sees there are no immediate gains in being a Christian, thus exposing himself for what he really is, an unbeliever.

I have a little arc welder in my garage, because sometimes I need to make things out of steel. Now welding can be a tricky business. When you weld two pieces of steel together the weld forms a very weak slag covering. You normally knock that off when you are done to see how good the weld. It can be deceiving. It may look like I have made a solid weld, and then when I hit it with a hammer and knock off the slag sometimes I discover a ridge of steel on this piece and a ridge on that piece and a valley of rubbish in between! No connection! I have often found it quite different than it at first appeared. It is the same with people. It may look

and talk like a believer on the surface, until it gets hit with God's hammer. When hit with the hammer of hard times or evil options and the slag flies away what we discover can often be surprising, when it looked so solid before. But when it was hit it proved to be only dross or fake after all. No connection. For you see, the unbeliever has a price, a limit beyond which he will not tolerate. And the Lord is sure to eventually push the price of being a "Christian" beyond that limit, in order to display him. But the true believer simply has no price limit. He understands that he was dead and now lives by God's grace. Such a one continues with the Lord even when life is at its very hardest. For there is indeed a true bond, a supernatural connection that holds when stressed. As those disciples desperately clinging to Jesus when everybody else was walking away in John 6. As Job when all that he had was so suddenly stripped away. So it was with Habakkuk here, clinging to the Lord though His message could not be more difficult to receive. It is because of our faith that we carry on, looking "*for a city with foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*", though we never see it in this life (as Abraham). It is because of our faith that we respond according to what the Lord promises or warned, though there is no visible evidence why we should (as Noah). As E.M. Bounds once wrote, "Faith is not

an aimless act of the soul, but a looking to God and resting upon His promises”. Faith is that exercise of the soul that so lifts our attention to God that it carries us right above our circumstances here below. What we have here is a description of a heart of faith in a man of faith. It is an encouragement to be steadfast, but there is more than just that. This is a *prediction*, an assurance of the way a true heart of faith will respond. Faith will patiently wait for the fulfilment of God’s promises. It *will* hold fast to the Lord, though He tarry loooooong. It will carry on following Him though hurting.

“His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him” – This is now a contrast. *“Lifted up”* speaks of pride. *“Not upright”* literally means not straight. Something is skew or not put right in this one. This is contrasted with the *“just”*, the one who is righteous or put right with God.

“Shall live by faith” – He shall *“live”* or flourish. The just shall not perish.

“By his faith” – By his faithfulness or firmness of confidence in God’s promises. Though the promise tarry, *this* is that vital element that moves one to wait for it.

Ah but that skewed soul, the one who is not righteous because he is so lifted up in pride, will not

wait or endure or continue or cling. As the writer of Hebrews puts it, such a one will “*draw back*” or quit or depart from the Lord, bringing upon himself God’s displeasure. As the Lord says there in Hebrews 10:38, “*but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him*”. He quits because his soul is lifted up in pride and not right in him.

I once spoke to a young man who scorned the idea that the Lord would put the choice of belief and unbelief before men, and then reward or condemn them according to their response. He did not personally think Christianity true, and considered it rubbish that he would perish in an eternal hell for remaining so unpersuaded. But the Lord makes the heart of the matter clear here that man might see and understand. Those who refuse to cling to the Lord in faith are actually showing their soul lifted up in pride, a soul not put right or justified. God condemns souls for their proud hatred of the light of God’s truth, displayed in their avoidance of it or departure from it (John 3:21). But the heart of faith patiently, steadfastly waits for God to keep His promises, “seeing” those promises as if already fulfilled.

From vs. 5 and through to the end of chapter 2 the Lord then follows with a “*taunting proverb*” (vs. 6), taken up by the nations and aimed at the proud

2:5 *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:*

nation of Babylon.

Vs. 5 – “*Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man*” – This parable of the nations comes across as a series of woes, describing what the nation of Babylon was like, yet ranging wider to display the nature of every proud man. It is a commentary on one whose “*soul which is lifted up is not upright in him*”. And heading the list of the Lord’s concerns here is “*proud man*”, displayed in his transgression “*by wine*”. Interesting that God puts pride and booze together. The drink of the proud perhaps? Until the proud one is left with nothing to be proud of, when it “*at the last bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder*” (Prov. 23:32). The same of course would be true of every type of intoxicating substance. What real benefit has booze ever brought to a person anyway, apart from the anaesthetic use referred to in Proverbs 31? Has drink ever enhanced anyone’s health or wealth or testimony or family life? It has only the potential for personal and national degradation and disgrace. Your argument is not with me. Compare in Daniel

5 proud Belshazzar of Babylon at the point of Babylon's downfall enflamed under the influence of wine. Compare as well;

- The first sign of trouble after the Lord cleansed the earth through the Flood came through drink and drunkenness (Gen. 9:20-25).
- Those "*mighty to drink wine*" in Isaiah 5:22-23. God spoke "woe" upon the besotted judges who succumbed to the influence of drink and bribes. That they were "*mighty to drink*" (vs. 22) speaks perhaps of a proud boast in their ability to consume booze and still keep their head. As if this was something to admire, rather than a glorying in their shame.
- Nadab and Abihu perhaps moved by drink to the trespass for which they were judged with immediate death in Leviticus 10. Pride must surely have been involved there as well, for a truly humble soul would not so neglect God's words.
- Leaders forbidden strong drink in Proverbs 31, lest their perceptions and judgments be perverted.

Wine and strong drink is the drink of the proud,

2:6 *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!*

certainly when it is abused.

Woe #1 – 2:6-8 – One taking what is not his.

Vs. 6 – “*Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him*” – “*All these*” are the nations all joining in a taunting song against Babylon, “*the hammer of the whole earth*”. It is a song with five stanzas, all beginning with the word “woe”. And again, with the focus ranging wider than just that particular dominant nation at that time, but seeming to take in the seat of Satan’s domain, only finally fully to be destroyed at Christ’s return (Rev. 17-18).

“*Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!*” – Whether by stealing, extortion, usury, cheating, etc.

“*How long?*” – Here is the obvious question. Just how long will gains gotten through deceit or force last? The obvious implication here is that such gains have a short shelf life, at least on the taker’s shelf. They come to an end, and vs. 7 adds the word “*suddenly*” to their flight. Because somebody else

will surely rise up to take from the taker.

“And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!” – This is a difficult phrase in the translating. Some writers suggest that the Hebrew word translated *“thick clay”* in the KJV may refer to the idea of “debt”. Thus woe to the one lading or loading himself with debt. As we know, the immediate context here is the looting bands of the Chaldeans, invading the nations all around them, stripping those lands and people of everything of value, things which of course were not theirs. Perhaps in doing this they were loading themselves with debt? As if the Lord considered possessions taken from others to be as if taken in loan, to be paid back in full? Such a concept would fit well with the Lord’s way of thinking, for we know from Proverbs that the opposite is true. Something given to one in need is considered by the Lord to be as if a loan to Him. *“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again”* (19:17). So if from the Lord’s perspective giving to the needy is a “loan” to be repaid to the giver, then perhaps one foolish enough to be taking from another is a “debt” to be paid back by the taker as well, only lading himself with a burden of debt to be paid in full eventually.

