

Pillar Passages – Habakkuk 1
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Today we look at Habakkuk and we begin, of course, in chapter 1. Habakkuk is a prophet of Israel who receives an oracle. This oracle was delivered to him privately but eventually this was recorded for us, that we may learn from Habakkuk.

Before we get any further into this; as we listen to this, we must remember this entire oracle comes as a response to Habakkuk's complaint before God. Let's keep that in mind. This entire oracles is prompted by Habakkuk asking God, "What is going on? I Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and You will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!'—there is violence in the land—and You will not save?"

Habakkuk is a pure man, and God has made him to see iniquity. Even while Habakkuk is experiencing destruction; violence; strife, and contention; the law is paralyzed; justice never goes forth; the wicked surround the righteous, so that justice is perverted—does this sound familiar at all to you? Habakkuk is questioning in all of it, Why oh God do you sit by idly. Why? Why is this?

It's a good question. Why do You not do this? Why do You not bring us revival?

This is something I pray for. Why do You not bring us revival? Why do You not change us?

Habakkuk seems to have in his mind a particular way that ought to happen. That the evil ought to be shrunk. It out to be dealt with justly.

Here is God's response. The Lord's answer is this. That I have already been working. Look among the nations (beginning in verse 5) and see and wonder and be astounded. You're going to be astounded, and I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to tell you and you still aren't going to believe it. You're still not going to believe what I'm up to. But I'm already up to my response to your question, and that is—I'm raising up the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans which are a bitter and hasty nation. A nation that is dreaded and fearsome. A nation of thieves.

They are more fierce than hungry evening wolves that are ravenous. Their horsemen come for afar. And what to they come for? They come for violence. They gather up captives like sand. They scoff a kings, every ruler. They laugh at every fortress. They pile up earth, and they take every fortress. They sweep up everything before them like the wind. In a word, these are guilty men. Why are they guilty? Because their god is their own might.

This is why, now that I've told you, you're still not going to believe it. That I would—in response to Israel's wickedness—raise up another nation that is even worse, who don't know Me at all, who have made their own power their god. That is My response.

Habakkuk, beginning in verse 12, it right, he still can't believe it. "Are You not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One?" You are holy. Surely, "we shall not die."

So, Your promise, they last forever. Habakkuk is starting to—respectfully and straightforwardly—piece together what God has told him. Habakkuk has a complaint here, but it is a respectful one. He is trying to track with God. So on the one hand, we shall not die because You are always true to Your promises. That true. And, what I heard You say, O God, is that You have ordained these murderous thieves as a judgement. You, the Rock who does not change, You have established them for reproof. I am tracking with You.

These are two truths that are true at the same time. So again, another question; You who are of pure eyes—I have pure eyes, and I hated that I've looked on evil in my generation. But You are the holy, holy, holy one. You are the inventor of purity. You are purity. You cannot look to see evil. You cannot look at wrong. So again, why to You idly sit by? Why to You wait and allow the evil in this nation to take root and fester as it has and then remain silent? Why do You remain silent when the wick swallows up the man more righteous than he?

In other words; Why would You take a nation worse than ours allow them in Your reproof? Why would You make that Your reproof? Why would You make that Your judgement? Because—in a way—it is parasitic. Because You, O God, make man like the fish in the sea; like the crawling things that have no ruler. But this wicked nation, he brings them all up with a hook. He drags them up out of his net. And he gathers them in his dragnet, so he rejoices and is glad. And here is the kicker, O God; the end result will be that that nation will sacrifice to his net. He will actually worship—again—his power; the fruit of his power. In other words; Your glory will be besmirched.

How do this work? Why? Why would You allow them to live in even more luxury and his food even more rich by his mercilessly killing nations forever?

Habakkuk is taking God at His word. He is listening. But he still has questions as he tries to piece it all together. So, famous words, "I will take my stand (Habakkuk 2 verse 1) 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."

A couple of things here.

First, complaint to God is not wrong—as long as we are listening to Him. As long as we are seeking to take Him at His word.

The second thing we ought to consider here is, how does this apply today? This is not a prophecy about the United States. This is a prophecy about Israel. Yet, so much of what is said about Israel can be applied to us. We are this nation. We are this nation that has come to violence. We are a nation that is full of iniquity, that is full of destruction and violence, strife and contention, where the law is paralyzed, justice does often not go forth, where the wick

surround the righteous—especially, *especially* in the womb—so that justice goes forth perverted. We say that we do justly, but we do not.

I wonder—to me it is inescapable as I think about the enemies of the west, as I think about China and Russia—how much can they fit into the description here of the Chaldeans and their lust for power and domination. Their willingness to abuse humanity for their own ends. Their abuse of the weaker nation; their harvesting of organs from unsuspecting people; their enslavement of people for economic domination. These nations—these governments—indeed fit the picture of the Chaldeans.

So, what are we to make of this? Some may say this comparison is inapt, and you may have plenty of reasons why it is not an out-and-out comparison. Other will approve of my comparison here, but their response would be; we need to restore American values like good citizenship and gun ownership. We need to return to the rule of the law.

But we need to ask ourselves; Has God done this before? Has God done this in recent memory? Has God used a more evil nation to reprove a nation for its evil?

Absolutely. We need only look back to World War II to see that the home of the Reformation, was reprovved and judged by God by and even more evil nation. If we can image this, the Soviet Union killed far more people in its own internal holocaust than did Germany in its holocaust.

Yet the same goes on today with Communist China. Communism in China has killed millions of people. Could God be readying that nation to reprove us for our wickedness?

That is very likely, in my view.

So nothing that we might do in response to this with worth anything unless we do what Habakkuk does here and see the God behind it all and pursue the God behind it all. Because this God does what He pleases. And He does what He pleases according to wisdom that is truly wisdom. Our country is truly nothing in His eyes—less than nothing. No country is too big to fail.

What are we to make of Habakkuk's example to us? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That is what we need to take from this. Because God's ways are not our ways. And in a world where God providentially orders *all* things according to *His* good pleasure—even the raising up of one even more wicked nation to reprove a less wicked nation—whatever He does *is* wisdom. We must set our eyes on Him and set our eyes on understanding His ways. That should leave us with a fear of Him, and this is the beginning of wisdom. Best to live with a fear of Him and proclaim that fear, and then work out from there waiting humbly for His response as Habakkuk does here.

We will hear God's response to Habakkuk in the coming days.