

Habakkuk 3:1-19

"Prayer, Perspective & Praise"

Habakkuk had a problem. His nation was sinking into the quagmire of sin & rebellion against the ways & word of God. The wicked seemed to prosper while the righteous seemed to suffer. He was surrounded by plundering & violence, strife & contention & he wondered if God was going to do anything about it... "How long?" was his question.

But when God revealed to him His plan, it troubled him even more! God's plan was to use a nation more *wicked* than His people to *punish* His people. Habakkuk couldn't connect those dots. He was doing the math; it wasn't adding up! The prophet was perplexed... However, he knew that God was righteous, that He was just & that He would always do the right thing. So if there was a problem, it wasn't on the end of God's *wisdom*, but on his ability to comprehend or understand God's *ways*.

So, he got alone & he waited for God to speak to him. He knew he'd kind of mouthed off a bit & that correction was coming his way ☺. So he said, "I'm going to wait, & I'm going to watch & see what He says to me & how I will respond when I'm corrected."

Ch 2 is God's reply. The gist is that God said, "I'm going to answer you, but the answer isn't just *for you*. Write the vision down (make it permanent) & make it *plain* so that the one who hears it can run with it, (share the truth of it w/others). (God's word should be not only insightful, it should be impactful (making a permanent difference in our lives) & it should be plain, easy to understand). & God told him that he would need to be patient, because He was going to deal w/it, but it would be at the "appointed time". & He said, "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright w/in him (he's twisted & sinful), but the just shall live by his faith." (Waiting *on* Me, trusting *in* Me).

& God went on to share *with him* & show *to him* the inner workings of Babylon. That though God was *using* them, he wasn't in anyway *justifying* them. They would be held accountable for the fact that they were greedy, they increased through thievery, brutality, they enjoyed false security, they were a people of debauchery & idolatry, they were sowing & they would be reaping as well... Judah would be *disciplined*, Babylon would be *destroyed*.

Ch 3 is the prophet's response. There's no protest, only prayer & praise having received proper perspective.

Vs 1

There's a little uncertainty as to what the exact meaning of this word "Shigionoth" means. It seems to be related to a verb meaning, "to reel to & fro." The thought is that it's to be set to the energetic, enthusiastic tune of the songs of triumph or victory.

It's very emotionally charged. The last Vs in this Ch sends it to the chief musician w/stringed instruments. So it seems Habakkuk had plans to ensure this would be sung in the worship circle, a song of praise, deliverance & triumph.

Vs 2

A number of things to draw out here. Again, if you remember right in Ch 2, Habakkuk had purposed to wait to see what God would say in response to his uncertainty & inability to put the pieces of God's plan together. & Then how *he* would respond when he was corrected.

Now he says, "I have heard Your speech... & was afraid." Not only in the sense that he was afraid of what was coming. But that (as we'll see) he was given a glimpse of the glory & might of the Living God, & His response was the *fear* of God. It's like His perspective was transformed from one of confusion to one of confidence, he went from gloom to glory, from sadness to singing & from worry to worship & what aided in that transformation was a proper appreciation for the greatness of God...

Let me just say that the fear of God is healthy for you & for me. When we realize the holiness, the magnitude & the might of all that He encompasses (which in truth we can't). But when we get a *glimpse* of that, it has this way of shrinking our problems, of calming our concerns & renewing our confidence knowing that God is in control. That He loves us, is for us & not against us, has thoughts of peace & not of evil toward us, to give us a future & a hope. That's the place to which Habakkuk is coming as we enter into Ch 3. -

Throughout the entirety of this little book. There's been a "back & forth" kind of dialogue between Habakkuk & the Lord, but Habakkuk hasn't really requested anything from God. He's asked questions, presented problems, but not really made any petitions. Here, he makes 2.

We might say that he petitioned God for a fresh manifestation of His power, & an undeserved measure of His pardon. He requested "might" & "mercy". He was asking God for revival. "O Lord, revive Your work..." Notice, "In the midst of the years!" In other words, right in the middle of everything going on. Let's not wait, let's get it going right here, right now! In the midst of it all!

"Right here, in the middle of all this trouble we find ourselves in, revive Your work!" Allow me to make an application for you. Judah had seen good times, but some years had gone by, there was a waxing, a waning of their love *for* God, their passion *toward* God... Now they found themselves drifting and distant *from* God.