Now if the KJV translators are correct in translating

2:7 *Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?*

2:8 *Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.*

it “*thick clay*”, then the term may be a sardonic reference to silver and gold. For what are such precious metals but a dense form of earth (“*thick clay*”)? Perhaps a reminder of the ultimate dirt-worthlessness of all such earthly “treasures”. Such trinkets fall within the file of “*the world*” and “*the things that are in the world*”, which things our God has told us to “*love not*” (I John 2:15). For one to love such passing away things is to admit that “*the love of the Father is not in him*”. The one who feels too keenly the need to have such things burdens himself with the acquiring of them, saddling his own back with a load of clay, and under which he must now strain and over which he must now fret.

There then follow solid assurances or warnings from the Lord in the next two verses, that the biter shall be bitten (vs. 7) and the spoiler shall be spoiled (vs. 8). The debt shall be paid back, with interest paid in blood! The very simple moral of the story is that gains gotten through a cheat just do not pay. The

Lord will simply not allow them to do so. In fact cheating gains do more damage than good in the end. Consider Jeremiah's comment on the matter in Jeremiah 17:11, "*he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst [middle] of his days, and at his end shall be a fool*". In other words before his days are half finished he will be parted from his illegitimate gains. "*And at his end shall be a fool*". By mid-life it will all be gone, and by end-life he will be known for a fool. It is the Lord talking to the one who might seek to acquire gains inappropriately. Is it security he is looking for through such ill-gotten gains? He is not going to find it there. He shall be parted from his proceeds before he half lives out his days. Does he seek honour or respect or status by this means? He "*shall be a fool*"! God's book of wisdom speaks again, "*He that is greedy of gain [profits illicitly] troubles his own house; but he that hates gifts [bribes] shall live*" (Prov. 15:27). Compare the sad experience of Achan and family in Joshua 7. Indeed "*Better is a little with righteousness than great revenue without right*" (Prov. 16:8). It is the Lord who assures us that the better way is right little over wrong lots. Will you believe it? Because the one who takes what is not his will assuredly be stripped of it eventually. This is no small matter folks. It is a principle God has entrenched in His law, that

“thou shalt not steal” (Ex. 20:15). How much of war is based on a violation of this principle. Thou shalt not take or keep what fairly belongs to another. In fact thou shalt not even covet. That means;

- Shoplifting.
- Borrowing on a permanent basis, without returning (thoughtless borrowing).
- Working for pay with less than diligence.
- Making a dishonest insurance claim.
- Buying things you suspect have been stolen.
- Refusing or even forgetting to pay for services rendered.
- Cheating on exams or assignments.
- Evading government regulations, as in skirting exchange controls or falsifying to avoid duty, tax, etc., or just neglecting to pay what is due.
- Refusing to give from our increase to the Lord. He Himself used the word *“rob”* in Malachi of those refusing Him the tithe. Withholding what is due either to the lord of the land or to the Lord of glory.
- Adultery, and even immorality. Consider the

symbolism of the father giving the bride at a wedding. Immorality takes from her and from her father what does not belong to the taker.

- Idolatry and superstitions that rob the only true and living God of His glory. *“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name”*.

It means every dishonest receipt of or hold on finances, material possessions, honours, praise, etc. It means every unfair gain of anything rightly belonging to another. For every such thing our sweaty hand closes around that does not belong to us the Lord will ultimately require repayment (vs. 6).

Why does the Lord hate all such stealing in me? Because to do so displays that I do not trust Him to take care of my needs. When I cheat I am showing that I refuse to trust the Lord to take care of me, just as Israel when running to some earthly, human alliance. It was that distrust that the Lord so despised in them (and in us), bringing His severest wrath. For such is a blatant denial of His clear promises;

- *“For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things”* (Matt. 6). How many of the things we need does our Father know about? *“All these things”*.

- “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). How many things will He “freely give us”? “All things”.
- “But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4). How many of our needs will He supply? “All your need”.

Will we believe it or not? It is so easy to get caught by the world’s selfish spirit, wanting to have what others have, what advertisers insist we *need*. It is so easy to adopt their spirit of dishonesty, feeling quite free to get what we want at the expense of somebody else. When we do that we show our willingness to use others, and at the same time to abuse the grace and promises of our Lord. As well, it is so easy to pick up on that “everybody is doing it” attitude. But the wise do not! It is the world who is up-side-down. It is the Lord who would have us to be different, indeed right-side-up.

Why does the Lord hate all such stealing? Because for me to do so hurts *me*, whom He loves. Though there is some immediate sweetness in every “*bread of deceit*”, it is from that “*afterward*” mouthful of gravel that our God would deliver us (Prov. 20:17). He would preserve us from the harmful habits that

are sure to form, for it will always be easier to do the same the next time. He would deliver us from the guilt that will take root in us, for Jesus died to deliver us from sin and guilt. He would have us to be holy, to be children of our Father.

Why does the Lord hate all such cheating and stealing? Because to do so hurts *others*. At the very opposite extreme from so abusing others, the Lord says “*let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*” (Phil. 2:3-4). We are to be the servant of all rather than the abuser of any. We are to be protectors of the interests of others, rather than molesters. The spirit of the Lord’s words in Philippians 2:3-4 is that we are to be more concerned with the interests of all others than our own concerns. That includes the shop owner, our government, the bank, the insurer, the tax man, the lender, the landlord, the employer (what does this say to strike action?), the Lord. Now you can turn that all around and find justification for yourself if you want to do that, but that would not be a sincere pursuit of the Lord’s words here.

The Lord’s counsel to us against stealing in Eph. 4:28 is to turn it around and become a good labourer, that we might rather have to give. May we learn that holy lesson Paul had come to understand,

2:9 *Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!*

“in whatever state I am, therewith to be content”
(Phil. 4).

No cutting corners,
No sneaky cheats,
The servant of others,
For God’s pleasure we seek.

Woe #2 – 2:9-11 – One building his own fortress through covetousness, stepping on others to do it.

This is a similar thought to that expressed in the previous woe (vs. 6-8). The counsel of both the 1st & 2nd woes is that we *“be content with such things as ye have”* (Heb. 13:5). We are given as well the reason such wealth might be sought; for security against some perceived threat. So here is one coveting *“an evil covetousness”* (vs. 9) with a greedy appetite for more, and for the purpose of lifting his *“nest”* or dwelling *“on high”* above *“the power of evil”*. This one wants more so that he might use it to put himself in such a secure position that none could pose a threat. He wants to put himself in such a place of plenty that the threat of hunger, thirst, or any other lack could never reach him.

2:10 *Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.*

Perhaps this is not moved purely by personal selfishness. Notice that it is *“to his house”* that he *“covets an evil covetousness”*. It is with *“his house”* or family in mind that he so lusts for wealth, that he might have for their protection or preservation or provision. At least that is what he tells himself and others. His desire for security drives his lust for the wealth to do it. See how far it goes in vs. 10, even taking the lives of others (*“cutting off many”*). But God speaks to such a one. By seeking physical or financial protection through such grasping means he actually *“consulted shame”* to his own house, those very ones he sought to preserve. He may preserve them for a time in body (shelter, food, etc.), but he does not preserve their character or reputation. They fall with him to a loss of honour the moment he brings shame upon them through stepping on others. And the Lord’s prophet states the case in vs. 10, *“Thou...hast sinned against thy soul”*.

