

# Trusting God in Trying Times

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We've paused our pulpit since the first of the year, paused it to just take an extended focus on the meaning of trusting God and growing in grace, and we started last Sunday, I believe it was, we looked at Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." And we considered that and we saw that our temptation is to determine our response to life by what we see and understand in the moment, what our eyes can see and what our hands can touch, and that Scripture bids us to remember that God is greater than all things, that we need to trust him more than we even trust our own perceptions of things. We should certainly trust God more than we trust our feelings. We should trust God more than what we trust in our limited sin-impaired minds. And so we looked at that and we saw the promise of God that those who respond to him like that, those who place themselves under the providence of God and entrust themselves to that will find that God has guided them through it all and led them to a good and safe conclusion in the end. That was last Sunday.

Then on Tuesday, we considered trusting God in prayer, and we saw that we pray not according to a tiresome long list of the needs of people around us necessarily; we pray for others, we intercede, we sympathize with them, but we realize that there is so much more to the heart response that we bring to God and the private aspect of prayer and worship and a discourse with God, so to speak, there's so much more than just a laundry list of physical needs and we realize that it's very easy to fall into that trap of a mechanical, earthbound, human-bound approach to prayer, and when you start to see it for what it is, that limited false approach, if I can be so bold, becomes a rather irksome way of praying. You know, there's so much more. We're coming into the presence of the living God, the living Christ, who loved us and gave himself up for us, and we want to know him and express our love to him, our worship, our trust in him, no matter what, and all of those spiritual components are lost if we're restricted to the four corners of a prayer sheet that we've either generated ourselves or that others have given to us. Yes, we love people. Yes, we intercede, but we don't limit our prayers to a human focus like that and so what we saw is that we cultivate faith and dependence in God. We go to prayer to tell him we love him and we trust him and to lay our hearts before him and to seek his help. And so we looked at themes of God in the Trinity and need in our trials, and confession of sin with our trespasses and thanksgiving for the triumphs that God gives to us. All of these

things give us a far more robust prayer life. It's far more in keeping with the fullness of the teaching of our Lord in Matthew chapter 6.

And so that's been the sphere of what we've been considering over the past couple of times together. It informs the spirit of what we are expanding on here today. I'm just kind of going with what I sense would be helpful and useful at this time in your lives and in our church. It's a privilege to do that and what I want to do today is to go back to a book that I've taught on many times over the years, but to present it in a different way that I have never done here at Truth Community Church and I invite you to turn to the Old Testament book of Habakkuk, and some would call it Habakkuk in other parts of the world. We use the pronunciation Habakkuk with generosity of spirit toward those who pronounce it differently. Over the years, I have taught on Habakkuk to help people learn how to trust God in trying times and usually I present it in a series of four messages. Instead of a series like that, here in this point in the life of our church, I want to just do it in a single message, frame it a little bit differently with the same basic content, because I think that it's going to bring things into focus for you in a way that's very easy to remember, very easy to apply, and we'll build on what we saw on Tuesday about the Christian entrusting prayer from Matthew 6. And after the service, if I can just say this briefly, for a short time after today's service, our book table will be open for materials that you can obtain to expand and take these things further. So just be aware of that opportunity after the service.

So, Habakkuk. Habakkuk, just by way of the briefest of introduction, you can reduce it down to this, Habakkuk was a man, he was a prophet, a spokesman for God, and he was a prophet of God to a rebellious people, and because the people to whom he was ministering were rebellious against God, they were acting contrary to his word, the conflict of it all weighed heavily on his heart, as you'll see, when we come to this book, as we open it and begin to read its opening verses, we see that Habakkuk the man was troubled. Habakkuk the man was anxious. Habakkuk the man was discouraged. And immediately I know by bringing those themes to light of a troubled heart, an anxious heart, a discouraged heart, I already know that I'm connecting with many, that many of you are saying, "Well, that's right where I am today." Well, praise the Lord for his good providence in bringing you to find something that will help from his word.

Now, the book of Habakkuk, we're not going to take time to explore this, but as you read it on your own, you can see what I mean, the book of Habakkuk records a dialogue between the prophet and God. Habakkuk prays in the first four verses, and God responds to him in verses 5 through 11. In verses 12 through chapter 2, verse 1, Habakkuk is speaking again, and then in the rest of chapter 2, God is speaking and then in chapter 3, the prophet is speaking. So it's just very helpful just from an understanding of the literary nature of the book to realize that we're seeing a conversation that is taking place between Habakkuk and God and through that conversation, as God revealed more of himself and more of his plan to Habakkuk, Habakkuk was transformed in his heart. He went from being discouraged to being joyful, even though nothing in the surrounding circumstances had changed whatsoever. And beloved, that's one of the really key things to understand about trusting God in trying times, is that what God would lead us to do is to trust him for

