

2142 - BIBLICAL OPTIMISM - Hab 3.17-19

PRELIMS. At the beginning of a new year let's be optimistic about the **promises** of God! Yes, the promises of God! This sermon is about **trusting** in God's **promises**. Despite the fact that the wages of sin is death God has **promised great things** for those who trust Him!

The Bible is a Book of **Hope**! God sent it to us to **help** us! Look at these promises given to the **Church** : *No weapon formed **against** you shall prosper+ You will be the **head** and not the tail – You will be the **lender** not the borrower + **Greater** is He that is in you, than he that is in the world + You might have meant it for evil, but **God** meant it for good + I can **do all things** through Christ who strengthens me*

BACKGROUND

Hab was born under **good** King Josiah who reformed the nation spiritually. However, he lived under **bad** King Jehoiakim, who **reversed** all the good things Josiah had done!! **APP** Some of us in the congregation are old enough to remember God's Word being honoured in our land, but have lived to see these laws removed!

Chap 1 = Hab **complains** *Destructiuron...violence...strife... contention...the law is paralysed and justice never goes forth* [1:3] and *How long shall I cry for help?* [1:1] Sound **familiar**?

God replies 'Don't worry, I'm going to punish the **leaders** of Judah – I am going to send the **Chaldeans** to punish Judah' *...behold I am raising up the **Chaldeans**...to seize dwellings...they all come for violence...guilty men, whose own might is their god* [1:6-11]

Hab **can't understand** this! How can a holy God use (for righteous purposes), such a wicked, corrupt, perverted nation? How can the Chaldeans be used for a good cause? *You are of purer eyes than to see evil and **cannot look** at wrong* [1:13]! **APP** It would be like using ISIL, Daesh, Osama bin Laden to punish a Xn nation! But there is a bigger picture, Hab. God has a **plan** for the **whole world**, not just Judah! God does use all His creation (including wicked nations) to fulfil His purposes. The Lord **strengthened Eglon** the king of Moab to punish Israel [Jud 3:12] and the Lord **stirred up an adversary against Solomon** [1 Kin 11:14]! God **rules the nations**! However

confusing world events may be to us, God is working out **His** plan. Whatever 2016 holds out for us, God is faithful and He rules!

Chap 2 = Hab waits for God's reply *I will take my stand at my watchpost...and look out to see what He will say to me* [2:1] **APP** God keeps us **waiting** very **often**. He wants us to exercise **patience**. God says *If it seems slow, wait for it, it will surely come* [2:3] You just live life **by faith**, *the righteous shall live by his faith* [2:4]

God replies: 'Don't worry about the proud Chaldeans – I will punish them too, they will **eventually** be destroyed too! Don't think the Chaldeans are going to 'get-away' with their sin!' They won't! **Woe to him** (the Chaldeans)... *you will have your fill of shame instead of glory* [2:15]. *The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him* [2:20]! Despite what is happening in the world God is ruling ver all the affairs which are baffling humankind!

APP You may be concerned that evil-doers 'get away with murder'! Remember God is **never in a hurry** to punish evildoers. He is **slow to wrath**! He wants to be merciful. But **ultimately** unrepentant evil-doers **will** be punished. **Justice** will be done – in the end!

But there is great **optimism**! In the long term, despite this judgment, there will be great blessing, for *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea* [2:14]! Hab is **repeating** what **Isaiah** wrote 100+yrs before in [Isa11:9] He's repeating a **refrain** which the prophets **often** spoke!

As in [Psa 86:9] *All the nations You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous things! + All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You* [Psa 22:27]!!

Scripture teaches that the Kingdom of God will **grow**. It starts as a Mustard seed (**smallest** of all seeds) and grows to be the largest. It will grow **through the preaching** of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people of **all nationalities**! When we look at history, in the long span, over the millennia, not just the centuries, we see how the Word of God has triumphed!

Before X's resurrection, only Israel had truth. Now **all continents** and many nations have the gospel. **When** God's people obey the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, **nations will turn** to the Lord. 'Bottom-up' influence, not 'top-down' control. When the masses turn to the Lord, the **populace** will choose rulers who will rule according to God's Word, which will in turn, bring its own blessing, because God's Word says *righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people* [Pro 14:34]

It is **not** like the **optimistic philosophy** of the **Enlightenment**, through a natural evolutionary process of human betterment. **No!** It is **not** achieved through **social institutions**. Rather it is by the **preaching** of the gospel and the **supernatural** work of the **Holy Spirit** on people's hearts! People will believe the gospel and the teaching of the Word of God. So, the **Church must** take its commission much more seriously *Go...make disciples of all nations, baptising them...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*. So, in the short term, there will be struggle and toil, in the long term blessing!

Chap 3 = Hab prays! How does he pray? Very **positively!** ...**Your work, O Lord...revive it** [3:2] Note Hab's conviction that all that is going on in the world **is God's work!** God still works in the world! Nothing, but nothing, you read in the news is not God's work! Some Xns think that God is not in the world. That He has completely abandoned it and it is merely functioning on its own 'mechanism'! No! God is working **in** the world. He **upholds** the world. *For the LORD...is... a great king over all the earth... God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne* [Psa 47] *In the midst of the years, revive it*, ie, in the **midst** of the years of **barrenness** and **judgment!** *in wrath remember mercy* [3:2c]

Now Hab himself was living in a time of **spiritual barrenness**. He was no stranger to the condition he was addressing. He knew from experience, and from prayer and fellowship with God how to address the situation! Things were not good in Hab's day, and things were not looking good for the future!

Look at the depressing state of affairs! The **fig tree** was not blossoming! And **wasn't likely to blossom!!**

*Though the fig true should **not blossom** – Church is **unattractive**.
The Church **hasn't a good image!** Church is not seen as a solution
for the problems of the day. There are more attractive offers!*

*...**nor fruit** be in the vines - **No converts!** In the very place where
you would expect some fruit, there is **none** at all!*

*the **produce** of the olive **fail** – The little fruit we have **doesn't last!**
Professions of faith have **not developed** into strong believers!*

*...the fields yield **no food** - Despite evangelism, **no results!** Despite
all the different things we have tried, nothing's happened!*

*the flock be **cut off** from the fold – even those who were converts
have either cut themselves off from the Church, or the Church has
cut them off from fellowship in discipline.*

*...**no herd** in the stalls – **Empty pews!** Hardly anyone goes to
Church. Churches are turned into Bingo halls and Snooker Clubs*

Yes – all these discouragements – and what?..... **Yet I
will rejoice** [3:18] How's that for optimism?

Hab's joy is all **based** and **founded** on *the Lord* there is a tremendous
future that God has planned - the **whole earth will be filled with His
glory**. Hab is full of faith and confidence about the future!

To strengthen his faith he only has to **recall history** *God came from
Teman* [3:3] reference to God delivering Israel at Sinai, and the other
deliverances! **APP** So today, amazing 'wonders' in our lifetime. Who
would have **predicted** the **Fall of communism?**

So, how does Hab **respond?** He sings on **Cloud 9!** = *He makes my
feet like the deer's, He makes me tread on my high places* and he gets
out His **stringed instruments** and sings to the Lord!!

If Hab could **sing so positively** like that - what **excuse** have **you/I**
not to sing **louder** because Christ has now come in **fulfilment** of OT
prophecies? **Wonderful** fulfillments! Over 100 in one chapter in
Daniel - so much a fulfilment that the skeptics only answer is to say
that it was written **after** they took place! What a testimony! **Jesus
Christ has come** and done amazing things in **fulfilment** of the
amazing 'crazy' predictions! *made grave with the wicked!!*