Then vs. 11 adds an interesting thought. Even if one should think all his tracks are carefully covered, there shall be witnesses indeed. And those witnesses shall arise from the most unexpected of

2:11 *For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.*

places, as if the very stones and timbers of the house should speak what they know and testify against him. It is the way it might seem to those so careful to cover up their wrong. Sin has a way of blinding us into thinking we are too clever to be found out, that nobody is sharp enough to pick up on what we are about. We do not realize that it is as if we carry a smell about us, a scent of what we are. Like the smoker carries a smell, which he himself does not smell at all. As one who eats garlic unknowingly puts out the evidence of his “crime” through breath and pores. People already know their own walk well enough to know where to look for our tracks as well. Folks are pretty sharp at piecing together what a man’s life is about. A shade of information here. A slip of a comment there. A flicker of a glimpse of some little action or response, just that one time. All coming together to form a surprisingly accurate picture of just what we are. A basketful of revealing things we thought nobody ever could have suspected. It catches up with a man eventually, for *“behold, your sin will find you out”*. Given enough time it comes together to form a solid enough case. And so a word is spoken, an

accusation brought, which cannot be sufficiently denied, and there it is, now open scandal! The Lord refers to that ultimate inability of a man to hide what he is, even before men, in this picturesque way. It is as if court is held in the house where crimes against man have been committed, or a house built through such crimes. And while the accused finds comfort in the lack of witnesses the very stones of the house suddenly speak what they know and the rafter beams confirm the charge, providing the two witnesses required by the Old Testament Law to make an accusation stick. Do you get the picture? Certainly the Lord sees what we are. But men will see it too, if they do not already.

So consider the crimes involved here;

Covetousness – An insatiable desire for wealth, which the Apostle Paul calls “*idolatry*” (Col. 3:5 & Eph. 5:5). Both covetousness and idolatry put trust in material things, and express dissatisfaction with God alone and what He has allotted. Covetousness ever lives for something more, some new bright shiny bead on the string of life. It is what Jesus so carefully warned against in Luke 12:15, saying, “*Take heed and beware of covetousness*”.

- **Faithlessness** – Not trusting the Lord for protection and provision. This is *fear* rather than *faith*, seeing to my own protection as if any man could really do that. All the walled cities of Judah never hindered Assyria’s onslaught. It was God who crushed Assyria when Hezekiah prayed in faith. The island fortress of Tyre fell to Alexander. Jerusalem’s walls did not keep out Babylon, or later Rome. Nineveh’s massive city walls did not keep Babylon out, nor did Babylon’s walls stop the Persian invasion. Faithlessness is man responding as if God had made no promises of our care, no command to “*fear not*”. As if God’s words of security cannot be trusted. As if death were not gain for one in Christ.
- **Lovelessness** – Stepping on others in our effort to acquire what we “need” (want).

These are serious crimes indeed. Crimes against God and man, bringing shame to ourselves and to the family we would protect, sinning against our own soul.

Now think about how simple the answer to what is described here in this woe. The answer is found in those two great commandments to truly love the Lord with everything and to truly love your neighbour as yourself. To love God is to trust Him

2:12 *Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!*

2:13 *Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?*

with everything, in everything, for everything. To love your neighbour is to never step on him. Whenever we have a desire that would lead us to hurt any other person or take what is theirs we can be sure it is a wrong desire.

Be not covetous. Be happy in the Lord with whatever. Be not faithless. Please God with your unqualified trust. Be not loveless. Ever the servant of all, seeking their very best.

Woe #3 – 2:12-14 – To build great earthly works (“*town...city*”) by abusing others (“*blood*”) and the Lord’s standard of right (“*iniquity*”) is “*very vanity*”.

Again the focus here is especially on the nation of Babylon and the splendour of her capital city and the way she funded the building of it. Yet again, the application stretches beyond just that narrow focus to all who would adopt the same evil principles that guided Babylon’s actions. To build in the way Babylon did is only a stacking for the bonfire.

Babylon

It was the passion of the Babylonian kings Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar to build the city of Babylon to a splendour and security beyond equal. It was well over a hundred years ago, in the late 1800's, that excavation work was begun at the ruins of the old city site of Babylon. And a great deal was learned at that time of the splendour of that once great city on the banks of the Euphrates. They found that the huge outer wall around the city was almost 26 metres thick! And then there was an inner wall which protected the main section of the city, with a wide moat between inner and outer walls. The only means of entry and exit were through 8 huge bronze gates at various points around the city. The most impressive gate was the Ishtar Gate, the walls of which were elaborately decorated with figures of dragons, lions, and bulls, made of glazed, coloured bricks. You have perhaps heard of the beautiful Hanging Gardens of that city, which apparently grew on the roof of a high building. They were gardens so impressive they were described in the writings of the Greeks as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was all a tribute to King Nebuchadnezzar's fascination with beauty and magnificence, perhaps wanting to outdo the legendary splendour of what God gave to Solomon. Remember this king's

construction project on the plain of Dura in Daniel 3. He did not just build a golden statue in honour of his splendour, he built one 10 stories high (27.7 metres). Babylon being a land of little stone and few trees, all was built of baked clay bricks. And all of this grand construction program was made possible by an immense slave labour force, acquired through Babylon's conquests. Who but the Lord could tell the number of lives spent in the construction of that once great city. Yes, *once* great! For what has become of the whole "Vanity Fair" of Babylon but a vast deserted ruin? The city fell to the Medes and Persians, and later to the Greeks. During and after the Roman era the city eventually fell to dilapidation, desertion, and ruin. It was a city exalted to magnificence on "*blood*" and "*iniquity*". The Lord did not fail to note the abuse of mankind on a massive scale in the passion of that proud nation to build splendour and security. And all of the human passion and purpose poured into that city, all of the untold labour and weariness, sweat and blood that went into lifting the wonder of that city from the barren plain to something King Nebuchadnezzar could look upon with supreme admiration, enthusing over "*this great Babylon, that I have built...by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty*" (Dan. 4:30), all of it is now come to scattered clumps of dried mud! They

cannot even fully excavate the old buried city of Babylon because the water table has so risen that their digs fill up, its features presumably reverting to the mud from which it came.

It was a nation of men abusing men, and stepping on God's eternal principles in the furtherance of great, impressive, oppressive earthly works. And behold how all such works come with relentless certainty to "*very vanity*", the most certain nothingness. The principle comes clear. Whatever is built upon a wrong basis is "*very vanity*", and only fuel for the fire.

Compare the first failed building project in that same land between the rivers. The tower of Babel was the same kind of abuse of God in an effort to build something impressive and make a name for themselves (Gen. 11). That project as well came to nothing by God's design.

Beyond Babylon

The same principle applies in spiritual realms. If you build without God, for your name; if you build through blood, through the abuse of another life; if you abuse people and God's standard of right in the effort to build anything on earth; if you step on God's two great commands in the construction project; if you build through things you acquired by

2:14 *For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

iniquity; if you gather to yourself through another's loss; if you press the project forward right over the top of others, or in contradiction of God's pure principles of right and fairness, you can be sure of one thing. It will not last! It is a house of cards that will come down soon enough. If it will not stand up to the Lord's faithful examination it will be burned up with the rest of the "*wood, hay, and stubble*" (I Cor. 3). All such carnal constructions, regardless of the present splendour, will come to *nothing!* "*Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain who build it*" (Ps. 127:1). And except it be built upon the Lord's principles of love for Him and His way, and love for our fellow man, it is a labour of "*very vanity*".