who he is in himself, and to recognize that who he is in himself is enough to satisfy your heart. You do not need a change in circumstances in order to go from discouragement to joy. You don't. You don't. And the first step to letting, you know, kind of starting to saw through the chains that tie you to this earth and the earthbound circumstances and earthbound relationships, is even if you don't understand how to get from point A to point B just yet, is to recognize that the answer to your discouraged heart is not a change in circumstances. It's not a change in the people around you. It's not a change in financial circumstances. The purpose, one of the primary purposes that God has in your life for bringing conflict and adversity to you is to teach you to trust him and to be satisfied in him alone; whether there are any external prompts to build up your trust or not, to realize that who God is based on how he has revealed himself in creation, in the Canon, in Christ, in conscience, and in conversion, who God is as he has revealed himself is more than enough to satisfy the believing heart and we see that taught to us in the book of Habakkuk. In the broader context of the Old Testament and the ministry of the prophets, Habakkuk is one of the twelve so-called minor prophets at the end of the New Testament. What the role of the book of Habakkuk does is it particularly shows the faithful remnant what faith in God looks like as his discipline comes upon them and so Habakkuk is specifically intended to teach us how to trust God and in that way it makes a great contribution despite its small size, it gives a great contribution to the overall Canon of Scripture that God has given to his people.

And so what we want to do this morning to help you learn how to trust God in your trying times, I just want to isolate two principles that have three and four sub-points. Two principles, principle one has three sub-points, principle two has four sub-points, and it's so simple. This is so simple. I am pretty confident that I cannot make it any more plain, clear, direct, and accessible than what we're going to do here this morning. What does it mean to trust God? Well, think about what happens when you're anxious and your heart is troubled in things, without exception, it's because we are preoccupied with earthly circumstances, earthly relationships, earthly problems, and we're trying to work through how can this be solved, or how did this ever come about, and what am I to do, and those of us that tend to be a little bit pessimistic and introspective in our approach to life, it's very easy for all of that ground to just collapse under us and then bury us in it. You know, that's just the way it is and the question is, how do we get out of that? How do we get out from that trap? How do we rise above it? And it can't be put, in my opinion, any simpler than what we're going to see here this morning from the book of Habakkuk.

Two principles, I'll give them to you up front. Number one, what you do. What does it mean to trust God? How do you trust God? Number one, you remember God. You remember God. And point number two, you wait on God. You remember God and you wait on God, and that's what Habakkuk is going to teach us here. It's all so basic, it's easy to overlook. There is absolutely no trouble at all in understanding these concepts. There's nothing difficult in Greek or Hebrew or systematic or historical theology, there's nothing difficult about this that the newest believer, the youngest person can't grasp and understand. There's nothing difficult in anything that we're going to see here this morning. Not one bit of it. But it's very hard in some ways, it's very difficult because you have to discipline your mind and discipline your heart to remember these things, to not

give into the temptations to discouragement and instead call to mind the things that you know to be true, call to mind the fact that the mercies of the Lord are new every morning and that great is his faithfulness, and to call those things to mind and to let those things control your perspective rather than the agitations of your heart. And so, beloved, when trials overwhelm you, whether you're looking at things personally, whether you're looking at the condition of society, the uncertainty of the future, matters of health, matters of relationships, none of the particulars like that matter, everything that matters is found in this exercise of faith and trust in the simplicity of remembering God and trusting God. And it's so basic, it's very easy to overlook but when trials overwhelm you, when you're tossing and turning on your bed, perhaps with tears drenching your pillow as you do, you have to stop and remember God and then wait on God. That's what we're going to see.

So point number one, remember God and there's three aspects to this that we see and learn from the book of Habakkuk. You remember God, first of all, in this way, you remember God's hidden work. You remember God's hidden work, or you could say more theologically, remember God's providence. Remember God's hidden work, remember God's providence, we're using those as equivalent terms.

So let's look at the book of Habakkuk, shall we? I gave you a very extended introduction so that you all had time to find it and, you know, you page through and while I see Jeremiah and Isaiah, that's easy, but Habakkuk, man; it's okay to look at the table of contents even. As you open the book of Habakkuk, you join his prayer life in progress. Look at the first four verses with me.

1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

That's just kind of an opening statement of the entire book. This is what Habakkuk has to say to us, you could say. Then in verses 2 through 4, Habakkuk is praying and you'll see that this isn't his first prayer over the matters that he has recorded for us. This is not Habakkuk's first rodeo in pleading with God about what's before him. Let's look at verses 2 through 4. He says, "O LORD," Yahweh, covenant-keeping God,

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? 3 Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. 4 So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

Notice that in that opening line, he says, "how long shall I cry for help?" That's a really key clue to understanding the dynamic that permeates this book. This isn't the first time that he's prayed and asked for God's help. He had been crying out for a long period of time. It doesn't matter what the actual chronological extent was, it was long enough that he had expected an answer from God, it had been long enough that he thought by now God would have responded, this covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God who loves his

people, protects them, vindicates them, helps them. "I've been crying out to you repeatedly and I've been met with this baffling sense of divine silence. You have not responded."