Can I just say; that same thing can happen to you & me. We've known the Lord for a while, we've walked w/Him for a # of yrs. Our passion begins to wax a bit, our love for God begins to cool off... We drift. Can I encourage you, cry out to God, that He might revive His work, right here, right now in the midst of the years... *You're at a place where hope is running thin (like Jacob when he was convinced, he'd lost Joseph). Where you're dry & parched spiritually (like Samson having fought a great battle & was dying of thirst). -- You can cry out to God for revival, for a time of renewing... He wants to "revive" you.*

When Jacob heard the words of Joseph sent back to him from Egypt we read (Gen 45:27) that his spirit "revived". He was given hope where there had been none. – When Samson prayed, he was dying of thirst, God split the rock, water came out... he drank & his spirit returned, he was "revived" (Judges 15:19). He was refreshed by living waters.

Of course, Jesus said, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*¹ Times of refreshing, renewal & revival are found in calling upon, coming to, falling before J.C.

They're found in renewing your relationship to the word of God. **Psalm 119:107** says this, *"I am afflicted very much; Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word."*

*Habakkuk prayed for revival... & Let's notice that Habakkuk (in praying this prayer) is acknowledging the fact that true revival results from the work of God, not the achievement of man. – Over the years, I've always been a little baffled as to why churches plan "revivals". As if we can determine that January 14th, 15th & 16th the Lord is going to bring revival & if you want in on it you need to be at this location at this time! - Now; I understand what they're communicating. That they want to take the time to focus on the Lord, their heart's desire is to receive from the Lord & so they're setting aside time to simply dedicate to Him (& that's fantastic). & It may just be a matter of semantics but I'm saying, choose a different word, call it something else. A time of seeking, a time of praying, a time of receiving, but *revival* is something only *God* can do.*

Now: is there anything we can do to open the opportunity (if you will) for God to move? Yes. We can do what Habakkuk is doing here. We can pray, cry out to God & plead for His reviving work in the midst of the years... But make no mistake, revival has nothing to do w/the plans, accomplishments or achievements of man. It is the sovereign work of the Spirit of God.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 7:37-38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& Let's pay attention to the words here, "Revive *Your* work." I think if we were to be honest (though we may not pray this way directly) often times underneath the carefully crafted petition is really, "revive *my* work," ("I really want to see what I'm doing here blow up!")

Is it wrong to want to see a ministry explode & reach the masses? No. The question is, "why". I think we should all have a heart to see what's happening here grow more & more, reach more & more. But not so attention is drawn to us, or how cool we are, or what trends we're setting... But that Christ might be magnified & glorified, that His kingdom might be increased, we want to populate heaven & empty the pits of hell by the work & word of the gospel! Pray for revival! (In the midst of the years).

Not only in the body, but in your life personally. We want to see the church revived, let's not forget, you & me... we *are* the church. It starts w/you, it starts w/me. He says, "Make it known..." "Let Your work be seen."

"In wrath remember mercy..." What a great word... We're crying out for revival, what we deserve is wrath. In wrath, remember mercy. "God, I'm not asking for what we deserve... I'm asking for mercy." That's what mercy is, it's not getting what we deserve... We definitely don't pray for *merit!* We pray for mercy. - & I'm so glad... that we serve a God who delights in showing mercy. I love what we read in Micah Ch 7, "*Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy.*"²

& Even more so, not only does God *delight* in mercy, He *desires* to pour out His grace. Not only to *not* give us what we *do* deserve, but to give us what we *don't* deserve... Forgiveness of sin, everlasting life, the precious Person of the Holy Spirit to live *in* & abide *w/us*. -

BTW (Maybe this is a word for someone). We're quick & eager to cry out for mercy when we're standing in the hotseat. But too often we're slow to show mercy when someone is in the hotseat before us... If you want to receive mercy, than be *merciful*. James said it like this, "*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*"³ Jesus put it even more plainly when He said, "*Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*"⁴ In wrath... remember mercy.

Now the prophet puts forth a hymn of praise, it's like he received a vision of the greatness of God. Some believe this looks back to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mic 7:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jas 2:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 5:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Others see it as a flash forward to the coming again of Christ. Honestly, I believe there's room for both. It's common for prophecy to have manifold fulfillments & for God to remind us of the past to assure us of His present & future faithfulness. The idea is that if God has delivered in the past & has plans to deliver in the future, then it stands to reason that His deliverance will abide in the present.

It doesn't mean tough times will never visit us. But that God will always remain faithful to us in the midst of it, working toward our growth & His glory.

Vs 3

We see this word, "Selah" commonly in the psalms. The idea is that of a rest, perhaps a musical interlude. A time for reflecting upon what has been said. Music has a way of tugging on the heart strings. & When that guitar solo, or musical break takes place during worship, it's not just so we can admire great musicianship. But so that we might have some time to think through what's being said, what's being sung, how it should impact &/or encourage us. It should turn our hearts to God in praise or admiration, it should strengthen our resolve to trust in Him...

Habakkuk has been thinking about how the Babylonians will execute judgment, but God wants to remind him that *He* will bring salvation.

