

Sermon #5 — Habakkuk Series

Title:            **DOESN'T GOD CARE?**

Text:            Habakkuk 1:12-17

Subject:        *God's Character — Our Security*

Date:            Tuesday Evening — August 24, 2010

Tape #          *Habakkuk #5*

Readings:     *Darin Duff and Larry Brown*

Introduction:

Doesn't God care? How often have you been so confused by things going on in your life that your very soul has cried out, "Doesn't God care?" — Why did I lose my job, when that scheming, dishonest man who misrepresented me got promoted? Doesn't God care? — Why is my wife dying such a horrible, painful death, a good, faithful woman, while the profligate and profane are in good health and always partying? Doesn't God care? — Why is my child laying there with his back broken, an invalid for the rest of his life, while the drunk who rammed into his car escaped unharmed? Doesn't God care?

Why is this nation, once so prosperous, so powerful, so secure now so unstable, unsafe and unruly? Doesn't God care? — Why is the Church of God so small and the hoards of religious infidels so many?

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Doesn't God care? — Why is Babylon so rich and Zion so poor? Doesn't God care?

Why am I so vexed with sin and unbelief, coldness and indifference, so much darkness and such deadness of heart, my own sin and unbelief, coldness and indifference, so much darkness and such deadness of heart! Doesn't God care?

That is my subject tonight. — **DOESN'T GOD CARE?** Our text will be Habakkuk 1:12-17. Here we see God's prophet Habakkuk reasoning just like we often do.

(Habakkuk 1:12-17) “[Art] thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. 13 [Thou art] of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, [and] holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth [the man that is] more righteous than he? 14 And makest

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men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, [that have] no ruler over them? 15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion [is] fat, and their meat plenteous. 17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?"

## **HABAKKUK'S CONFUSION**

The first thing that strikes me in this passage is the fact that we have before us a confused believer, a confused prophet, a worshipper of God confused by the things he saw and experienced.

As I read the opening chapter of this portion of God's Word, I can almost hear Habakkuk crying out in his soul, his heart broken within him, "Doesn't God care?" **He is asking**, "How can a holy God use unholy, wicked, idolatrous men like the Babylonians to chastise and correct elect people?" In frustration,

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the prophet cries out, “Doesn’t God care? Does He really know what He is doing?”

**This man, Habakkuk, had lived through and experienced the great moving of God upon his people during the reign of King Josiah.** He had seen the worship of God re-established in Judah. He had seen the house of God full of people earnestly seeking the Lord. He had seen justice restored in the land. He had seen idolatry crushed and oppression replaced with mercy.

**Then he watched the nation under King Jehoiakim go into a period of spiritual, moral, social and political decline.** Habakkuk cried out to God about the deplorable conditions in Judah, and, for a while, found God silent, apparently unconcerned. — **“O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!”** (v. 2) — But, then, Lord God answered his servant’s prayer, telling his prophet that he would send the godless, cruel Babylonians to be his agent of judgment on Judah.

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That was not what Habakkuk wanted to hear. He was looking for another revival, but the Lord God was determined show his displeasure with Israel and Judah. He was determined to establish a wicked, idolatrous, immoral, ungodly nation, Babylon, as his rod of correction. He was determined to judge Israel by the hands of the unbelieving Babylonians.

**When Habakkuk heard the Lord his God declare that he was going to use the Babylonians to correct Israel, he was even more confused.** How could the holy Lord God use an unholy instrument like Babylon to correct a more holy nation like Judah? This was a question about God and evil. **Habakkuk, knowing the character of God, wanted to know how the holy Lord God, whom he worshipped, could use a wicked, idolatrous people to accomplish his purpose of grace for his elect.** — I'm sure interested in that; aren't you?

**Verse 13** — “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the

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wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”

Not only was the Lord God determined to use the vile Babylonians to correct his people and chasten them for their sins, **he was determined to make Israel like fish and creeping things taken with the angles (hooks) and nets of men so base that they sacrificed and burned incense to their angles (hooks) and nets and drags** (vv. 14-17).