And what's he been praying about? Well, we're not going to look at things in detail. This is very much a satellite view of this book today. But Habakkuk was appalled at the corruption that he saw all around him, no doubt in the people, no doubt in the leaders, no doubt in at least some of the priests. Rather than being a prophet to an obedient, worshiping community of believers called out by God through their lineage and with Abraham and according to the faith of Abraham, he's been ministering to people who are rejecting the word of God, pursuing their own carnal ways, and it manifests itself in wickedness and violence throughout the whole society. Now, understand that this prophet, as a man, he's a very sensitive, tender man. He's got holy desires in his heart, and for people that are like that, these kinds of difficulties are difficult on them because they feel them so deeply. They can't just dismiss it with a wave of their hand, and Habakkuk was like that. He said, "God, I've been crying for help. I say, God, look at the violence, and you haven't done anything." He had prayed for change. He had prayed for help. And yet, the more he prayed, the more the situation grew worse. It was baffling to him, and he's expressing questions like this. He said, "God, why are you silent? Why are my prayers unanswered? Why? Why? Why?" You know, it echoes Psalm 13. "How long will I cry out? How long, how long does this go on?"

And dear fellow believer in Christ, part of the temptation that Satan will insinuate to your mind in times like this that's really debilitating, very difficult to come to grips with, is it'll suggest that maybe there's something wrong with you, maybe you've done something, there must be hidden sin in you that has brought these calamities upon you, that's brought this adversity to you. God is punishing you for something that you have done and then that just multiplies and the quicksand just sinks and engulfs you even more; in the midst of that then it's not just the adversity, but I wonder if God has aligned himself against me. And that's difficult to find your way through. Now, just by way of a brief window of response to that here on this side of the cross, beloved, understand that if God has saved you in Christ, understand that if you're resting on the shed blood and the merit of Jesus Christ for your salvation, that Christ has loved you, Christ has given himself up for you, that the triple promise of the word of God, we sung about it in one of our opening hymns, is, "I will never, ever, ever leave you, nor will I ever, ever forsake you." And so when we have been brought into union with Christ, died to that realm of Adam and brought into the realm of Christ and the realm of his grace and his love and the eternal purpose of God being worked out for certainty in our lives, it's not possible that you as a Christian find yourself as an enemy of God. You've been reconciled to God. And so we trust in Christ, we trust in his love, and we say, "Whatever the explanation is, it's not that Christ has reversed his attitude toward me. He died for me while I was an enemy. It's while we were godless that he yielded himself. It's while I was in sin that he caused me to be born again. How could he possibly turn against me when I'm now a child in the family of God, how could I ever see him turn against me if he loved me when I was an enemy? How much more is his love going to be faithful when I'm a child?" You may not understand all of the surrounding circumstances, but you never need question the love and the intentions of

God and the intentions of Christ towards you but that doesn't mean that you won't enter into these realms like Habakkuk did of severe adversity, extended time of unanswered prayer, questions, "God, why? Why? Why are you not responding?"

Well, you need to remember God's hidden work in those times. Things looked chaotic from Habakkuk's perspective, but as you read on in chapter 1, you find that God had the situation completely under control. He was way ahead of the curve on Habakkuk. Habakkuk saw a little tiny slice of things, concluded from that view of little tiny slice of things that God wasn't doing anything and it's almost laughable when you step back and realize that God sees the whole picture from beginning to end. God has appointed the end from the beginning. There's no way that God could be unaware or indifferent in what's happening in his creation or among his people and we see this in practical ways as we go on to verse 5. God answers Habakkuk now. And he says,

5 "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. 6 For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. 7 They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.

What's he saying here? God is telling him, "Habakkuk, you need a bigger perspective than what you have as you pray to me in that way. You say I'm not doing anything. You say that I'm silent. Far to the contrary." He says, "Look up, look out on the world scene. You see that nation that's gathering power, that's growing in might before your very eyes? That's me at work," and God says, "I am raising up that nation so that," and as the book of Habakkuk proceeds on, we won't take time to go through all of this, God is raising up a nation with military strength. I'll just stop there for a moment. All of a sudden, there is a whole aspect of the work of God that is being brought to bear on Habakkuk's mind that he hadn't had the first clue or given the first consideration to. And what was God doing? Well, look at verse 11 of chapter 1, still speaking of the Chaldeans, also known as the Babylonians, he said,

11 Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!"