Vs 4-5

There are obviously things we could talk about, but I just want to highlight a couple things along the way. Notice that we read that His brightness was like the light... & there His power was hidden.

It's like a paradoxical, counterintuitive statement. It's like saying, "His glory conceals His glory..." John said, *"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."*⁵ To add to that, Habakkuk tells us here that God is greater than the most majestic description that can be articulated. The light that emanates *from* Him only *conceals* Him. His power is concealed in His glory... He dwells in unapproachable light. – Think about that.

Vs 6

Underline that, "His ways are everlasting." God is not a man that He should lie. There are many plans in a man's heart. Nevertheless, the Lord's counsel, that will stand. Heaven & earth will pass away but God's word (God's ways) will by no means, never pass away. His ways are everlasting.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Jn 1:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 7-11

We're reminded of when Joshua fought at the battle of Gibeon. How he prayed and the sun stood still for twenty four hours. (Josh. 10:12-14)

Again, he's rehearsing the faithfulness of God to save, deliver & to preserve His people. That we serve a God who brings salvation! Notice.

Vs 12-13

Again, perhaps not the exact interpretation (though there's certainly room for it) but allow me to draw out another application. Underline the 1st ½ of Vs 13. "You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For salvation w/Your Anointed." (W/Your Messiah). Ladies & gentlemen, this is the gospel! Jesus put it like this, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*⁶ God sent His Son into the world... "You went forth" not for the condemnation of the world... "For the salvation of Your people. For salvation w/Your Anointed." That the world *through Him* might be saved.

For God made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved. (Selah... think about that).

Vs 14-16

I love Vs 16. It's the appropriate response of a man who's seen the glory of God & caught a glimpse of the sovereign power of God. "My body trembled, My lips quivered, rottenness entered my bones..." *The idea being, "I couldn't stand in His presence." Perhaps you recall when Isaiah saw the Lord, high & lifted up, the train of His robe filling the temple, the angels flying round about the throne of God, crying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is filled w/His glory!"* The house was filled w/smoke & Isaiah was overwhelmed. He said, *"Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."*⁷

When Daniel saw a vision of the Lord he fell on his face. He said, *"no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength."*⁸ John, Rev 1. When he saw the Lord, he fell at His feet as though dead...

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 3:16-17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 6:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Da 10:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Habakkuk was overwhelmed at the greatness, the power & majesty of God... & Now that He has a proper perspective, He gives God praise.

His faith isn't found in his circumstances, in how much money he has, or how great things may or may not be. It's found in the Lord. & Circumstantial hardships doesn't in anyway diminish the power, the glory & might of our God. & He comes to realize that hardship/devastation shouldn't distract me *from* God, but drive me to deeper devotion & dependance *upon* God... Notice.

Vs 17-18

Things are only going to go from bad to worse. That won't diminish his faith. How about you? You lose your job, they're coming for your house, you find yourself in line at a local shelter for food for your family...

Someone close to you betrays you, circumstances seem to work against you. You find your health failing. Will that diminish your faith? "Behold, the proud, His soul is not upright w/in him; but the just shall live by his faith..."

& Listen, faith isn't blind to tough times. He's calling it like it is. Yet he realizes that God's love isn't circumstantial. Though *He slay me*, yet will I trust Him... We can't always rejoice over our circumstances, there may be many times that we weep over our circumstances. Yet we also know that this world is not our home, we set our minds on things above & not on things of the earth, our rejoicing isn't in the flocks, or the figs, our faith isn't in the fruit of the field, it's in the Lord.

& God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us... For the N.T. equivalent of these Vs write it down & read it later. Phil 4:11-13

Vs 19

From confusion to confidence. From pleading, to praising. From gloom, to glory & the transition was found in the understanding of the greatness of God.

"The Lord God is my strength." Again, not my bank account, my own ingenuity, resources or abilities... It's not by might, nor by strength, but by My Spirit says the Lord of hosts.

You may be in rocky places, but God will (by His Spirit) give you sure footing. You will be more than a conqueror (*He* will make you walk on your high places) through Christ Jesus who has loved you & give Himself for you. – The secret of the Christian life is Christ in you. Pray, cry out to God for revival.

Habakkuk's prayer didn't change the circumstances around him, but through prayer God changed the heart/mind w/in Him.

Prayer, perspective & praise.

Prayer Points:

God You are so good, & greatly to be praised! We thank You for adjusting our perspective today. For reminding us that You are a God of salvation & that You have sent J.C. to save us all. Increase our faith, help us to find our strength, our joy – in You. We bless Your name.

God has sent forth His Son for salvation. If you've not received the Lord, never surrendered to the Lord, do so now. God has loved you. Jesus has died for you, turn from your sin, trust in Him today & you'll never be the same.