

Let's pray together.

Lord we thank you for your gracious provision for allowing us to be together today in your house to worship you in prayer, song, teaching, and fellowship with one another. As we study more of Your Word now, I pray that you would apply it to our hearts by Your Spirit, so that we would know You better, know the truth, and that we would believe and obey as you use this to conform us to the image of your dear Son, in whose name we pray, Amen.

It is my privilege to be here before you today to share God's word with you. As you know by now, the Swann's are away this week, so if you are watching on the livestream, don't adjust your screen, Charles has not grown a beard or changed his voice. We look forward to continuing our study in James next week, as well as observing the Lord's Supper. I do want to thank those of you who were

praying for me this past week as I prepared for today – it has encouraged me and also motivated me to study and seek the Lord even more – so thank you for that.

In a group this large, there is no doubt that some of you are facing difficult times right now, trying times, and others of you are in what you consider to be a quiet or calm period of your Christian life. Each of us is somewhere on the spectrum that goes from very hard on one end to smooth sailing on the other. What is true about this spectrum that should be a comfort to us is that the blessedness and the sovereignty of God stretches all the way across, and no matter where we find ourselves within the plan of God at the moment, we always find ourselves in His loving care.

And as we set our minds on things above, and think about the big picture, and what this means in light of eternity, that truly is a comfort. **But** we still live on earth, right now. And questions do arise,

sometimes ones that we don't always know how to answer.

Let me ask you - Have you ever had something happen where you wonder what God is doing? In my experience those in the more reformed circles tend to emphasize the sovereignty of God, and rightly so. And sometimes that may give us pause when answering a question like this, because we don't want to give the impression that we ever question the purposes of God. But honestly – have there been moments when you wonder what is God up to here? Or why is this happening in this way?

Have you ever wondered why God allows so much evil in the world? Is God in control or not? We say of course. And we also freely admit and believe that He is all powerful, right? So then, if He also knows everything, has all dominion and all power, how is it that the world seems to be so wicked? Even more, how is it that the church has so many problems? Why is it that people who claim to have

the Spirit of God living on the inside of them are so apathetic to the things of God? Didn't He say He was going to build His church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it?

Well, if you have ever had any of these feelings, you are not alone.

King Solomon once said, '**there is nothing new under the sun**'. We aren't the first to have questions, and we won't be the last.

I want us to look at the book of Habakkuk today. If you are not sure where this is, look to your left or right, and you'll find that the person next to you doesn't know either. It is 5 books from the end of the Old Testament, and this book is really an interesting and helpful discussion between one of the minor prophets and God. You know, most of the work of the prophets in the OT have some call to the people of God about judgement and the

need for the nation to repent, some admonition from the prophet. This book is unique in that it really is primarily a conversation between Habakkuk and God – He is crying out to God for understanding and we get to see this back and forth between them without the normal type of rebuke or encouragement to the people of Israel. The dialogue of the book and Habakkuk's prayers to God in this way replace the normal structure that we see in the OT prophets. There is one interesting departure from this, and we will talk about this later on in the message.

I want us to walk through this book – a little different than what we normally do each Lord's day, but today I want to see if we can take a bird's eye view of an entire book and draw some conclusions and applications from it. We won't read each verse in depth, but will cover all three chapters. And here is what I want you to understand:

**Prop:** - “You can trust God in times when you do not understand all that He is doing – you can rely on His character to do what is right, using whatever means He sees fit to accomplish His purposes, because He is faithful.”

There are five brief sections that support this statement, they are

1. A Cry for Action
2. God's Curious Reply
3. A Call for Understanding
4. God's Righteous Judgment
5. A Song of Trust

### **Number 1** – A Cry for Action

Habakkuk 1:1-5 “**1The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. 2O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? 3Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?**

**Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. 4So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.”**

One question that I normally have when I look at an OT book and start reading is...where am I? Or more specifically, WHEN am I? We, here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in order to understand the Scriptures, need to go back in time and get ourselves into the mindset and context of what is being written. Who is Habakkuk, and when is he writing? At what point in the life of Israel are we jumping into? Well, the answers to these questions will help us understand the dialogue between Habakkuk and God in this book. We need a brief history of Israel – as I was thinking about how to be as concise as possible in explaining the history of the nation of Israel and where we are, our family also happened to be reading through the book of Acts. And wouldn't

you know it, right there in Acts 13, Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch in Pisidia on the Sabbath, and someone asks Paul, 'hey, you have anything to say to the people of God?' Paul says, nah, I'm good. No, Paul takes this opportunity and gives them a brief history of Israel, part of which is useful for us. Beginning in verse 16...