“And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, [that have] no ruler over them? 15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion [is] fat, and their meat plenteous. 17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?” (Habakkuk 1:14-17)

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Historically, the Babylonians literally put hooks in the jaws of their captives and dragged them off to Babylon to be slaves. What a ruthless people these Babylonians were! Yet, they were God's instruments of judgment upon Israel. I cannot help but remember Peter's words: — *“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”* (1 Peter 4:17)

## HABAKKUK'S GOD AND OUR GOD

Next, as soon as Habakkuk learned what God was determined to do, as soon as he discovered God's purpose to send the wicked, barbarically cruel troops of Babylon to sup up Israel like the east wind sups up the sand, scorning Israel's princes and scorning God himself, **this faithful man fell back upon the very character of his God and our God.** He seems to have said to himself, “Remember who God is. Worship him. Trust him. And be still.”

**First, Habakkuk speaks to God about God.** He describes God to God. — **“[Art] thou not from**

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**everlasting, O Lord my God, mine holy One?**

Obviously, God does not need for you and me to tell him who and what he is; but we need to tell him, that we may order our cause before him. That is why he says, — *“Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified”* (Isaiah 43:26).

**“Art thou not from everlasting!”** — Thou posed as a question, Habakkuk was stating a fact. He who is God is the everlasting God who inhabits eternity! When we speak of such things, explanation is impossible. When we think of eternity we are out of our element. He who is God is eternal. He is without beginning, without succession, without variation, without end. The loftiest thoughts of the loftiest minds are lost in the idea of his eternity. He who is our God is the everlasting God. — *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding”* (Isaiah 30:28). — *“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms”* (Deuteronomy 33:27).



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- His love for us is an everlasting love
- His covenant is an everlasting covenant.
- His mercies are everlasting mercies.
- His goodness is everlasting goodness.
- The life he gives is everlasting life.
- The redemption of our souls is everlasting redemption.

**Do not imagine** that Habakkuk is here describing only the events of his day. Habakkuk wrote these words by the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, as God's prophet to us, "*for our learning, that we might through patience and comfort of the Scriptures have hope*" (Romans 15:4).

Look at verse 12 again. "[Art] thou not from everlasting, **O LORD my God!**" — Notice that Habakkuk takes hold on the Triune Jehovah with the grip of faith, using that sweet, possessive, personal pronoun "my." — "**O LORD my God!**" Quite literally, he is saying, "Are you not from everlasting, O Jehovah, my Elohim, my Worshipped One." This name of God, "Elohim" is a plural noun referring to One God. The significance is obvious. We worship

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One God who is three distinct Persons in One glorious Being, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (I John 5:7).

- This Triune Jehovah is my God in an everlasting covenant he has made for me, by which he gave himself to me and took me as his from everlasting!
- Redemption is not a work of yesterday. Christ was set up from everlasting, — “*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (Psalm 89:19; Revelation 13:8).
- And from everlasting we have been “*accepted in the Beloved!*”

Read on: — “**Mine Holy One!**” — **Does Habakkuk call the Lord Jehovah, the Christ of God his own Holy One?** Indeed, he does; and so should you, if you trust the Lord Jesus. The Lord God commands us to own our Savior as our Holy One (Jeremiah 23:6). He who tells us to call Christ “*THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,*” our Holy One, and teaches us always to so esteem him, is the Lord God who has

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made Christ unto wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

- He is our Righteousness, by which we are justified.
- He is our Holiness by which we are sanctified.
- He is our Holy One before God.
- He is our Holy One in us.
- He is Jehovah my Righteousness imputed to me.
- He is Jehovah my Righteousness imparted to me.

## **SHALL NOT DIE**

Next, Habakkuk draws a firm conclusion from what he has just stated. He says, “[Art] thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine holy One?” If that is so, as I am assured by God himself, then it must be concluded that — “**We shall not die!**” The Lord God may use Babylon to correct us; but Babylon shall never prevail over us, Babylon shall never destroy us. The enemies of God’s Church shall all perish. God’s Church shall outlive all her foes. We shall trample all the seed of the serpent beneath our feet at last! — We who are the objects of God’s free mercy, love and grace in Christ, shall not die!

