Habakkuk Devotionals & Sermon Illustrations

HABAKKUK DEVOTIONALS
Our Daily Bread
Today in the Word

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HABAKKUK 1

Warren Wiersbe's overview - The name Habakkuk may come from a Hebrew word that means “to embrace.” In his book, he comes to grips with some serious problems and lays hold of God by faith when everything in his life seems to be falling apart. Habakkuk saw the impending Babylonian invasion, and he wondered that God would use a wicked nation to punish His chosen people. His book describes three stages in Habakkuk’s experience—perplexity: faith wavers (chap. 1); perspective: faith watches (chap. 2); and perseverance: faith worships (chap. 3). The key text is Hab 2:4, “But the just shall live by his faith.” It is quoted in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38. The theme of Romans is “the just” and how to be justified before God. Galatians tells us how the just “shall live,” and the emphasis in Hebrews is on living “by faith.” It takes three New Testament epistles to explain one Old Testament text! - With the Word

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Habakkuk 1:1-4
The Secret Of Joy
Read: Habakkuk 1:1-4; 3:17-19

Though the fig tree may not blossom...yet I will rejoice in the Lord -- Habakkuk 3:17-18

One of the shortest books in the Old Testament is the book of Habakkuk. In its three brief chapters we see an amazing transformation in the prophet's outlook on life. His opening words express depths of despair, but at the close of the book he has risen to heights of joy.

What caused this remarkable change? Why did Habakkuk begin with a complaint and end with a song of praise? The answer lies in three verses in chapter 2. In addition to God's message of judgment on the wicked, the Almighty told the troubled prophet, "The just shall live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). He also promised that someday the earth would "be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14). Finally, He assured him that "the Lord is in His holy temple" (Hab 2:20). These wonderful truths were just what Habakkuk needed to lift him out of his deep depression. By fixing his eyes on God, he rose above his discouraging circumstances and found a source of lasting joy in the Lord.

Like the prophet, we too must walk by faith and look forward to that glorious time when Jesus will return to earth to set up His kingdom of peace and righteousness. Maintaining our confidence in Him is the secret of true joy! --R W De Haan

Rejoice in Christ the Lord, again
The Spirit speaks the word;
And faith takes up the happy strain:
Our joy is in the Lord. --Anon.

To improve your outlook, keep looking up

Habakkuk 1:1-4

The Bible's School of Prayer

To call God and us unequal partners is a laughable understatement. And yet by inviting us to do kingdom work on earth, God has indeed set up a kind of odd-couple alliance. God delegates work to human beings so that we do history together, so to speak. Clearly, the partnership has one dominant partner—something like an alliance between Microsoft and a high school programmer.

We know well what happens when human beings form unequal alliances: the dominant partner tends to throw his weight around and the subordinate mostly keeps quiet. But God, who has no reason to be threatened by us, invites a steady and honest flow of communication.

I sometimes wonder why God places such a high value on honesty in our prayers, even to the extent of enduring unjust outbursts. I am startled to see how many biblical prayers seem ill-tempered. Jeremiah griped about unfairness (Jer 20:7, 8, 9, 10); Habakkuk accused God of deafness (Hab 1:2); Job conceded, “What profit do we have if we pray to Him?” (Job 21:15). The Bible teaches us to pray with blistering honesty.

God wants us to come to Him with our complaints. If we march through life pretending to smile while inside we bleed, we dishonor the relationship. — Philip Yancey

Give Him each perplexing problem,
All your needs to Him make known;
Bring to Him your daily burdens—
Never carry them alone! —Adams

The best thermometer of your spiritual temperature is the intensity of your prayer. —Spurgeon

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Habakkuk 1:1-2:4

Only One Option

If you were to ask several people to draw a crooked line on a piece of paper, no two lines would be identical. There is a lesson in this: There are many ways to be crooked, but only one way to be straight.

The Lord tells us that the righteous person has only one option—to "live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). In the chapter prior to this declaration from the Lord, the prophet Habakkuk had complained about the violence and injustice around him. It seemed as if the wicked were swallowing up the righteous (1:13).