Then in vs. 14 the prophet's vision looks beyond the moment, beyond the silly little anthills of proud man's "grand" projects, to that day to come when the one commodity of vital importance will be the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Compare Isaiah 2:1-4. The Lord's words here in vs. 14 clearly look beyond to Christ's coming earthly kingdom. It is a hope so commonly expressed (Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; Isa. 6:3 & 11:9), a day when men will at last

glory appropriately. *“But let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me that I am the Lord”* (Jer. 9:24). What we have here is the Lord’s case against building with vain means, which are not *His* means, and therefore cannot last. The vision looks beyond even the final rise and fall of the city of Babylon, when the very seat of Satan shall finally be crushed (Rev. 18), to the day when the Lord shall be all in all. The kingdoms of man with their determined focus upon the splendour of man, epitomized in the empire and city of Babylon, must come down and be shown for the vanity they are before the Lord can take His rightful place of true splendour in His coming kingdom. Compare the kingdoms of men crushed before the kingdom of Christ can arise to fill the earth in Daniel 2 (vs. 44-45). Before the earth can be filled with God’s glory it must first be rid of man’s glory. And until that day the knowledge of the Lord’s glory filling the earth is to be our one supreme purpose. For only what is done to that end will last. The Lord’s purpose has always been very different from the world’s. Man’s purpose is to display his splendour through great impressive works, to attain security. But the Lord would make known to the world His glory.

Babylon represents man’s greatest effort to lift

2:15 *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!*

2:16 *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.*

himself to splendour, but it just did not last very long. The echo of its fall is repeated throughout the Bible, “*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, is fallen*” (Isa. 21:9). The same is true of any purpose promoted through wrong principles or the wronging of others.

Woe #4 – 2:15-17 – Those who dupe others through drunkenness or some other means to take advantage of them shall come to the worst kind of shame.

Vs. 16 – The prophet seems to say, “Go ahead, drink yourself jolly and satisfy your pleasure in the abuse of another. But the Lord has a cup He is going to pour out too. His cup of wrath”.

Compare David with Uriah in II Samuel 11, seeking to short-circuit Uriah’s integrity with drunkenness (vs. 13) in David’s effort to use the man to cover his own filthy tracks. David’s shame was all the greater for this ugly aspect, now broadcast to every generation. Compare Lot’s daughters abusing their

2:17 *For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.*

father with the use of wine in Genesis 19. How many a man has taken advantage of a woman by this very means, removing her natural resistance through drugs or drunkenness, that he might have his way. Such will come to greatest shame.

The answer is to be wise to understand the nature of man and be alert. The newspaper carried the story a few years back of a teenage girl who was sitting with a man out late one night at a club, and then was shocked to wake up in bed with him the next morning. The article was from the perspective of the outraged mother of the girl. Obviously she was drugged or led to drink too much, and it is an ugly thing to be sure. Such a heartless, treacherous molester will certainly be brought to shame! But there was a less-than-wise girl involved as well. Out so late it was early, drinking at a club where and when she *should not be*. Sure, one might argue that her body should be respected by others, and indeed it should. But unfortunately that is just not the real world. To hang out where the wolves play is to invite their interest. So understand the nature of man

and be wise. Look closely here and know what you are dealing with out there. It is God's gracious warning on the nature of the beast. Just stay away from the whole scene that could easily lead to this. Stay right away from the clubbing, drinking scene, or any place where drugs and booze and raw hedonism is the order of the day. Compare Dinah in Genesis 34, who "*went out to see the daughters of the land*". She put herself with the world and ended up raped and the centre of greatest family disgrace and tragedy.

The principle widens to include any clouding of perception or deluding of another in order to take advantage. Compare;

- Satan deceiving Eve with lying words (Gen. 3).
- Jeroboam persuading the nation of Israel with "*Behold thy gods*" (I Kings 12).
- Moses' words to Aaron in Ex. 32:21, "*What did these people do to you, that you have brought so great sin upon them?*" "How were you so deceived by them?"
- The Seductress of Proverbs taking her prey with her persuasive honey-tongue (Prov. 5:3; 6:24; 7:5, 14-21).

So be smart, my friend! Be aware! Be wise to

2:18 *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?*

neither abuse alcohol nor let yourself be abused through it. The simple answer “no thanks, I do not drink” or “I do not do drugs” delivers one from a world of trouble. And then walk right away from that influence and from those who bring it without delay. For your own good and for the glory of God.

Woe #5 – 2:18-20 – Those promoting or sold by the lie of idols.

These last three verses make up the final stanza of this song of woes sung to the bully of Babylon, and beyond them to the whole earth, and to Satan’s power behind the methods. The Lord’s question over every form of idolatry is here – “What profit?” It cannot win! Satan cannot win! It is written!

Babylon was the fountainhead of all idolatry. Every false god was spread to the entire world from that earliest source. Therefore it was fitting that the question be put to that nation, with all the world listening in. “What profit?” Did idolatry ever profit the now non-existent nation of Babylon? Behold the global object lesson. Did it ever profit the city of

Babylon, now in fact a buried ruin and visible only because men managed to dig it up like a dog does an old dry bone? The Lord despises the worship of all idols or creatures or images or shrines or icons or amulets, any and every earthly item or creature, whether “Christian” or non, whether in churches or pagan shrines.

Two types of idols are specified here in vs. 18. “*The graven image*”, carved from wood or stone, and “*the molten image*”, made from melted metal poured into a mould. Either type is of course quite dead, the mere creations of man, only bits of earth (wood, stone, or metal), and thus of no true saving use to man. Dead idols do not even have any practical use for man, as a beautifully carved marble column to hold up the roof or a great iron anchor to secure a ship. As the Apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 8:4, “*We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one*”. To trust in such an item, to allow such a thing to “speak” to you or to “teach” you or assure you of the future is to hear “*a teacher of lies*”. For surely He who is truth does not speak through such means. Man cannot create life, and thus his own creations cannot have real life or power. Even if he could in some way produce life or actual intelligence it would be lesser life, not life superior to its creator. We logically cannot make something greater than ourselves.

Therefore any oracles or teachings attributed to any such carved or cast lump of earth could not have come from the lump. Obvious! Communication cannot come from something that does not even possess life. Lifeless things cannot think. Breathless things cannot speak. So from the very surface of things any “teachings”, claimed to be from an idol, were obviously founded upon a lie. If there is communication from a lump of earth there is clearly some other source, some other life form behind the lump. And this cannot be God, for He has declared abomination all such sources (Deut 18). He has refused any such earthly representation of Himself (Ex. 20:3-5). Deceiving spirits can be the only spirits behind every such foolish falsehood, seeking to turn human worship away from the Lord.

Now please do not make the mistake of thinking idolatry an empty consideration for us since we do not practice it in our thinking western world. Understand how the world is gradually returning to faith in idols. In many cases it never left it (Catholics, Hindus, Red Indians, etc.). We see it in the rising interest in crystals, and other forms of amulets, born out of eastern mystic religion. We see it in superstitious beliefs, and in the rise in mystic Red Indian and Celtic and lore, and the practice and paraphernalia of witchcraft, etc.

2:19 *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.*

Idolatry has yet to experience its greatest worldwide revival, which will yet come in the days of Antichrist's reign. Antichrist will bring to fulfilment the type and example set in Nebuchadnezzar as world ruler demanding universal worship through an image or idol (Dan. 3 & Rev. 13). It will be a return to idolatry on a grand scale. Obviously a gradual rise to this is likely as that day draws near. God will allow for this deception as a just end to man's incessant determination throughout history to worship and serve creature more than Creator (II Thess. 2:11-12).