What God is telling Habakkuk is, is that, "I am preparing this rising nation to be an instrument of discipline upon my own people." God, in his sovereign might, as he causes nations to rise and fall, was specifically empowering and strengthening this nation of the people known as the Chaldeans and they were gathering and expanding their realm through military conquest. And what God is saying is, "That's all my doing. I am raising them up and I'm going to use them as a divine paddle on my own people to discipline them for the sin which, Habakkuk, you have rightly identified." The Chaldeans would invade and conquer his people. They would suffer as God brought divine discipline upon them, and eventually they'd be carried off into exile, taken away from their land as God disciplined them for their sin, their false worship, all the other matters. And God is telling

Habakkuk this. He's giving him a pre-understanding, you might say, of the short-term future that was ahead for the nation of Israel. As they went about their sin and wickedness, as Habakkuk struggled and wrestled in prayer, God says, "Let me tell you what's really going on here. It's far more than the immediate situation you see, Habakkuk," I'm taking the liberty to speak in the first person because God is dialoguing here. I can't do it any other way. God tells Habakkuk, "There's more to the scene. I'm addressing the problem over a course of time, and what's going to happen in the end is there is going to be severe discipline brought upon the people. Habakkuk, far from neglecting the situation, I'm doing a work on my own timetable. I'll do it as I want, with whom I wish, as I wish."

Now here's the point for today, and here's what you need for trusting God in your trying times: based on what Habakkuk saw, or in the language of Proverbs 3, to connect these two messages together, as Habakkuk relied on his own understanding, he thought that God was inactive. He thought that God was not doing anything. He was leaning on his own understanding based on what he saw, and he had not taken the fullness of the reality of God and the sovereignty of God into account as he assessed the situation. But the reality was, the hidden reality, the full reality, the reality from God's perspective was this, and it's just stunning. This book is just a stunning piece of literature, let alone a stunning revelation of the majesty of God. God, contrary to what Habakkuk said, God was actually orchestrating world events. God was actually directing the course of world history to address the very thing that Habakkuk accused him of not doing anything about. It was the exact opposite of what Habakkuk thought. Habakkuk says, "You're not doing anything." What a ridiculous accusation to make when God is raising nations in order to address the sin of his people. You see, beloved, Habakkuk did not understand as he went to prayer. In all of his agitation and all of his accusations, he did not understand. God was working in far greater ways than Habakkuk could have imagined. And you see, beloved, and hopefully we all feel a sense of shame, of embarrassment before God when we realize that we've prayed so many times in exactly that same way. "God, why, why, why? Why don't you do this or that?" When the reality is that God is working all things together for good to those who love him, that he directs all things after the counsel of his will, Romans 8, Ephesians 1, on and on you could go.

And so, beloved, you see what you have to do, what you have to do, and again, this text from Proverbs 3 and Habakkuk, it just fits hand in glove, when you are in that troubled, agitated spirit, the first thing that you have to do is say, "Stop." You talk to yourself before you talk to God. You talk to yourself and you tell yourself, "Self, stop it. Stop thinking that way. Stop acting and responding as though God was not involved in this situation in every single detail. Don't do that," you say to yourself, "because you know, O soul, you know that God is at work in everything that happens. You know that God loves his people, that God never forsakes his people." And all of a sudden, there's a pivot point in your response to things to realize that, "Wait, there has to be more going on here than what I realize. God is at work, and God is faithful and even if I'm suffering for a time, it can't mean that he is neglecting me, overlooking me, or anything of the sort." You remember that God is working in everything that happens, that virtually everything that God is doing is something that is beyond your realm of perception, and you stop the

accusations and you say, "Whatever else is happening here, I've got to remember that the Lord's at work no matter what."

Now that's the first aspect, you remember God in your trying times. You remember his hidden work. You remember his providence. You don't have to understand what providence is doing. You don't have to know anything about the details of it. It's enough to know the reality of that even if you don't know the details and the truth of matter is for you and me and anyone else that has ever been a child of Adam, we couldn't begin to process it even if we knew. If the majesty and the complexity of the work of God in every detail of the universe was presented to us, it would blind our minds like his Shekinah glory would blind our physical eyes. It's too much for us and that's why, beloved, that's why you and I cannot lean on our own understanding. Even if the fullness of everything that God was doing was laid out to us, we wouldn't be able to understand it. It's too far. It's too high. It's too deep, as Scripture says in other places. I believe one of the psalmist says, you know, "How can I comprehend these things? This knowledge is too high for me. It's too great. I can't understand it." Now look, you know, this cuts directly against some of the proud hearts in the room here but we have to humble ourselves before a holy, majestic, omniscient God and remember his present work, his hidden work.