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(John 11:25-26) “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

- **We shall never die spiritually.** Christ is our life; and we live in him and with him forever!

Grace may be low in us, as it often is; but it is never lost. We may often be in dead and lifeless frames, and need quickening afresh, yet God’s saints are never without spiritual life. The grace and Spirit of God in us is a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life. Our spiritual life can never fail or cease. It is secured in Christ. It is Christ!

- **We shall not die the second death.** We shall not die eternally (Revelation 20:6). — The purpose of God cannot fall. — The purchase of Christ cannot be lost. — The cross of Christ cannot miscarry! — The seal of God cannot be broken. — The promise

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of God cannot fall to the ground. — “*We shall not die!*” — What a blessed conclusion of faith!

(Revelation 20:6) “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:6)

## BOWS TO PROVIDENCE

Then, in the light of God’s character, with the assurance of God’s salvation for himself and all the chosen Church of God, the prophet of God gently, meekly bows to God’s purpose and God’s providence. Look at verse 12 again.

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

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Habakkuk acknowledges that Babylon had been ordained as the executioner of God's judgment in his day, just as it is in our day. Babylon represents all the wickedness of the world and all the false religion of the world. Of all the civil, political, religious evil in this world, let us understand this: — **“Thou hast established them for correction!”**

- The Lord God sovereignly used Egypt to preserve his chosen for 400 years. Then he destroyed the Egyptians.
- Our all-wise, ever-faithful God used the Midianites, the Moabites and the Philistines in the days of the Judges to correct his people. Then, he raised up judges to deliver his chosen and oppress their oppressors.
- Even now, our God uses Babylon (political and religious) to correct his Church, ever separating the tares from the wheat (1 Corinthians 11:19).

(1 Corinthians 11:19) “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.”

Our God will see to it that the earth will always help

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the Woman, his Church, though Satan breathe out fire against her from without and from within!

**OUR MIGHTY ROCK**

Let me show you one more thing in Habakkuk 1:12. Habakkuk call upon the Lord Jehovah, saying, “**O mighty God!**” If you will look at the marginal translation in your Bible, you will see that those words might just as well have been translated “**O mighty Rock!**” — **Let us, like Habakkuk, ever take refuge in Christ our mighty, omnipotent Rock of Salvation** (Proverbs 18:10).

When a believer cries out, as Habakkuk did here, contemplating the evils of his day and feeling his own corruptions within, see how gracious the Lord is! The Prophet no sooner calls to the Lord, but the Lord hears and makes answers his cry. I cry out, because of violence, Habakkuk said. Then he said, “*Wilt thou not hear?*” And our great and gracious God replied, “I will not only hear, **I will do such a work of grace in the gift of my dear Son, as shall do away all the ruins of the fall.** And yet, though

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I will work so marvellously, so wondrously, no man, no one, no sinner will believe what I have done, except I do another wondrous thing, except I give him life and work faith in him by my omnipotent mercy; and this too I will do for my chosen, the apple of my eye!”

Let us ever remember what the Lord our God has done in our day and generation.

- Now redemption is finished!
- Now salvation is accomplished!
- Now Christ has returned to glory!
- And his care is unceasing, infinite and beyond imagination!

**Let us never again imagine that God doesn't care!**

“Does Jesus care when my heart is pained  
Too deeply for mirth or song,  
As the burdens press, and the cares distress  
And the way grows weary and long?

Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,



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His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,  
I know my Savior cares.

Does Jesus care when my way is dark  
With a nameless dread and fear?  
As the daylight fades into deep night shades,  
Does He care enough to be near?

Does Jesus care when I've sinned and failed  
By Satan's temptation's strong;  
When for my deep grief there is no relief,  
Though my tears flow all the night long?

Does Jesus care when I've said "goodbye"  
To the dearest on earth to me,  
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,  
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

Oh yes, He cares, I know He cares,  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,  
I know my Savior cares.

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“Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)

Amen.