**16So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. 17The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18And for about forty years he put up with<sup>b</sup> them in the wilderness. 19And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. 20All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. 21Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty**



**years. 22And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' 23Of this man's offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised."**

We can depart here – after David, the king was Solomon, and then after him, the two kingdoms divided, 10 tribes in the northern kingdom and 2 tribes, Judah and Benjamin in the southern Kingdom. The northern kingdom continued on for another 200 years before being captured and overthrown by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The southern kingdom lasted another 140 years, eventually falling to the Babylonian empire in 586 BC. But it was just a few decades before this, in around 605 BC that we have Habakkuk writing this book. The situation was dire once again in Judah at the time, under king Jehoiakim. 100 years before there was a good king, Hezekiah, who feared the Lord and led the nation to remove idols and to revere the one true God. Have you heard the

phrase, “it skips a generation?” Well, Hezekiah’s father Ahaz was evil, and so was Hezekiah’s son, Manasseh. Manasseh essentially reversed all the good that was done by Hezekiah and you can read that later today when you are relaxing in your recliners, in 2 Kings 21 and 2 Chronicles 33. But there was an interesting twist. He was so evil that God had him taken away in to exile, but then he repented and God restored him. And although he repented, the nation was so wicked that it kept right on going down the tubes. Then his son Amon became king and did even worse than Manasseh, and he never repented. He was so evil that his servants killed him. But then, God raised up a king, Josiah, that did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in the ways of his father David and did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. The book of the Law was found, there was revival in the land, but there was disaster coming. Huldah the prophetess lets Josiah know that judgement is coming on the nation, but because he has done

what is right, he will not see it. After the death of Josiah, a few years later, Jehoiakim is king, the nation is back to evil again, the wicked are prospering, and Habakkuk cries out to God.

One of the things we see Habakkuk struggling with is regarding God's sovereign control over the affairs of life, and not when God IS intervening, but rather when He is NOT making His control apparent in judgement. Habakkuk has real questions because the nation has fallen into a state of such sin and he is troubled by God's inaction. The wicked are running rampant at the expense of the righteous and nothing is being done about it, though He has cried out to God for something to happen. Habakkuk knows that for this to turn around, God will have to intervene, and he has consistently prayed and pleaded with God to no avail. This is where we find him in verses 1-4.

**20 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 idly look at  
wrong? 4..justice never goes forth. For the wicked  
surround the righteous; so justice goes forth  
*perverted.*”**

I think this question from Habakkuk is something we don't understand, because we don't understand what it is in our time to really live in a covenant community. God had made a covenant with His people, and Habakkuk expected that if they obeyed then they would receive blessing, and if they rebelled and flaunted their sin, they would receive cursing and judgment. And when he didn't see that happening, he wondered why God allowed it to be this way. Notice something - His heart attitude and the question was in line with the character of God – God, why are you not acting in a way that would affirm the covenant that you have with us? He was boldy, yet humbly seeking the truth. You see this

being done in Psalm 10, Psalm 12, Psalm 73 – the writers calling on God, asking Him why the wicked prosper, and when, O God, will you answer. This is common. Something to note here – something we **must** remember. We are not God – He is not like us. He can handle any question we have, in fact, He knows the questions we have already, but it matters how we approach Him. So as Habakkuk does, let us come boldly to the Lord with our questions when we don't understand why things are the way they are, but let us do so with humility, remembering we are speaking to a Holy God who sees all, ordains all, has a perfect plan that we only see in part, and is powerful enough to pull it off. So that was number 1 – A Cry for Action.

**Number 2** is God's Curious Reply. This is so interesting – look with me.

**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.** (which is also quoted by Paul in Acts 13, kind of interesting)

**6For 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.**

**7They are dreaded and fearsome;  
their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.**

**8Their horses are swifter than leopards,  
more fierce than the evening wolves;  
their horsemen press proudly on.**

**Their horsemen come from afar;  
they fly like an eagle swift to devour.**

(Their armies are fast, big, merciless)

**9They all come for violence,  
all their faces forward. (They don't let up)  
They gather captives like sand.**

**10At kings they scoff,  
and at rulers they laugh.**

**They laugh at every fortress,  
for they pile up earth and take it. (earthen ramps)  
11Then they sweep by like the wind and go on,  
guilty men, whose own might is their god!”**