Vs. 19 – *“Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach!”* – Beyond calling it ridiculous, the Lord pronounces *“woe”* upon all who stand before any lump of wood, stone, or metal attempting to communicate with it or looking to it for guidance. In reality *“there is no breath at all in the midst of it”* to ever be able to answer back. We are reminded of the prophets of Baal vainly crying to their false god Baal on Mt. Carmel (I Ki. 18:26). God just said to the evil spirits

2:20 *But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.*

behind all that lot, “You will be silent!”

Vs. 20 – “*But the LORD is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him*” – How right that we end this section with our attention turned to the heavenly temple, from dumb idols to the only true and living God. As the idols of man stand dumb before their admirers so let man stand dumb with awe before the Lord of glory. For “*the day of the Lord*” will indeed come when all of mankind will stand in silent awe before the true God (Zeph. 1:7), when every unsaved soul will stand condemned in silent guilt before God (Rom. 3:19). Compare the sailors on Jonah’s ship stripped of their false trusts and standing in awe of God in the silenced storm (Jonah 1:16). We do not know the nature of the decisions of those sailors, but few have ever had such an adequate introduction to the true and living God. Every mouth shut, every argument silenced, every alternative abandoned, every earthly trust stripped away. Compare the ultimate of this at the Great White Throne in Revelation 20, with earth and heaven fled away. The very substance of things worshipped throughout history will be removed entirely in that day of final judgment.

Perhaps there was a touch of application for Habakkuk as well here in vs. 20. “Hush now, O man of God!” For it was a time to be still and wait expectantly for the Lord to do His will. It was a time for the man of faith to silence his complaints and lay aside his doubts about the way the Lord was doing things. It was a time to just calmly and quietly believe God for the outcomes, to just *“be still and know that I am God”*. It was time to believe the Lord’s word of assurance and stop making demands that this mortal man must understand all aspects of what the Lord is doing. It was a time to acknowledge that the Lord had a firm hold on the reigns and knew where He was going with it.

We too must live as Habakkuk, standing upon our watch and waiting on the Lord (vs. 1), living above our circumstances in calm, quiet expectation of the Lord’s eternal purposes. All of the biblical commands to *“watch and pray”* and *“wait upon the Lord”* express this same attitude of the godly. God will indeed intervene, in His time. Rest in that fact. Wait patiently for Him, for the outworking of His purpose in this age.

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass” (Ps. 37:7).

Questions Answered;

- No, God is not indifferent.
- No, God is not unjust.
- No, man cannot totally understand God, yet He is ever worthy of our praise.
- Yes, all will ultimately come right and be resolved.
- Yes, man must wait, though it (Jesus) “*tarry*”, with an inward calm of patient trust.

Chapter 3

3:1 *A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.*

Vs. 1 – “*A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth*” – So this is the prophet’s prayer, again. Notice how Habakkuk begins all 3 chapters with his eyes on the Lord. In the first 2 chapters it was in an attitude of complaint and appeal. Here now his concerns have been somewhat resolved and it is more an attitude of praise. In fact there are musical notations throughout this chapter;

- Vs. 1 – “*Upon Shigionoth*” – In the Psalm 7 heading is the singular form of this, shiggaion.
- Vs. 3, 9, 13 – “*Selah*” – common in Psalms.
- Vs. 19 – “*To the chief singer on my stringed instrument*”.

These suggest this portion was sung in public worship. So this is actually a song, a hymn of praise, an anthem of God’s mighty ability. God’s prophet is *singing* these words. Understand what is happening here. Habakkuk is a changed man! He came into this book full of complaints, sighing his

3:2 *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.*

objections to the Lord. But when Habakkuk made the decision to simply believe God and leave it with Him and rest in his faith an amazing change took place in him. Where before he was sighing his complaints he is now singing his praises. God turns our sighing to singing, our problems to praise, our carping complaints to a hallelujah chorus, when we choose to just believe His words and let *Him* be God and patiently wait on His purposes. Not running ahead, insisting “I want what I want, now!” Not running behind, saying “I do not want what You want for my life right now”. Never turning aside from His perfect will.

“*Upon Shigionoth*” – This word is from the Hebrew verb *shagah*, meaning to go astray or err or swerve or meander. The Brown, Driver, & Briggs lexicon suggests for “*shigionoth*” a “wild, passionate song, with rapid changes of rhythm”. Nobody knows for sure what the word means, though many ideas have been suggested. It may have offered some instruction on the way this hymn was to be sung.

Vs. 2 – “*O LORD, I have heard Thy speech*” –

Habakkuk acknowledges that he was fully hearing God's words and understood what He was saying. It is the starting place for all true understanding and blessing. We must come to God with hearing hearts and ears. No more the vague awareness of His will, and that is sufficient. We must determine to hear and understand His words, and fully know what He requires of us.

“And was afraid” – Habakkuk expresses to the Lord his feelings with the news of what was to happen with his people. In vs. 16 he does the same. Habakkuk was very personal in his interaction with the Father, nothing mechanical. “O I was so afraid when I heard of Your plans. But I understand now”. It is right and proper to feel anguish over people, to sorrow in their loss. God sees our tears and feels our pain and is willing to hear of our hurt. When He tells us to *“rejoice with those who do rejoice and weep with those who weep”* would He be telling us to respond in ways He does not? *“Jesus wept”* with Mary's anguish in John 11:35. He understands like no one else can. He loves and therefore feels. He has told us that He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. So we can talk to Him about what we feel and fear, like we would talk to our earthly father.

“Revive Thy work in the midst of the years” – With the prophecies of chapter 1 Habakkuk of course

understood that years would be involved in God's judgment upon His people. His plea was that in the course of those years God might ultimately "*revive*" or restore His people. Israel is God's work, at least that work of God in which Habakkuk was especially interested. And at that point there was little clarity concerning God's plans for His people beyond their looming judgment. The northern tribes of Israel were already taken into captivity to Assyria, and now Judah would be swept away as well. "O Lord, beyond Your coming necessary judgments '*revive Your work*' among your people again. Restore them to Your favour. Let them be a people of Your blessing again someday. And Lord please "*make known*" by sending further word what Your continuing purpose is for us. And though Your wrath is right and just, O '*remember mercy*' in dealing with Your people".

See how there was no bored disinterest in this man concerning his people. The anguish of what his people would face, of God's wrath upon them, stirred him deeply, and so it should. Those close to God, those most like Him, feel as He feels. The book of Lamentations is Jeremiah's weeping over this very judgment that fell upon his people, after the fact. Yet it is God lamenting through His prophet.