God responded to Habakkuk by saying that His people were to be "just" and were to live by faith. They were not to be like the one who is "proud" and "not upright" (2:4). A proud and self-sufficient person will rationalize his faults and imperfections. He doesn't want to admit that he needs God. His ways are crooked.

Wickedness seems to prevail in our world. God urges us to live our lives in faith, taking to heart His assurance to Habakkuk that there will be a day of reckoning for the wicked.

The only way to please God now and to be ready for that day of reckoning is to live by faith.— by Albert Lee

Lord, grant me grace throughout this day

To walk the straight and narrow way,

To do whatever in Thy sight

Is good and perfect, just and right. —Huisman

The only right way is the straight and narrow way.

Habakkuk 1:1-11
Doesn't God Care?

September 17, 2015

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. Isaiah 55:8

Why does the intoxicated driver escape an accident unharmed while his sober victim is seriously injured? Why do bad people prosper while good people suffer? How often have you been so confused by things going on in your life that you have cried out, "Doesn't God care?"

Habakkuk struggled with this same question as he saw the distressing situation in Judah where wickedness and injustice were running rampant (Hab. 1:1-4). His confusion drove him to ask God when He would act to fix the situation. God's reply was nothing short of perplexing.

When we don't understand God's ways, we can #trust His unchanging character.

God said that He would use the Chaldeans as the means of Judah's correction. The Chaldeans were notorious for their cruelty (Hab. 1:7). They were bent on violence (v. 9) and worshiped nothing but their military prowess and false gods (Hab. 1:10-11).

In moments when we don't understand God's ways, we need to trust His unchanging character. That's exactly what Habakkuk did. He believed that God is a God of justice, mercy, and truth (Ps. 89:14). In the process, he learned to look at his circumstances from the framework of God's character instead of looking at God's character from the context of his own circumstances. He concluded, "The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights" (Hab. 3:19).

Lord, it is easy to let my circumstances change how I understand You. Help me to remember that You are good and faithful, even though I can't see everything and may not understand how You are working.

Our situation may look very different from God's point of view.

INSIGHT: The book of Habakkuk is a dialogue between the prophet Habakkuk and God. Ministering to the rebellious kingdom of Judah 120 years after Assyria destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel, Habakkuk was perplexed as to why God had not punished Judah for her sin (Hab. 1:2-4). God responded that He would use the Babylonians to punish Judah (Hab. 1:5-11). Habakkuk was even more perplexed that a holy God would use an evil pagan nation to discipline His own people (Hab. 1:12–2:1). He then learned that God would punish Babylon too (Hab. 2:2-20). Habakkuk, praising God's faithfulness (Hab. 3:1-15), affirms his trust in God to do what is right (Hab. 3:16-19). Sim Kay Tee

By Poh Fang Chia

Habakkuk 1:2

Job 24:1-25

How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? - Habakkuk 1:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

An old saying declares that "out of sight" is "out of mind"—people do not concern themselves with what they cannot see. In our case, however, it is the fact that we lose sight of God that sometimes causes us to think that He doesn't have us in mind. Our circumstances don't always immediately reveal God's purpose. This is especially true when these circumstances appear to favor the wicked. The prophet Habakkuk, who uttered the complaint in today's key verse, wrestled with this problem as he watched the ruthless Babylonians literally get away with murder.

The prophet's question was essentially the same as Job's query in today's reading. In essence, they both asked, "God, if you are as good and just as we know you are, why don't you do something?" Job wanted to know when God would finally set the time for judgment. In exasperation, he lists a variety of situations in which the "bad guys" appear to be winning. Job's question was not without ulterior motives. He wondered why such tragedies had befallen him, despite his righteous behavior, when others who blatantly ignored God's righteous standard seemed to go free. The prophet Habakkuk described the social and political climate of his day and wondered why God would tolerate such wrongs. The answer for both men was not a comfortable one.