Now secondly, along with that, you remember God's character. You remember God's character. As we read on, and we'll be looking at verse 12 in just a moment here, what God had just said was a conundrum in itself. He said, "I'm doing something, and here's what I'm doing. I'm going to raise up a pagan nation to discipline my people." Well, all of a sudden the problem went from bad to worse in Habakkuk's mind and what it meant for the external circumstances of things, because what that means is the coming invasion is going to make things circumstantially worse. We're going to be subjugated by a hostile pagan people. I'm going to go from people that at least outwardly name the name of Yahweh and at least have some connection to his law, we're going to go from that to this, to a realm where unbelieving people who have no regard for Scripture and no regard for God's people, no regard for the name of God are going to be in charge politically and humanly speaking. And you know, you say, "What kind of answer to prayer is that? I thought when I prayed, things would get better in a way that I could see and understand and feel." What God told Habakkuk is this, is that it's going to get much, much worse and I'm bringing that to pass. Wow.

How are we to understand something like that? We've got to remember God's character. You have to remember God's character in these perplexing times that come to us all. Look at verses 12 and 13 in Habakkuk. He says,

12 Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. 13 You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?



The gist of what Habakkuk is doing and saying here is he is calling to mind the holiness of God. God is separate from man. He is high and exalted and lofty and there's no one like him. He's holy in that sense. And he is morally pure. God could never, ever, ever do anything wrong. It is impossible for God to do anything wrong. Titus 1:2 says, it is impossible for God to lie. It is impossible for him to violate his truth. It is impossible for him to violate any of his attributes, any of his perfections by what he works out in time among men. He cannot violate his love, his grace, his goodness, his greatness, his majesty, his truth. He can't violate that. Everything he does is consistent with his character. Everything that he brings into your life, beloved, is consistent with the perfect character of God. You've got to remember that. Here in the context of Habakkuk, what it means is that God, whatever he's doing as he raises up this nation, it's not his intention to exterminate his own people. That's what Habakkuk says there in the middle of verse 12 when he says, "we shall not die." We may suffer. There may be individuals among us who perish, and certainly there will be when this comes, but as a people, the line of Abraham, the line of David, cannot possibly be exterminated and cast away from the presence of God because then he'd be violating his holy, faithful character. Habakkuk says, "Whatever's going on, it's not the end of us as a people. We may suffer for a time, but God, you'll surely keep us."

And God vindicates that. God says that. If you look over at chapter 2 verse 8, and obviously we're leaving out a lot for the sake of what we're trying to do this morning. In chapter 2 verse 8, God is addressing the Chaldean people. He's telling them that while he's going to use them, he'll get around to dealing with them in the end and he says, "Because you have plundered many nations," this nation that's rising up that will discipline his own people, "you have plundered many nations," but what goes around comes around, "all the remnant of the peoples," whoever is left, "they're going to plunder you because you've shed the blood of man, you brought violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them." God used them, but they go beyond his purpose, they exercise their own sinful lust for violence as they do, and God says, "I see that too. I'll punish that too in the end." And in the context of what Habakkuk is saying, God gives him a perspective on what Habakkuk is wrestling with theologically. "God, how can you as a holy God use a wicked people to accomplish your ends?" Well, one answer to that is that's all he's got to work with because all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But in addition to that, what God is saying is, "There's a very long-term plan in place here. I'll use these people for a time. Yes, they're wicked. And after I'm done with them, I will judge them." And world history shows that after 70 years, the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians, and on it goes; the broad sweep of world history vindicates the very principle that we're seeing here.

Here's the point for today, beloved: Habakkuk remembers God's character as he remembers God. He remembers God's hidden work. He remembers God's character, says, "God, you're holy. You could never do anything wrong. The outcome of this could never be our complete extermination and destruction." And the point, there's a broad point about God in general, and then there's an application to your heart and circumstances here today in particular. The broad point is this, beloved: God always, without fail, deals with men according to his character. God always deals with his people in his faithfulness. And

so, and so, therefore, remember last week said the key word in trusting God is "therefore." All of these things are true, therefore I will see my circumstances this way, therefore I will respond this way, as opposed to saying, yeah, I see all of that, but, you know, you don't know how wicked my family has been to me. You don't know all of the struggles that I have. Nobody knows the sorrow I've seen. Christian, brother, sister, it's time for us to grow up and to stop using the word "but" to resist the truth of God. Your circumstances do not contradict the character of God, no matter what. Rather, the character of God helpfully informs the way that you should interpret and respond to your circumstances.