Now let me ask you an important question. Did the

Lord do as Habakkuk asked? Did He restore and make known and mercy His wayward people? Well He did reveal further what He would do. He sent His prophet Jeremiah to “make known” to them that their captivity would last only 70 years and then they would return (see Jer. 25:11-12, 29:10-11). And do not miss in Jeremiah 29:11 how He remembered mercy! As well, God put Daniel over there in Babylon to give the most incredibly detailed sketch of His extended purpose for Israel to the end of the age. He was/is not finished with His people Israel. In fact not until God accomplishes His 6 great purposes, given by the angel Gabriel in Daniel 9:24, will He be done with His purpose for Israel, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy”. This verse is the broad perspective of the whole time period of the 70 sevens of years, giving the period of time and the people and place of focus and the purposes to be accomplished. These are purposes fully accomplished only in Christ’s return. The basis of some of these purposes was established at Calvary, but the actual application to Israel as a nation will only come at Christ’s return. Understand that the wonder of Daniel’s amazing prophecies was partly in answer to the prayer of

3:3 *God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.*

Habakkuk, that the Lord would “*make known*” in the midst of those years. This was Daniel’s prayer as well. When God is going to do a work He first raises up people with passion to pray it in.

As well, the Lord did revive or restore His work according to Habakkuk’s prayer. He raised up Cyrus, His “*shepherd*”, to conquer Babylon and release His people that they might return, as Isaiah had prophesied a couple centuries before (Isa. 44:28-45:1). He raised up Ezra and Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah to lead in rebuilding the temple and city and to help re-establish His people in the land. Though necessary judgment did indeed come, God did make known and restore and mercy His people as Habakkuk prayed.

With vs. 3 things change. Habakkuk was no longer praying, but now sees a vision of the Lord coming in glory. It is images of God’s complete ability to deal with all resistance, images that run back in time to God’s great deliverances of His people throughout history. Habakkuk’s vision at times seem to reach into the future as well, with glimpses of what is to come, yet describing poetically the greatness of

God's glory and power and ability to accomplish His purposes. The point carries – as in the past so in the future. It was God assuring His servant that He is well able to accomplish His will, and that His purpose *“for the salvation of thy people”* remains (vs. 13). As the prophet began to pray the Lord opened his eyes to see and know both His ability and willingness.

Vs. 3 – *“God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran”* – Teman and Paran were areas south of Judah. Teman was a city in northeast Edom, south the Dead Sea. Paran was the wilderness area south of Edom, toward Mt. Sinai. So Habakkuk saw the Lord approaching Palestine from the south, blazing forth in glory and praise. Why from the south? Perhaps reminiscent of Israel's approach in the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua. In that event it was Israel coming, yet it was *God* coming through them to take the land. In Joshua's encounter at the end of Joshua 5 with *“the Captain of the host of the Lord”* it was the Lord showing Himself, stepping into the conflict in a very tangible way.

Compare as well in Isaiah 63 the Lord coming from Bozrah, again a city of Edom to the south. This is the Lord striding forth *“in the greatness of His strength”* and *“mighty to save”*, coming up with glory

from Edom. Two questions are asked there in Isaiah 63:1-2. Who is this? Why are your clothes red? The answer clearly is Jesus Christ, wearing clothes “*dipped in blood*” (Rev. 19:13), the blood of His enemies in His return. This is surely a reference to Armageddon. It seems the final battle will follow the imagery of the conquest under Joshua. Jesus will show Himself fully able to effect the complete deliverance of His people. He will not come this time as sufferer, but as sovereign avenger. His return will bring both rescue and ruin, for the day of Christ’s return will be both “*the day of vengeance*” and “*the year of My redeemed*” (Isa. 63:4). He will come with zeal to avenge His enemies and to save His own.

Do you understand the thrust here? As there was no resisting God in His first coming from the south to that land, so there will be no resisting Him in His return. When God at last comes to crown His own and conquer His foes nothing will stand in His way!

Vs. 4 – “*And His brightness was as the light*” – Always when the Lord is seen in His glory it is with brilliance of light. When John looked upon Jesus in Revelation 1:16 he said “*His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength*”. Absolute, unclouded brilliance! When Paul was blinded on the Damascus road by that vision of Jesus, he

3:4 *And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.*

described the light as “*above the brightness of the sun*” (Acts 26:13). When the three saw Jesus transfigured on the mount, His glory unveiled, they said “*His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light*” (Matt. 17:2). Peter called Jesus the “*day star*” (II Pet. 1:19). John called Him the “*true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*” (Jn. 1:9). He is “*the bright and morning star*” (Rev. 22:16) and the “*Sun of Righteousness*” (Mal. 4:2). Always it is such images of brilliance in His presence.

“*He had horns coming out of His hand*” – This is a difficult phrase. The KJV has the more literal translation. The other translations make it “rays” flashing from the Lord’s hand. The Hebrew word is “horns”, and “flashing” is not in the text, though the term “horns” can at times suggest rays of light. The word for “hand” can refer to the side, like our phrase “on every hand”, meaning every side. Horns in the Bible are commonly used to depict strength, as the horns of an animal are his weapons, the symbols of his power. So it is the question of whether this phrase is connected with the phrase before it or the

3:5 *Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals
went forth at his feet.*

one after it. Is this further on the brightness of His light, describing light beams or lightning bolts shooting out from around Him, or from His hands? Or is it describing in symbol form the power in His hands? 'Tis a hard call. I would put the last of vs. 3 and the first of vs. 4 together, and then this together with the last of vs. 4. First a statement of the brilliant light of His glory, setting earth and heaven ablaze as He comes. Then a statement of His power, though He tends to hide His power and does not flaunt it.

“And there was the hiding of His power” – God in fact is given to hiding Himself and His power. Jesus came as deity veiled in humanity. Only on the Mt. of Transfiguration was His true glory unveiled. Isaiah said, *“Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour”* (45:15). He comes to us in this age hidden in His written Word. There is power there to save souls and transform lives, but it is not obvious or visible or in your face, always veiled. Why? Because faith discerns God, even with His power veiled, and God’s power unveiled does not create faith. See Hebrews 3:7-11 & John 2:23-25.

3:6 *He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.*

Vs. 5 – With pestilence and fire He comes. So this is no scene of sweetness and tranquillity (vs. 12). This is the Lord of glory coming in judgment with weapons of destruction. Compare in Daniel 7:9-10 His future coming in judgment and fire. Yet in delivering His people from Egypt the Lord used the same, in the plagues of diseased cattle, boils, and hail with fire. Compare Zechariah 14:12-15 & Revelation 20:9. Again, it is glimpses of both past and future here. The reminders of the past lay the foundation of assurance for things future. As He has done, so He will yet do. The Lord does not promise things He has not already quite proven He can do. As He thoroughly judged His enemies and completely delivered His people, so He will yet do the same. This is a vision of God’s complete ability to judge enemies and deliver saints.

Vs. 6 – *“He stood, and measured the earth”* – Now the Lord pauses momentarily in His approach, perhaps to assess the situation with His all-seeing eye. No action without careful forethought, even in pouring out His wrath. He is never out of His head

in rage, never mindlessly flying in without due consideration.

“He beheld, and drove asunder the nations” – Then, fixing His gaze, the Lord scatters every rebel heart from before Him. Again, in the past this was God dealing with the godless Canaanite nations before Joshua. In the future this will be Jesus returning to meet the nations of earth gathered to that same land at Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21). The point common to both is *God*, quite able to scatter every enemy, whether a small bevy of pagan nations in Palestine or the combined armies of earth. Even so our God is able to scatter away whatever oppressive trouble you and I may be facing.