In Job's case, the answer was silence. God does not respond to Job's questions until the end of the book. Even then, He does not explain Himself. For Habakkuk, God outlined His plan but warned: "Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told" (Hab. 1:5). Paul quoted this verse while preaching in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch as a caution against the danger of unbelief (see Acts 13:13-52). Faith recognizes that God is working out His plan according to His own timetable. We know that a day is coming when both the righteous and the unjust will be held accountable for their actions.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY- Today's passage and key verse remind us of the need to look at our circumstances through the lens of faith. Not only will those who lack faith have trouble seeing God's hand in the midst of their circumstances, they would fail to grasp His plan, even if He told them. We have an advantage that both Job and Habakkuk did not. We possess the completed Scriptures. The Old and New Testament both warn of a coming day of judgment. Learn more about it by looking up the term judgment using a concordance or Bible software. (Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved)

Habakkuk 1:1-4

Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? - Habakkuk 1:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

The "problem of evil" is a philosophical dilemma that has troubled believers throughout history. It goes something like this: If God is all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful, how can evil, suffering, disaster, and death exist in the world? If He is all-loving, wouldn't He want to end these things? And if He is all-knowing, wouldn't He know how? And if He is all-powerful, wouldn't He be able to do so? If He really is all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful, how can we explain these things? But if He is not all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful, how can He be God?

The problem of evil is not only an issue raised by unbelievers, for we find people wrestling with it in the pages of Scripture as well. The prophet Habakkuk was one of them. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah whose book seems to have been written just before 605 b.c., the date of Babylon's first invasion of Judah (see Jeremiah 46). This short book feels more like a psalm than a prophecy because it revolves around a dialogue with God rather than a message for the nation. Habakkuk's name means "embracer," which various commentators have interpreted to indicate his love for God, his love for the people, or God's love for him (a man embraced by God).

Habakkuk poses his essential question early in this book: Why does evil go unpunished? (v. 3). From a human perspective, God appears to be not listening, not paying attention, or not doing anything (v. 2). The prophet feels forced to watch things

that God should not be allowing or tolerating. The sin he sees is that of his own people, and like the psalmists his words reflect anger, grief, and a desire for justice. Yet justice is not being done and is even being perverted or twisted out of shape (v. 4). Is God paralyzed? How can people sow sin and not reap judgment? Morally and spiritually, things are the opposite of what they should be.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The perversion of justice deeply bothered the prophet Habakkuk, and it should bother us as well. One suggestion for making a difference against contemporary social injustice is to purchase a worship CD entitled CompassionArt: Creating Freedom from Poverty. Some of the biggest names in Christian songwriting participated in a spiritual retreat, during which they wrote the songs for this album, with 100 percent of the royalties going to help those in need.

Habakkuk 1:2–3

TODAY IN THE WORD

Medical experts warn that repressed anger can cause headaches, nausea, or other health problems. Perhaps because of this, there are many who encourage people to stop bottling up their anger and to let it all out. The problem with this approach, however, is that anger can be very destructive--both to the angry person and to those around. So what are we to do with our anger, especially as Christians? Job can help us out here Job 6:1-13; 7:11-21

Habakkuk 1:5-11

I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. - Habakkuk 1:5

TODAY IN THE WORD

Conrad Maier-Sogheg made a lot of money, enough to deposit $10,000 per day to his bank account in Georgia. How did an unemployed man manage this? It turns out he was literally making money, printing his own bills from inside a rented storage unit. He used laser templates, special paper, and a variety of chemicals, including baby powder, to create his counterfeits. Said one police officer: “It's the best counterfeit scheme I have seen in my law enforcement career. The bills look and feel real.” How was he caught? He failed to pay the rent on his storage unit, and when workers went to empty it out they discovered the scam.

“You may be sure that your sin will find you out,” the Bible warns (Num. 32:23). Justice is inevitable. That's exactly how God answered Habakkuk's first question. He told him that justice was about to be done, that the nation's punishment for sin and covenant-breaking was imminent. It would not be allowed to continue indefinitely. This was not a prophecy of the distant future, for God told the prophet it would happen “in your days” (Habakkuk 1:5).