Don't lean on your own understanding. Lean on the unchanging, eternal character of God. He's holy. He's in providential control of everything. He has shown you great love in Christ, "And this is love not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." If you want to be a person, if you want to be a man or woman of faith, there is no alternative but to think and to respond to life in this way. You start by remembering God. You start by remembering his promises. You start by remembering his character and then you say, "I'm going to look at my life and circumstances in light of that greater eternal picture rather than according to my frustrations and my limited perspective. I'm not going to lean on my own understanding. I'm going to remember God. I'm going to remember his providence. I'm going to remember his character. And from that, I will conclude that God will bring his good intentions to pass in time no matter what, cannot be any other way." And there starts to form within you something of the spirit of Martin Luther, which he expressed in different circumstances. He said, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen." "Yes, I acknowledge all of the difficulties, the troubles, the strife. I acknowledge all of that," you say to yourself, "But I'm not going to interpret life in light of that. I stand on the character of God. I stand on the promises of God. I stand on the providence of God and because he's loved me and given himself up for me in Christ, then I'm not going to give in to fear. I'm not going to give in to discouragement. I'm not going to give in to my pessimistic introspective nature. I'm going to believe God and I'm going to live and think accordingly because I remember him."

Now, third aspect of remembering God is to remember God's plan. Remember God's plan. It's not just that God is working things out as he goes along. He is doing that, but that's not all of it. It's not just his character, we have to remember that God has an eternal plan. Go back to when we talked about the decree of God. He determined what would happen beforehand in everything in the universe. God has decreed what would happen. He created the earth, and now he's working everything out, every aspect of detail, he's working it out so that his original plan is completely fulfilled without any fail. God has a future plan. He's working it to a designed end, in other words. He's not figuring it out as he goes. He established the plan. He knew the plan from the beginning. He knows it now, and he's working it all out according to his wisdom, according to his time, according to his character. And so life, beloved, absolutely is more than what you see and understand and apprehend in the present circumstances. What is God's future plan? It's still future to us here today in 2024.

Look at Habakkuk 2, verse 14. Habakkuk 2, verse 14. This is God speaking. He said,

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

How thoroughly does the surface of water cover the oceans? Complete, total, absolute. And what Habakkuk says, what God speaks to and through Habakkuk is, is that there's a coming day where all the world will know the glory of God. We don't have to define that and work out all the eschatological implications of that today. There is a coming time where the glory of God will be manifest and everybody will see it and it will be undeniable. In the language of Philippians 2, "there is coming a day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." That's the certain plan that God has. All the nations will see God's glory. All of his people will find that God has been faithful to them. All will know that God is majestic, God is sovereign, God has done it, and everything will bow to that great eternal reality without fail, without exception. That's his eternal plan, to reveal his glory and to make it visible to all men so that all give homage to his Son, either in voluntary love, "My Lord, my Master, you are King," or by forced submission by those who refuse to submit, "You're King," everyone will come to the same conclusion in the end.

And so, beloved, when you realize the universal nature of the coming kingdom, when you realize how vast all of this is, and that billions will all be in concord, "May Jesus Christ be praised," you know, again, and I'm saying this to my own heart as much as I'm saying it to yours here in this moment, doesn't that make our problems, our struggles, our trials, doesn't it make them look rather small by comparison to this great reality that is coming and knowing that when that great reality arrives, that God's intentions for you by name, he won't lose you in the process. He won't lose you. He won't lose Neil. He won't lose Paul. He won't lose Donna in the process. He won't lose Jim. He won't lose Lisa. He's not going to lose any one of his children in the process of accomplishing this great universal reality. He'll do the great big picture to perfection and then everything that pertains to you and your concerns and your heart and your tears, somehow he'll take care of all of that also and all the world in all the details will see all the glory of God and ascribe praise to his name. That's what you have to remember.

It's almost physically intimidating to me in this moment to stand and preach in light of those kinds of realities. We are seeing the great majesty of everything about God, and we have to remember that. That is the context in which we understand everything else so that everything difficult yields to that greater reality. It will be overruled by what God intends to do in the end. It'll all be overruled. Your sad marriages, your rebellious children, for some the children you've lost, all of the reversals of life, all of the criticisms, it's all going to yield to that greater reality, to the glory of God, not to the glory of us. So you remember God and all of a sudden you've got a whole different... Let me do it this way. When you remember God, you've got a whole different perspective on things. When you remember his providence, you remember his character, you remember his future plan, all of a sudden the whole dynamic of everything is turned upside down and totally transformed simply because you've remembered who God is and what he does and what

he will do. All of it's completely transformed and not a thing has changed. Not a thing has changed.