“The everlasting mountains were scattered” – There seems to be a contrast here, putting *“everlasting mountains”* and *“perpetual hills”* against God’s everlasting ways. The first seems to be spoken with a touch of sarcasm. For though we would think of mountains and hills as eternal or perpetual, they *“were scattered”* and bowed down. It is another glimpse of things future, for they will all come down. With the final bowl judgment of God’s Revelation judgments poured out in Revelation 16, we read in vs. 20, *“and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found”*. *“Eternal”* mountains fall before Him, things men consider so permanent

3:7 *I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.*

and unshakable. In fact all of earth and heaven will be utterly gone when the condemned stand at last before the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11). Yet in contrast to things we consider rock solid and eternal God's "*ways are everlasting*". God will still be standing when the mighty mountains and seas are no more. "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away*" (Matt. 24:35). Compare II Peter 3:10-11 & Isaiah 51:6.

Vs. 7 – Cushan is Ethiopia, and Midian is the Arab lands on the opposite side of the Red Sea from Ethiopia. It is as if the Lord is coming right up the Red Sea and the curtains are flapping on either side with His passing. It is the earth shaking and the nations trembling before God in His coming. Remember how the nations of Canaan were shaken with fear as God came with His people under Joshua (Josh. 2:11; 5:1; Ex. 15:14-16).

There is something of that same fear developing even now in the hearts of the unsaved with the common doomsday theme in films and modern "prophesies". The Spirit is busy convincing the world "*of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment*"

3:8 *Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?*

(Jn. 16:8). The gospel message just confirms what man already knows in his heart of hearts. It is never really a matter of *understanding* God's call to salvation, but of *willingness*.

Vs. 8 – The Lord strikes river and sea in bringing His salvation. The Red Sea and Jordan were thrown aside in bringing His people out of Egypt and into Canaan, as if His wrath was poured out on those bodies of water. It is a poetic form here, yet expressing God unhindered by impossible obstacles when He is riding His purpose to bring salvation. Compare similar imagery in II Samuel 22. This again has both past and future significance, for the 6th bowl judgment in Revelation 16 is poured out on “*the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared*” (vs. 12). So again the Lord will yet take out a “great river” to accomplish both His purpose of judgment on the nations and the salvation of His people.

Vs. 9 – “*Thy bow was made quite naked*” – This first

3:9 *Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.*

phrase is relatively clear. Literally from the Hebrew it is “with nakedness was Your bow made naked”. It is a Hebrew form of speech meaning “very much made naked”. The Lord made bare His bow or weapon, very much so. The 2nd phrase is not by any means an easy translation. Differing Bible versions translate this 2nd phrase as follows;

- KJV – *“according to the oaths of the tribes, even Thy word”*
- NKJV – *“Oaths were sworn over Your arrows”*. Like men cursing God’s judgments in Revelation 16?
- NIV – *“you called for many arrows”*
- NASB – *“The rods of chastisement were sworn”*

In the Hebrew behind the English there are only 3 words in this phrase, interestingly all nouns – “oaths branches word”. From “branches” other ideas are possible, such as rod, staff, sceptre, spear, or tribes, as the branches of a people. Arrows seems a bit of a reach. “Word” can be speech, hymn, poem.

The Septuagint translates it, “Surely You did bend Your bow at sceptres saith the Lord”. Shooting at kings? One Old Testament scholar counted more than one hundred different translations of these words.

Perhaps what we have here is the Lord making bare His bow in defence of His people, those people or tribes to whom His gave His word or oath or promises. Or are we to understand it as the bow of a rainbow? Is He perhaps referring to the rainbow God revealed in the heavens as a sign of His oath or covenant when He gave His word He would never again destroy the earth with a Flood? In that day He certainly cleaved the earth with rivers as the rains fell and the fountains of the deep gushed out. Vs. 10 also speaks of “*the overflowing of the water*”, which “*lifted up his hands on high*”. Either way it is again images of God’s overwhelming power to judge, to save, to accomplish His will on earth. We may not be able to discern with certainty the details here, but the general feel of it is quite obvious.

“*Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers*” – Literally, “rivers You divided of earth”. A marginal reference in my Bible suggests “You cleaved the rivers of the earth”. Either this is a reference to the earth divided with rivers or the rivers of earth divided. Perhaps referring to the rivers that will one day flow east and

- 3:10** *The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.*
- 3:11** *The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.*
-

west from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8; Rev. 22:1-2; Ezek. 47)? Perhaps again speaking of bodies of water (Jordan & Red Sea) divided by the Lord to bring His purposes to pass?

Vs. 10 – It is like the earth is wetting itself in trembling fear. Perhaps this refers to the Flood of Noah when all the mountains of earth were covered, describing the roaring “*voice*” and lifting up of the waves. Again pointing to one of the great judgments of Bible history when God determined to purge the earth, and showed Himself so totally able to do it.

Vs. 11 – “*The sun and the moon stood still in their habitation*” – This looks back to that day when Joshua broke the back of the Canaanite resistance, when they went through the night from the Jordan valley to Gibeon in the hill country, and attacked the southern confederacy of kings, putting them to flight. The Lord showed Himself there, sending great hailstones which killed more of the fleeing Canaanites than Israel killed by the sword. Joshua wanted more time to finish the job, so he prayed to

3:12 *Thou didst march through the land in indignation,
thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.*
3:13 *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.*

the Lord that He would make the sun and moon stand still. And we are told in Joshua 10 that “*about a whole day*” was added to that historic day, while Joshua finished off the fleeing armies of the south (vs. 12-14). Again it was a scene of judgment, when God did wonders in earth and heaven, stepping in to help His people, to give a resounding victory over the wicked, showing Himself strong for their help. That is the theme here. It is scenes of judgment and victory, of both the past and future, where God is especially revealed.

Vs. 12 – A summary of the Conquest of old, and of Armageddon to come. This is no timid, tentative movement. God is striding through the land. The nations of earth are threshed like grain, flailed and thoroughly trampled in God’s anger. Compare Revelation 14:17-20 & Isaiah 63:1-3.

Vs. 13 – “*Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people*” – Here is stated the Lord’s purpose in so coming as we see Him here in such unstoppable power. He intervenes or steps in to save His people.

In fact He wrote it into His name, for the name “Jesus” means “Jehovah is salvation”. How full of meaning these words, summarizing all of what God has been busy with throughout the ages;

- He delivered His people from the famine through Joseph in Egypt.
- He delivered them out of slavery in Egypt, completely without an army.
- He kept Israel for decades through the wilderness.
- He gave victory in the conquest of the Promised Land.
- He delivered His people from captivities.
- He kept them through worldwide persecution, and has brought them back to their land.
- And He has continued to keep them there against all odds.

But more than all else, He sent His Son to shed His blood for their sins, and ours. From the day of man’s fall into sin God has gone forth for the salvation of His people. And so He will continue to do into the prophetic future.

Behind “*Thine anointed*” is the word messiah in the Hebrew. It may refer to God’s chosen people in

3:14 *Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.*

parallel with the first part of the verse (Ps. 105:14-15), or it may refer to Jesus the Messiah coming as God's agent, working His salvation for His people.

"Thou woundedst the head..." – This seems to be an allusion to the Genesis 3 prophecy of the Seed of the woman who would wound the head of the serpent (Satan).

"The head out of the house of the wicked" is perhaps a reference to Satan, who received a fatal blow at Calvary when death was swallowed up in victory through Christ's resurrection. Jesus *"spoiled principalities and powers"* there, making *"a show of them openly, triumphing over them"* (Col. 2:15). Perhaps it looks beyond as well to Satan's man, the Antichrist of the last days (or both), *"whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming"* (II Thess. 2:8). Every leader in wickedness God will ultimately bring down.