What was He going to do? He planned to raise up the Babylonians and use them to conquer Judah. This is stunning in at least two ways—spiritually, in that a pagan nation would be used to judge God's people, and politically, in that the mighty Assyrians were about to be displaced as a world superpower. The imagery relates mostly to hunting and prey. Like a leopard or vulture, the Babylonians would descend upon their hapless victims. They would be as irresistible as a desert wind, defeating even those seemingly secure in fortified cities. But God was under no illusion about the Babylonians. He knew they were idolators. He knew they would be “ruthless” and portrayed them as typical conquerors (Habakkuk 1:6-7), that is, as proud lovers of power and domination who would be dreaded by others and “whose own strength is their god” (Habakkuk 1:11).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - When reading biblical prophecy, it is helpful to have handy a timeline or chronology of events. Otherwise, we can get lost in the various historical episodes that are presented as past, present, and future from the prophet's perspective. If your Bible has such a timeline among its resources, we encourage you to study it along with this month's devotionals. If not, or if you're looking for something more in-depth, you can obtain a reference such as The Chronology of the Old Testament (book and CD-ROM), by Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones.

Habakkuk 1:12-13 - THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DOUBT AND UNBELIEF- The prophet focused on the character of God, as Jonah had done when he disagreed with what God was doing (Jonah 4:2). “Men of faith are always the men who have to confront problems,” wrote G. Campbell Morgan, for if you believe in God, you sometimes wonder why He allows certain things to happen. But keep in mind that there’s a difference between doubt and unbelief. Like Habakkuk, the **doubter** questions God and may even debate with God, but the **doubter** doesn’t abandon God. But **unbelief** is rebellion against God, a refusal to accept what He says and does. **Unbelief** is an act of the will, while **doubt** is born out of a troubled mind and a broken heart. - Warren Wiersbe, Be Amazed, page 112

Christ never failed to distinguish between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is can’t believe; unbelief is won’t believe. Doubt is honesty; unbelief is obstinacy. Doubt is looking for light; unbelief is content with darkness. - JOHN DRUMMOND

Clouds of doubt are created when the warm, moist air of our expectations meets the cold air of God’s silence. The problem is not as much in God’s silence as it is in your ability to hear. - Max Lucado

Doubt is not always a sign that a man is wrong; it may be a sign that he is thinking. - Oswald Chambers

We may be tempted to doubt. We may have to pray, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief " But we can take sides with our faith and by the exercise of it give doubt no chance to grow. Such faith moves mountains. - Vance Havner

Modest doubt is call'd
The beacon of the wise. - Shakespeare

Every step toward Christ kills a doubt. Every thought, word, and deed for him carries you away from discouragement. - T L Cuyler

I will not doubt though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails;
I will believe the Hand which never fails,
From seeming evil, worketh good for me.
And though I weep because these sails are tattered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,
"I trust in Thee!"
I will not doubt though sorrows fall like rain,
And troubles swarm like bees about a hive,
I will believe the heights for which I strive
Are only reached by anguish and by pain;
And though I groan and writhe beneath my crosses,
I yet shall see, through my severest losses,
The greater gain.
I will not doubt, well anchored in the faith,
Like some staunch ship my soul braves every gale,
So strong its courage that it will not fail
To breast the mighty unknown sea of death.
Oh may I cry, though body parts with spirit,
"I do not doubt," so listening worlds may hear it
With my last breath. —Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Doubt makes the mountain which faith moves.

> Doubt sees the obstacles; faith sees the way.
> Doubt sees the darkest night; faith sees the day.
> Doubt dreads to take a step; faith soars on high;
> Doubt questions, "Who believes?" Faith answers, "I."

Harry Ironside - Honest Doubt - Often when pressing the claims of Christ upon men and urging them to believe the gospel, I have had them seek to parry by declaring that they could not believe, as they were honest doubters. I suppose there is such a thing as an honest doubter, but I dislike the expression when that which men profess honestly to doubt is the infallible Word of the living God. Tennyson has written,

> "There is more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half your creeds."