A proud and fierce army, whose standard of right and wrong is just whatever they think it is, they determine justice, and in the end, heap up pride and arrogance. God tells Habakkuk that He IS going to judge, but not in a way that he would have ever imagined. God reminds Habakkuk that He is, in fact, a covenant keeping God, and then He goes a step further. He calls him, then raises him. God's plan is to do something that nobody would have imagined. Surely Habakkuk knew that God sometimes did things that were a little mysterious. He no doubt knew the story of Joseph being sold into slavery, then saving his brothers later on during the drought. He knew the verse we quote from Genesis 50:20 **“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many**

**people<sup>b</sup> should be kept alive, as they are today.”**

He knew from Isaiah that **“8For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. 9For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** But what he never saw coming was that God would use a godless and evil nation to overthrow His own people in judgment as part of His perfect plan for Israel. The fact is that God sometimes acts in ways that we don't understand. He allows things in our lives to happen, ordains events and timelines, sicknesses and deaths of loved ones, changes in circumstances that we never saw coming. God has a bigger picture in mind than we do, and is always, for the child of God, working in ways that will be for His ultimate glory and your ultimate good. That is not only the promise of Romans 8:28, that is what we find here in Habakkuk as well. Young people, listen to me. When you don't understand why your parents are setting boundaries for you, why they



are asking you to either do or not do something, they often times have reasons that you don't know anything about, that you are not able to process yet. But what you can trust in is that they are working in your best interest – the love that they have for you is being expressed in this way, and you can trust in that and obey them when you don't understand all of the reasons why.

So, how does the prophet respond? This is **number 3**, A Call for Understanding.

You can just see Habakkuk after hearing this.

He is reeling, but he is trying to remember that God is God, so he starts by saying in verse **12 “Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die.”** You can see his trust in how he answers back to God here – this is his default setting – something we would do well to learn from. Then it's almost like he is telling the

Lord what he has just heard back to him, continuing in verse 12 **“O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.”** He has good theology, knows God is sovereign – he says you have ordained them. It is not just some random chance of world events that is causing the Chaldeans to overtake the nation, but rather God has orchestrated this like He does all of history. But there is more. He also knows that in His sovereignty, God is dependable and strong, He is a firm footing – something he will pick up later in chapter 3 as well. He calls God a Rock, or we might say a refuge or protection - and he also says something else about the Lord that I think is important when we are facing uncertain or confusing times. He says at the end of verse 12 that God has established the Chaldeans as a reproof. This means that God is not capricious nor erratic – this means that he is not constantly and unexpectedly changing – he is not impulsive, wishy washy, doesn't do things willy nilly, off the cuff, he

is not a reactionary God, but rather he has a purpose in what he ordains. This is so important for us to realize when facing life's difficult situations. There is purpose behind what you are going through, there is a spiritual reason for your struggle, for your specific struggle. Beloved, take comfort in this – God has not just wound up the world and left us to spin. Elisabeth Eliot said ***“God will see to it that we are in circumstances best designed by his sovereign love to give us opportunities to bear fruit for him.”*** He didn't just give up on us once sin entered the world, - he wasn't surprised and turning to plan B - but had decided before the foundation of the world to redeem us. His plan is an everlasting plan, he loves His people with an everlasting love.

So Habakkuk starts off by acknowledging his trust in the Lord, but then he has another question, one that we probably would have too, if truth be told. Verse 13 – ***“13You 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?**

**14You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. 15He<sup>a</sup> brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad. 16Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury,<sup>b</sup> and his food is rich. 17Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?"**

He says, okay, let me get this straight. I know we deserve judgement, but you're telling me that a nation that is more wicked than we are, that has no reverence for You at all, you are going to allow us to be ransacked and pillaged by them? This is the answer to my prayer for justice? How can this be right? In verse 13, God you are holy and pure and hate sin, how can you watch a nation that is MORE

sinful than we are overtake us? In verses 14-15 he says we have no earthly nations or kings to protect us, we are like sitting ducks here, like fish that are going to get sucked up into the net, referring to how easy it is going to be for the Chaldeans to come in and swallow up the kingdom. Sure, it is right for us to be judged, but like this?!? And by a group of people who worship only themselves and the power of their own might? Verses 16-17 describe a fisherman who uses a net to catch fish, lives in luxury, and idolizes the means he uses, namely his net. So Habakkuk is trying to make sense of all of this, and says God, how can you allow this to happen this way? I don't understand! Have you ever felt this way? Has God ever put you in a situation that frankly didn't understand what He was doing? How did you respond? Do you find it difficult when you don't see how God is using your current circumstances for your good? I think that is natural. As one missionary put it ***“All along, let us remember we are not asked to understand, but***