Now, when you've recalled all those things, trust goes another step further, that brings us to our second point here this morning: you wait on God. You remember God and you wait on God. Our challenge, our opportunity, our reality is, is that we're caught for a moment in a parenthesis of time between now and between the final fulfillment of all of these things. That final fulfillment informs our understanding of it, but in the meantime we have to suffer along the way sometimes and so we have to wait on God while he works out his purposes. And understand that sometimes, as he does here with Habakkuk, as he did with Paul in 2 Corinthians 12, sometimes God is content to leave you in your suffering, in your unjust circumstances. He's perfectly content to leave you there, to not change it immediately so that you would learn to practice these things and see the reality of them fulfilled over time, that you would deepen in your faith, that you would grow in your conformity to the image of Christ. Think about it this way. Think about it this way. Consider faith as a school in which you're learning. Well, even the worst public school institution doesn't pretend to communicate all of its information in a single day. Students learn over the course of time. They grow in knowledge over time, or even at the best of universities, if there's any left. You grow over time over a course of several years of study. You know, and if we want to be doctors of faith, you know, and you think about what doctors go through with undergraduate and then medical school and then residency and all that, it's a long time to get to be in that place. Well, don't you think that for something that's infinitely more valuable, a genuine, tested, sincere, genuine faith in Christ that shows that you are truly a child of his, don't you think that it's going to be tested? That it's going to take time to learn these things? Sometimes you fail an exam? Sometimes you miss a quiz because you're not watching, whatever? Isn't it obvious that there's going to be a time element to this and that there's going to be effort and struggle in the process? Isn't that evident?

Why would we think that you could educate a mind, oh, you could only educate a mind over years, but that God has to fix a heart instantly? Our expectations are ridiculous, they're wrong-headed and it's because of the way that we've been conditioned to think, especially in our day, by the past 50 years of so-called Christian teaching. Name it, claim it. You want it now. "Hey, look, I've got a microwave. I've got a smartphone. I've got a drive-through restaurant. I want everything now." Beloved, you can't take those worldly, ungodly expectations and carry them over to the way that you expect God to deal with your soul. Sometimes you have to wait and we'll see this as we go along, waiting on God is not a passive resignation to the inevitable. You have something to do. You have work to do, spiritual work to do.

In terms of this waiting, look at verses 2 and 3.

2 ... the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. 3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end--it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.

It says you're going to have to wait, wait, wait, wait. Then look at chapter 3, verse 16. Habakkuk 3, verse 16, he says,

16 I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.

I've got to wait. It's not going to happen right now and I have to compose my soul by my remembrance of God and wait on him.

What does that look like? Well, your responsibility is to live by faith in trying times. Look at chapter 2, verse 4. Chapter 2, verse 4.

4 "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him [speaking about the proud], but [by contrast] the righteous shall live by his faith.

We have something to do day by day as we live out our remembrance of God. What does that waiting look like? I've said this many times. It is not sitting down and in complaint and saying, "There's nothing I can do about it. God's going to do what he's going to do. Whatever will be, will be." You know, and you give out this disgruntled sigh at the end of the contemplation. That's not faith. That's not waiting on God in a biblical sense. That's sinful, passive aggressive defiance. Sinful, passive aggressive defiance. That's not faith. What does the faith that waits on God look like? Number one, you wait expectantly. You wait expectantly. In other words, having remembered God, you persevere through the hardship with – watch this, this is italicized in my notes, so it has to be really important because I don't italicize much in the notes – persevere with confident hope that God will eventually deliver you. Confident hope. You wait expectantly.

Look at chapter 2, verse 1. He says,

1 I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

Habakkuk was like a watchman on a tower that is looking out for the well-being of the city and he's looking out on the horizon. What the watchman did, he would look out on the horizon for the first sign of perhaps a messenger coming with a hurried message, perhaps looking out for hostile peoples coming against the city, the watchman was looking to see what he would find. Habakkuk was like that watchman, looking with responsibility, looking to God for what would come next. And so, beloved, when you trust God in your trying times, you look to God with your heart and you have confidence that he will be true to his word. Say, "I don't see any way out of this." I was thinking recently about someone I know having had multiple discussions with him and just things that he's gone through and, you know, things where it just seemed like there was never any way out of the circumstance. What you learn is that trust means that while you're

waiting and while you're in that position, before there's any sign of deliverance or relief, you look to God and say, "I don't understand how, but I know that he'll work this together for good and I will wait on him until it comes to pass. I will worship him," Trinity, trials, trespasses, triumphs in the language that we looked at on Tuesday. "I'll pray. I'll be faithful to the people of God. I won't wander away just because, you know, life is hard. I'm going to stay faithful and let that be my expression of looking to God." But in your adversity, beloved, here's the thing, you're so informed by your remembrance of God that you expect him to prove his faithfulness to you. Say, "It can't be any other way. God has to bless me through this because of who he is, what he does, and so I expect him to bless me even though I don't see any way that it could come about. I'm not leaning on my understanding. I'm acknowledging him. I'm knowing him in all my ways." In other words, to state it negatively, you refuse to despair simply because you don't understand. You wait expectantly.