I am not so sure that Tennyson was correct; certainly not if it is a question of doubting the truth of the gospel. I would not like to go home and tell my wife something and have her say, "Well, my dear, I am trying to believe you, but, honestly, I doubt you. I believe there is more faith in honest doubt than in being too sure you are not trying to put one over on me."
A lady said when I had explained the way of life as clearly as I knew how and shown her some plain, definite passages from the Holy Scriptures, such as John 5:24 and Matthew 11:28, "Well, I am trying to believe."
"Trying to believe whom?" I inquired. "It is God who has spoken in His Word. What do you mean by saying you are trying to believe Him?"
She saw her sin and her mistake and exclaimed, "Oh, I did not realize what I was saying. Yes, I can and I do believe what God has declared." And her soul entered into peace

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Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? - Habakkuk 1:13

TODAY IN THE WORD

No doubt you have heard of the Swiss Army knife. But have you heard of a model called the Giant? It weighs two pounds, costs about $720, is assembled by hand in Switzerland, and contains 85 different devices, including such exotic tools as a cigar cutter, fish-hook disgorger, and golf-club face cleaner. The Giant incorporates every feature of every other model of Swiss Army knife and is mainly intended for collectors. Although rather impractical to carry daily, it is an impressive reminder of what a useful tool a Swiss Army knife can be.

Tools were on Habakkuk's mind in today's reading. God had just told him that Babylon would be His tool to straighten out the injustices described in the prophet's first question. But this answer created new problems, so Habakkuk had a second question: How can evil be an instrument of justice? Or more specifically, if the scales of justice for Judah were to be balanced by an arrogant and godless conqueror, how would those scales be balanced for Babylon? He believed firmly that God was eternal, sovereign, and absolutely holy (Habakkuk 1:12-13a). How, then, could He do what He had just told him He would do? Wasn't it inconsistent with His divine nature? Wasn't the cure worse than the disease?

Our key verse today sums up the “problem of evil.” Habakkuk was reeling. Spiritually and morally, everything seemed out of order or distorted. It was as though he had asked a question about fish, and in response had been told justice would be done on the fish by means of a wicked fisherman (Habakkuk 1:14-16). That made things even worse! Would such an evil and unjust state of affairs be allowed to endure? “Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?” (Habakkuk 1:17). Habakkuk vowed to watch and wait for God's answer to this urgent and difficult question (Habakkuk 2:1).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The book of Habakkuk has already taught us at least one truth that might bring a sigh of relief—you can ask God any question. He's big enough for your toughest ones. He won't be stumped or baffled. The kind of answer you want isn't guaranteed, of course, but prophets and psalmists have provided many examples of crying out deep, honest, painful questions to God. If you've been holding back, write a spiritual journal entry or a letter to God that expresses your most perplexing questions.

Habakkuk 1:12

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

Art not Thou from everlasting, O Lord my God? Thou diest not. Habakkuk 1:12

Note the attributes of God, which are enumerated in these words. His eternity—He is from everlasting; He is the Holy One—of purer eyes than to behold evil; the Almighty—the Rock. Is it not wonderful that mortals should be permitted to put the possessive pronoun before these wonderful words, and claim this glorious God for themselves! My God; mine Holy One.

But the most remarkable is the reading suggested above by the words, “Thou diest not”; “He only hath immortality.” Time cannot lay its hand upon his nature, or death dissolve it. His hair is white, but not with the whiteness of decay, but of unutterable purity. He need not tremble at the summons of man’s great last foe. Unchangeable! The same yesterday, today, and for ever! The death of death! The destruction of the grave! He dies not.

All this is true; but it is true also that in the person of his Eternal Son He died. He laid down his life, though none took it from Him. He bowed his glorious nature beneath the yoke of death. Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He took part in the same, that through death He might destroy death. Though He ever liveth, yet He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

There are many mysteries like those at which the prophet hints. He holds his peace whilst the wicked swallows up the man that is more righteous than himself. It is the problem of all ages why God should permit it; but whatever be the explanation, it cannot be because He has vacated the throne of the universe, or that his arm is weakened by disease. From everlasting to everlasting He is God.

Habakkuk 1:12-2:3

God's Delays

Waiting is hard for me. I want answers now. Postponements perplex me; deferrals daunt me. I’m baffled by God’s delays, wondering why and when. “How long, O Lord?”

The prophet Habakkuk wanted answers as well, but God chose to take His time. “I will stand my watch . . . to see what [God] will say to me,” Habakkuk wrote (Habakkuk 2:1). “The vision is yet for an appointed time,” God replied. “Wait for it; because it will surely come” (Habakkuk 2:3).