***simply to obey.***” So there are a mix of emotions here from Habakkuk, I think a healthy mix. He trusted God, but had real questions and in Chapter 2, we find him ready to receive an answer from God. Verse 1 **“1I 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.”**

This is a phrase reminiscent of the watchmen who would go up to the tower to see what was coming their way, a military phrase. Habakkuk knows God is going to answer, and he is eagerly waiting to see what the response will be.

You know, it dawned on me when reading this verse that sometimes we get stuck when we are in this place. We say, “I don’t understand, God” but we stop there, maybe pout a little, shake our heads in frustration. James tells us that we don’t have because we don’t ask. We stop when we need to continue on a little further. “I don’t understand

God, please help me understand why this is happening, and if I don't or can't see clearly enough, give me strength to obey through this."

Well, Habakkuk got an answer, this is **number 4**, God's Righteous Judgment. Picking up in verse 2, **"2And the Lord answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it."** Write this down, Habakkuk. Make it clear, this is meant to be read by others, and make it easy to read so that those who go by quickly can still understand what I'm telling you.

**3For 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.** This might take a while Habakkuk, but be assured, my judgment is coming. There is a perfect timing to my work in the world, and I have declared it, it will surely happen. This sounds like 2 Peter 3 doesn't it? **"3knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following**

**their own sinful desires. 4They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” 5For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.**

**8But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,<sup>a</sup> not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the**



**heavenly bodies<sup>b</sup> will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.<sup>c</sup>”**

People might be tempted to think that God's judgment was never coming. Same thing here, God might take what seems to be a while to fulfill this prophecy, but He is going to do it, so wait for it. This one only took about 50 years to fulfill, so relatively quick in the grand scheme of things.

Now back to Habakkuk 2:4 – listen to what God says here:

**4“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,(speaking of the wicked) but the righteous shall live by his faith.<sup>a</sup>”**

Does this sound familiar at all to you? This verse is what cause some to call Habakkuk the father of the Reformation. Now it is God speaking, but the prophet records His words and these are taken up in 3 places in the New Testament. We see it in

Romans 1 and Galatians 3, and Paul is talking about saving faith.

Romans 1:16-17 **“16For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith,<sup>e</sup> as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”** Verse 17 had a huge impact on Martin Luther in his understanding of the imputation of righteousness to a person, how that is accomplished apart from the law, and wholly by faith, which is given by God himself, through no merit of the receiver, but based solely on the work of Christ. This was the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation.

Similarly in Galatians 3:11, **“11Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”** Again, emphasizing the means by which we are MADE righteous, talking explicitly here about justification.

And it is important to remember here that God through Habakkuk is referring to faith in the seed of Abraham, that OT faith that saves in the same way that all are saved, which is to say faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the only one who can take our sin and give us His righteousness.

Then in Hebrews 10:36-39, we see a slightly longer quotation of this verse (4 and the preceding one, verse 3) in reference to sanctification, or living out our faith, continuing on in righteousness. **“36For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37For, “Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” 39But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”** And then right after this, the writer of Hebrews goes into a whole chapter,

(11) that describes how the faith of the saints was lived out in the lives of those who went before as an example to us, those who persevered.

One pastor said, quote “He’s describing how the faithful are declared righteous through the ministry of justification. But then, you see that the writer of the Hebrews, he’s speaking about a persevering faith. In Hebrews Chapter 10, he shows how the righteous are kept faithful, and this reminds us that the same faith that justifies is also the faith that sanctifies. It’s reminds us that this verse which says that “the righteous shall live by faith” ministers to us both in our righteousness at the moment of salvation as well as the righteousness that carries on throughout our lives. And so, we see that the Lord throughout this old book and throughout Habakkuk’s life is the answer to life’s most difficult questions.

But God doesn't stop there, he goes on in Chapter 2 to describe what He is going to do to the Chaldeans (Babylonians) because of their wickedness.