Secondly, you wait reverently. You wait reverently. Rather than grumble in the delay, you remember the throne of God. Look at chapter 2, verse 20. Chapter 2, verse 20 says,

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

God reigns in majesty. He's there on the throne of the universe, ruling over all, high and lofty where no human eye can see him and yet exercising his sovereign control of it all. You worship God on the basis of that revealed reality on his character and plan, and you worship him before you have your answer. You don't say, "I'll praise you when you do what I want." You say, "Even if you don't do what I want, I'm going to praise and worship you." Complete reversal. You wait reverently.

Thirdly, you wait submissively. You wait submissively. Chapter 3, verse 2. After God has revealed his plan to him, Habakkuk submits to it in verse 2. He says,

2 O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

"God, you are sending your wrath upon this people in righteousness. My prayer is that not that you would change your mind, but that you would remember mercy as you do." He submits to the adversity. He accepts it as from the hand of God and he says, "God, in light of that, just give me mercy to endure what you are sending." And so you say, beloved, and I know, as always, these messages go so long, I can't help it. You say to yourself, you say in prayer, "God, I believe that you sent this adversity to me in wisdom and in love because I remember your character. God, I don't understand why. I don't understand why it has to be so hard, why it has to be so painful. I don't understand that at all. But I don't have to. I will trust you. I accept this trial, God. I only ask you to be faithful to me. I'm not asking you to change anything. I accept it. I'm just asking you, O God, to be who you are to me. And if you are who you are, loving, gracious, faithful,

holy, righteous, good, if you manifest and work out your providence to me according to your character, I'll be fine. That's all I ask for then."

And so you have this expectant, reverent, submissive trust, this expectant, reverent, submissive waiting, and that enables you to do one final thing as we close, to wait joyfully. To wait joyfully. And just by way of quick summary, you remember God and you wait on God. You remember God by remembering his providence. You remember his character. You remember his future plan. And then you're waiting on God, you're waiting on him expectantly, reverently, submissively. And now finally you wait joyfully. As the book ends, Habakkuk is no longer complaining and he is no longer afraid. Look at verses 17 and 18. He's realistic. You know, this is not Christian science that asks you to, in Christian science that, you know, the cult of Christian science that says to deny evil altogether as if it didn't exist. That's a ridiculous way, philosophy of life. Habakkuk looks at it all realistically and yet he's no longer intimidated by it. Verse 17,

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,

In other words, "God, even if we lose everything," verse 18,

18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

He faces full collapse of life and society. Everything that he's loved could be gone but he trusts God with all of his heart. He doesn't lean on his own understanding. What's he done here at the end? He's acknowledged God in all of his ways. All of Habakkuk's ways, Habakkuk has acknowledged God in all of them, and therefore he can rest. And beloved, not only can he rest, he can rejoice. He can rejoice because God, who God is, is enough to satisfy his soul completely without any additives brought to it. God is enough.

Beloved, this is everything in the Christian life. What I'm saying right now is everything. You've got to grasp this. You've got to embrace it if you're going to be the fullness of the Christian that God has called you to be. God is enough. Period. Full stop. End of paragraph. End of chapter. End of book. God is enough. And it's when you rejoice simply because God is who he is that you're bringing the most glory to God.

Let me just add as we close here, you and I have even more reason to trust God than Habakkuk did. He's the same God, but there's been a progress of revelation since Habakkuk ministered some 2,700 years ago, 2,600 years ago. Since Habakkuk, Christ came. Christ lived. Christ died. Christ rose again. Christian, Christ drew you to himself. Christ made you new. Christ promises you eternal life. All of those things subsequent to Habakkuk. We look at all these principles of remembering God, waiting on God, and then for the climactic fireworks of the entire glorious display, we see Jesus Christ, high and lofty, faithful to his people, the love of God expressed in human flesh and at the glory of the cross and God takes all of those things, lays them before you in your mind by

the Holy Spirit and he says, "Yes, I know all about your adversity. Do you know a portion about me to remember me, to wait on me, and to rest in your Savior?" Trust God in your trying times, beloved. He'll never leave you. He'll never forsake you. He'll never fail you. You'll never be shown to have been a fool to have trusted him like that.

Let's pray.

*Gracious Father, I pray that you would be so kind and merciful to these people according to all that we've discussed. Help them to trust you in their trying times. What's true individually, Father, may it be corporately as well as you work in our church and just do such a manifold work of wisdom over the course of time. Father, we submit to you. We know that you're at work. We know that you're holy and good. We know that you have a future plan that will certainly be fulfilled so we're content to wait on you. We expect you to be good to us. We trust you for that. We wait on you with reverence. We acknowledge you. We wait on you submissively. We wait on you joyfully. There is no God like you, and in Christ there is no other place that we would rather be, no matter what happens in the world around us. Be glorified in our midst and in our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.*

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