Faith never gives up. It knows that despite appearances, all is well. It can wait without signs or significant indications that God is at work, because it is sure of Him. “Each delay is perfectly fine, for we are within the safe hands of God,” said Madame Guyon (1648–1717).

We too must learn to view each delay as if it were “perfectly fine.” Postponements are reasons to pray rather than grow anxious, impatient, and annoyed. They’re opportunities for God to build those imperishable but hard-to-acquire qualities of humility, patience, serenity, and strength. God never says, “Wait awhile,” unless He is planning to do something in our situation—or in us. He waits to be gracious.

So take heart! If God's answer tarries, "Wait for it; because it will surely come."— by David H. Roper

Soon shall the morning gild

The dark horizon rim,

Thy heart's desire shall be fulfilled—

"Wait patiently for Him." —Havergal

God stretches our patience to enlarge our soul.

Habakkuk 1:12-2:4

Waiting For God

They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel (Psalm 106:13).

A friend found it difficult to be patient during a long hospital stay. She was a Christian, but she feared that some sins from her past were too bad to be forgiven. I assured her that when she confessed them to God He forgave her. And her doctors reassured her that her depression would lift and she would get better. Still she found it difficult to wait for the light to break through.

Habakkuk was perplexed and impatient too. First he complained to God about the evils of the Israelites (Hab 1:2, 3, 4). The Lord responded by saying that He would use the Babylonians to scourge them (Hab 1:5-11). Then the prophet raised a new problem—Babylon was more wicked than Israel (Hab 1:12-17). Though frustrated, Habakkuk didn't act rashly. Instead, he showed reverence for God by declaring that he would wait for Him to make things clear. When God spoke to Habakkuk again, He assured the prophet that He would give him the answer. He commanded him to write it clearly so that he could proclaim it speedily. But He also told Habakkuk that he would have to wait awhile before seeing all the wrongs made right. This delay was a trying experience for Habakkuk, but the answer eventually came, and at just the right time.

When waiting for God to work, we must exercise patience and steadfast faith, leaving matters in His hands. God will reward us for our patience—but not too soon nor too late. —H. V. Lugt (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Patience is a virtue that carries a lot of wait.

Habakkuk 1:13

Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. - Habakkuk 1:13

TODAY IN THE WORD - The story is told that during the Revolutionary War, a minister named Peter Miller had a neighbor who hated and ridiculed him. But when his unbelieving neighbor was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death, Miller walked to the camp of General George Washington to plead for the man's life. Washington listened to the plea, but said he didn't feel he should pardon Miller's friend. "My friend!" answered Miller. "He's not my friend. He's my worst enemy." Washington was so surprised by Miller's actions on behalf of an enemy that he granted the pardon. Miller took the pardon to the condemned man, and his life was spared.

That's a wonderful story of grace, and it applies to the life of Manasseh, the longest-serving and most evil king to rule over Judah. It's hard to believe that Manasseh was the son of Hezekiah, about whom the Bible says there was no king before or after him who did so well at doing right.

It's safe to say that no king before or after Manasseh did as much evil as he did. Not only was this man Hezekiah's son, but he ruled with his father as co-regent for about ten years before taking the throne.

Manasseh ruled for a total of fifty-five years, and he did irreparable damage to the nation. God said that because of all the sins Manasseh committed against Him, He would punish Judah with the same standard He had used against Israel and the dynasty of Ahab. Judah would also be sent into exile (2 Kings 21:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15).

The extent and variety of Manasseh's sins are stunning. He undid Hezekiah's reforms, and offered his own sons as sacrifices. If there was any form of idolatry to be practiced, or any evil person to be consulted, Manasseh did it. He even set up an idol in God's temple in Jerusalem. It's no wonder Manasseh and his people paid no attention when God tried to speak to them (v. 10).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY- It's hard to imagine that it took as much of God's grace to save "ordinary" people like us as it did to forgive Manasseh. (Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved)

Habakkuk 1:13

Hiding My Face

I'm a news junkie. I like knowing what's going on in the world. But sometimes the atrocities of life make me feel as if I'm a kid watching a scary movie. I don't want to see what happens. I want to turn away to avoid watching.

God reacts to evil in a similar way. Years ago, He warned the Israelites that He would turn away from them if they turned toward evil (Deut. 31:18). They did, and He did (Ezek. 39:24).