Again, the character of God is on display. He is sovereign, but he is also just. He is going to put things right, but it is going to happen in His perfect timing, as mentioned in verse 3. Throughout the rest of chapter 2, God gives 5 Woe's or curses that will come on the wicked. He says that they will be cursed because

v. 6-8 They plunder others – because they have plundered others, the remnant of those people would plunder them.

v. 9-11 They gained economic and physical security at the expense of others – grasping at abundance to the detriment of others. Proverbs says that 'he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house' – and even if there are no witnesses present

the house itself will metaphorically cry out against the oppressor.

v. 12-14 – They are ruthless and brutal in trying to establish their fame – they will one day acknowledge the glory of the Lord.

v. 15-17 – The 4<sup>th</sup> woe is because they take pleasure in the sin and humiliation of others, including the terrible disregard for the creation and animals – God will surely pay them back in kind.

And finally, v.18-20, the 5<sup>th</sup> curse is because of idolatry. Listen to these verses – **“18“What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! 19Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. 20But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”**

This is a clear contrasting statement about the futility and silence of idols versus the power and ability of God. All who worship such idols are fools, and nobody has a word to say before a holy God. Wow. These woes are universal enough and general enough for some application for us as well. First, God hasn't forgotten the deeds of the wicked, even though because of common grace this sometimes seems to be so. God's judgment will come, and that is sure. Also, the way we treat others and the way that we worship God matters. As believers we should be even more careful to make sure that what we do, how we make our money and provide for our families, how we worship him is in keeping with the principles in the Word of God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, and Love your neighbor as yourself, right?

Now, how does Habakkuk respond?

## The last section, **part 5** – A Song of Trust

You know, one of the ways we express ourselves as humans is with music. We sing and play instruments when we are happy, and also when we are sad. It is almost as if when we cannot contain our emotions any longer, whatever they may be, they seem to burst out of us in praise, agony, love, wonder. This is in all genres of music and poetry. And we see it in the Scripture by many of the inspired poets, including Solomon, David, and Asaph, when basically he was asking the same question in Psalm 73 that Habakkuk was asking.

**3For I was envious of the arrogant  
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.**

**4For they have no pangs until death;  
their bodies are fat and sleek.**

**5They are not in trouble as others are;  
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.**

**6Therefore pride is their necklace;**



**8They scoff and speak with malice;  
11And they say, “How can God know?  
Is there knowledge in the Most High?”  
12Behold, these are the wicked;  
always at ease, they increase in riches.  
16But when I thought how to understand this,  
it seemed to me a wearisome task,  
17until I went into the sanctuary of God;  
then I discerned their end.  
18Truly you set them in slippery places;  
you make them fall to ruin.  
19How they are destroyed in a moment,  
swept away utterly by terrors!  
26My flesh and my heart may fail,  
but God is the strength<sup>b</sup> of my heart and my  
portion forever.**

Wonderful attitude here, and this is exactly what we see in Chapter 3 of Habakkuk.

**“1A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. 2O 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.”**

He responds to God with a song of praise. It seems like he is just talking with God. But we see an interesting note in verse 1, “A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth,” which is a term, a musical term that speaks about the corporate worship of the body of believers. At the very end in verse 19, to the choirmaster with stringed instruments, which shows that this was not just a prophet talking with his God, but at some point, this prophecy was written down. It was composed, it was set to music, it was used within the corporate worship of Israel, perhaps even in the exile and beyond. And so, we see that what Habakkuk was going through actually helps him to help others in turn. And that is often why God allows us to endure things, in order to strengthen another part of the body. So this speaks to being a part of a larger body, being a part of the church that we are ministering one to another. And sometimes,

our suffering, our struggle allows us to comfort others with the comfort that we have received. Habakkuk hears back from God in verse 2, and prays for God's glory to be revealed, but for God to also be merciful – beautifully honest. Then he goes on in verses 3-15 to describe the work of God in the past, throughout the nation, describing how God has worked for them to preserve and to save them from their enemies, and how God is sovereign over time and creation, he is able to remember God's past faithfulness, as he endures the present suffering. And so, like all the prophets, he looks back to the creation, he looks back to the Exodus in the power of God and rescuing His people from the Red Sea and from the slavery in Egypt. He quotes the law in Deuteronomy, he quotes the prophets, he quotes the writings of the Psalms, and he has all of this foundational understanding of Scripture that he brings into his writings. – finally in 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.”**

Habakkuk has gotten an answer from God, and he is a broken man. But he has faith and he will trust in God as he waits for His righteous judgment to come. Before God's righteous judgment is the hard time of the Chaldeans overtaking them, but even so, he knows that God is sovereignly taking care of him. He ends his song of trust by rejoicing,

**“17Though 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, 18yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 19God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed<sup>d</sup> instruments.”**

No matter what, I'm trusting in God, because I know the character of God and He is faithful.