Vs. 14 – Behold the nations coming *"as a whirlwind to scatter"* and *"to devour"* God's people. It is images

3:15 *Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses,
through the heap of great waters.*

of Armageddon here. See Daniel 11:36ff & Zechariah 14:1-3 & 12:3.

Yet the Lord would “*strike through with his staves*”. Behind “*staves*” is the same word as in vs. 9 meaning branches, or perhaps rods, staffs, spears. This apparently describes the attackers’ own weapons used against them, perhaps referring to the way the Lord has often taken attacking armies apart, by turning them against themselves through national rivalries or blind panic. Compare many places where the Lord used or will use this means to conquer foes;

- I Samuel 14:20 – the Philistine army through Jonathan & his armour-bearer.
- II Chronicles 20:23-24 – Edom, Ammon, & Moab against Jehoshaphat.
- Judges 7:22 – Gideon with the Midianites.
- Zechariah 14:12-13.
- Zech. 12:3-4 – horses turned against.

Vs. 15 – “*Thou didst walk through the sea with Thine horses*” – This seems to refer to the Red Sea crossing

3:16 *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.*

in Exodus 14, yet depicting the way the Lord so easily handles all the tumult of man's resistance. He just walks right through it! Again it was the Lord revealing Himself in the defence of His people and in the destruction of all resistance. Again the theme here – God hopelessly huge, and for His people, at key points revealing Himself with unmistakable clarity and power.

Vs. 16 – Habakkuk describes his response to this awesome vision of God, this fearful review of God's dealing with people and for His people. *It was terrible!* As a result the prophet was overwhelmed, as if ready to collapse. To see God coming in judgment and wrath is a dreadful thing to behold! It is an image meant to stir the hearts of people, especially unsaved souls. For "*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Heb. 10:31), "*for our God is a consuming fire*" (Heb. 12:29).

Habakkuk's reaction was similar to every Bible circumstance where one is confronted with the presence of the Lord. As Peter, James, and John at

Christ's transfiguration, when the voice spoke out of the cloud and *"they fell on their face, and were sore afraid"* (Matt. 17:6). As John in the presence of Jesus in Revelation 1, when John *"fell at His feet as dead"*. Seeing such visions from the Lord was perhaps always an exhausting, terrifying thing. Daniel recorded some of his own reactions when receiving visions of God;

- 7:28 – *"As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart"*.
- 8:27 – *"And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days...and was astonished at the vision, but none understood it"*.
- 10:8, 16 – *"Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me to corruption, and I retained no strength...by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength"* (absolutely wasted).

Yet what a different story in the saved soul when God's judgment will at last be past, *"when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe"* (II Thess. 1:10). It will be a day of greatest joy rather than terror.

Now think about vs. 16 as describing the Spirit's work in convicting a soul of sin. When I heard the words of God it stirred a trembling in me. There arose in me a fear of His wrath, and a yearning for the promises of God, promises which I knew were not mine. Oh the anguish of finding myself at odds with God, indeed His enemy! My heart responded as Isaiah's, "*Woe is me for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips*". I understood the rottenness of sin within me, my utter unfitness for God's presence. I saw in His word His warning of greatest trouble coming! His words stirred in me a longing to know "*rest*" in that day of His coming, "*when He cometh up unto the people*" to "*invade them with His troops*", His host. I would know rest in that day rather than face the living God as my enemy. Now of course Habakkuk was talking about God's invasion through Babylon. But the verse reminds me of the Lord's work in me when bringing me to conviction, hearing of Christ's return for His own and knowing I would not go with Him because I was not His child. Yet when at last I came through the anguish of it and surrendered to the Lord there was peace and joy within, as we see in vs. 17-18.

Now stand back and look at what we find here. God's prophet has come to peace and rest in his soul through this terrible vision of the exceeding power and judgment of God. The way to true peace

and joy is not by denying the terror of the Lord's wrath and judgment as displayed in this vision. It is not by reading only Bible portions that speak of God's lovingkindness. The way to true peace is to embrace the whole, true vision of God, terrible and awesome though it be. We must allow a complete vision of the true God to have its proper purging work in us, to put us on our face before Him. Then we will find Him responding as He did with Peter, James, and John after His terrifying transfiguration, *"and Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid"* (Matt. 17:6). Or John in Revelation 1, *"and He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not"* (vs. 17). Or Daniel, *"then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong"* (10:18-19). God's touch and tenderness and words of encouragement and peace (true and lasting peace) are for those who bow low before a true vision of Him. Here is terror turned to trust and rest. It is the way of God with us. One must first know the terrible burden of sin and threat of facing God, and come through this with agonizing, humble openness in repentance. Only then can one know the peace of settled rest. Only then can one know the confidence of the Lord on his side, strong for

3:17 *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:*

3:18 *Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

him (vs. 19). Calvin wrote, “The true and only path to rest is through such fear. Whoever is securely torpid (sluggish or dormant) and hardened towards God, will be tumultuously agitated in the day of affliction, and so will bring on himself a worse destruction; but he who in time meets God’s wrath and trembles at His threats, prepares the best rest for himself in the day of affliction”.

“But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word” (Isa. 66:2).

Vs. 17-18 – Though Habakkuk should personally be stripped of everything in the coming invasion of Babylon, yet he now fully understood that His God is bigger than Babylon, bigger than the very worst trouble or loss, indeed terrible! But terrible *for him*. For God would be his strength and sustainer. Please understand it. If we deceive ourselves into thinking God soft and little, then He is soft and little for us, and not big enough to work confidence in us.

3:19 *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. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.*

But if we see Him as He truly is, great and awesome, and yet *our* God, then He is great and awesome *for us!* It is the work of understanding that God wishes to accomplish in every one of us, to “*be still, and know that I am God*” (Ps. 46:10).

Vs. 19 – “*He will make my feet like hinds’ feet*” – Like a gazelle or bok effortlessly leaping from mountain to mountain. It is a picture of boundless strength and surefootedness. Freedom and safety!

“*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*” (Isa. 40:31).

So Habakkuk came in to this writing complaining and anguished, and goes out rejoicing in his confident trust in the Lord. As one writer put it, he “started in the pits, but ended on the mountaintop”, leaping on them in fact. He had learned some things about his God, showing the great value in our searching questions put to the Lord. He cried out to his God, and his cry was heard. It may not have been the answers he was looking for, but he found

all he needed in the Lord. Not only did he find answers to his concerns, but he found a confidence that lifted him above *every* concern.

Warren Wiersbe wrote, “Habakkuk shows us how to deal with life’s problems: 1) admit them honestly; 2) talk to God about them; 3) wait quietly before Him in prayer and meditation on the Word; 4) when He speaks, listen and obey. Never run away from the difficulties of life, because God wants to use those difficulties to strengthen your faith”. Ron Blue wrote, “The Sovereign Lord gives triumph over circumstances to those who trust Him. The way to get out from under the load is to get right under the Lord. To be under the Lord is to be over the circumstances”

May the Lord be your God indeed. And may you see clearly from His words the true vision of who He is, both terrible and tender, both His goodness and severity. For only then will you understand Him to be bigger than any trouble you may face in this life. As He has always so adequately shown Himself big enough for the deliverance of His people, so He will continue to be for His own into the ages of the ages.

“Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Ps. 2:12).