It is a fact that God sometimes does things in ways that we don't expect and wouldn't necessarily prefer. One of the wonderful byproducts of a correct understanding of the character of God is that we can know, amidst the times that we don't understand all that God is doing or why He may be doing it in a particular way, we can know that He is trustworthy and good and is working all of these things for our ultimate good.

## Application

1. Remember that God is not like us – and that is a good thing. (Psalm 50) The only reason we exhibit real forgiveness and grace is because God has acted upon us – otherwise there would be only vengeance and wrath toward others. God is not like this – he has the range to be all of these things in Himself.
2. We can bring our questions to God – He is able to handle all of them – we need to remember humility and to whom we are speaking, but let's

be honest with Him, since he already knows our hearts.

3. God is not to be worshiped for what benefits he gives us, but for who He is.
4. God can be trusted to do right, even when our understanding isn't complete.
5. God uses different means to accomplish His perfect purposes.
6. Suffering is part of God's plan for the believer and He gives grace to walk through it.
7. Our eternal reward and the glory of what is to come far outweighs what we endure here - Romans 8:18.

I want to end with the words of a beautiful current song that expresses the heart's desire of Habakkuk as seen in Chapter 3. The song is called Bow the Knee.

There are moments in our journey  
following the Lord  
Where God illumines every step we take.

There are times when circumstances  
make perfect sense to us,  
As we try to understand each move He makes.  
But when the path grows dim  
and our questions have no answers, turn to Him.

There are days when clouds surround us,  
and the rain begins to fall,  
the cold and lonely winds won't cease to blow.  
And there seems to be no reason  
for the suffering we feel;  
We are tempted to believe God doesn't know.  
When the storms arise,  
Don't forget we live by faith and not by sight.

Bow the knee; trust the heart of your Father  
when the answer goes beyond what you can see.  
Bow the knee; lift your eyes toward heaven  
and believe the One who holds eternity.  
And when you don't understand

the purpose of His plan,  
In the presense of the King, bow the knee.

Let's pray together.

#### Outline of Habakkuk Sermon

- A. Introduction
  - a. Have you ever questioned God
  - b. Similar questions by those in Scripture (David, Asaph, Solomon)
  - c. Purpose statement of sermon – “We can trust God in times when we do not understand all that He is doing – we can rely on His character to do what is right, using whatever means He sees fit to accomplish His purposes.”
- B. A Cry for Action
  - a. Brief History of Israel
  - b. Similar cultural situation as Amos and Micah
  - c. Reason for Habakkuk's question
- C. God's Unexpected Judgement
  - a. God promises judgement
    - i. God is a covenant God and, as such, promises blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience. This is part of His unchanging character. Give examples.
  - b. Says he is going to use an even more wicked nation to judge Judah
    - i. Is this curious to you? Why would God do this? Does it sit well with you or do you also question with Habakkuk why God would chose to judge in this manner?
- D. A Call for Understanding
  - a. What, whaaaat? How can God use a group of people MORE evil than Judah to judge them?
  - b. I know I'm gonna get it, but I will wait for an answer from God – bring in Job comparison
- E. God's Promise of Righteous Judgement



- a. Again, the character of God is on display. He is sovereign, but he is also just. We need to remember that we are sinful creatures, we don't deserve anything, and we need to focus on God's grace when we struggle with His actions. It is always important to remember that we are not neutral creatures by nature. And even if we have been born again by the Spirit of God, we are still being transformed and conformed into the image of Christ – we don't fully have the mind of God yet, so we need to be reminded to be humble in our questioning.
  - b. It is important to note that in God's response, we have the assurance that He hasn't forgotten to put things right – but it will happen in His time. (2 Pet 3:9 for reference)
  - c. The Righteous shall live by faith – talk about the 3 NT places this verse is quoted and make the distinction between justification and sanctification.
- F. A Song of Trust
- a. Did you know this was a song? Talk about singing and music and how it is important as a part of worship.
  - b. Habakkuk recounts God's faithfulness throughout His dealings with His people, and expresses his full trust in God in all circumstances.
- G. Applications
- a. Read each one, briefly make comment
  - b. Bow the Knee lyrics