The prophet Habakkuk had not forsaken God, but he suffered along with those who had. "Why do You show me iniquity," he asked the Lord, "and cause me to see trouble?" (Hab. 1:3).

God's response to His confused prophet indicates that even when evil obscures the face of God, our inability to see Him does not mean He is uninvolved. God said, "Look among the nations and watch—be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you" (Hab 1:5). God would judge Judah, but He would also judge the invading Babylonians for their evil (see Hab. 2). And through it all, "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

When world events cause you to despair, turn off the news and turn to Scripture. The end of the story has been written by our holy God. Evil will not prevail.— Julie Ackerman Link

Lord, we praise You for Your displays of power in the
past and Your promises of victory in the future,
for they replace our fear of the world
with confidence in You. Amen.

Don't despair because of evil; God will have the last word.

HABAKKUK 2

WHY? - Hab 1:3, 13, 14 - "How can God expect me to trust Him when He's permitted this to happen?" This reveals an impulsive heart that wants to believe and be faithful but is shattered by pain. Answering the question may be part of postfuneral counseling when you and the questioner have more time. The writer of Psalm 73 struggled with a similar problem, and so did the prophet Habakkuk. True faith doesn't bargain with God and say, "I'll trust You on my terms." True faith says with Job, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15 NASB). The three friends of Daniel had it right when they told the king, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire.... But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18 NASB). No bargaining here! God can be trusted no matter what He permits to happen, because He loves us too much to harm us, and He's too wise to make a mistake. - Warren Wiersbe

This chapter (Habakkuk 2:1-20) reports an experience Habakkuk had that is similar to one recorded by Asaph the psalmist in Psalm 73. Like Habakkuk, Asaph was bewildered at the providential working of God in this world: he was disturbed because the wicked seemed to be prospering while the righteous were suffering. Like Habakkuk, he reasoned with God, and then, like Habakkuk, he gave God the opportunity to reply. "When I thought to know this," he wrote, "it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God" (Ps. 73:16–17). There in the sanctuary he found God's answer to his problem, and his sighing was turning into singing. - Warren Wiersbe

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Habakkuk 2:1

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

I will look forth to see what He will speak with me. Habakkuk 2:1

The prophet had made his complaint in the preceding chapter; and now he climbs the watch-tower, much as the watchman did who waited for tidings of the battle between Joab and Absalom. He looks forth for God's answer. This, to say the least, is respectful in our dealings with the Almighty. Too often we ask questions, and do not wait for replies; shoot prayer-arrows into the air, without stopping to see where they alight, or what quarry they strike. We are in too great a hurry, to take time and trouble for climbing the watch-tower, and awaiting the Divine reply.

God still speaks to the waiting soul. Sometimes, there is a direct answer to its perplexity; at others, there is the assurance that the vision is yet for the appointed time, but that it is hastening towards the end. O long-waiting soul, dost thou hear those words? Thou hast been standing long upon the watch-tower. Hope has almost died; but the vision is panting in its haste to be fulfilled. If it tarry, wait for it; because it is already on the way. Every throb of the pendulum brings it nearer. The express train is hurrying towards thee, with its precious freight.

How often God's answers come, and find us gone! We have waited for awhile, and, thinking there was no answer, we have gone our way; but as we have turned the first corner the post has come in. God's ships touch at our wharves; but there is no one to unload them. His letters lie at the office; but no one calls for them. It is not enough to direct your prayer unto God; look up, and look out, until the blessing alights on your head. When we ask what is according to his will, we receive while we

pray.

Habakkuk 2:1-8

Begin With God

"Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

Speaking to the graduating seniors of New Zealand Bible College, Brian Smith said, "How well I recall the remark of a senior missionary in India when he was reflecting on the phenomenon we call Hinduism. When you see its temples and hear the throb of its drums and smell the fragrance of its incense, and realize the tremendous hold it has upon the land, your heart sinks. And the consolation I have is this: This too, this mighty construction of religion and faith and worship, will disappear, like all those systems of the past. Where now are the ancient gods of the Assyrians, the Egyptians, and the Romans? Where now Artemis, "great goddess of the Ephesians, she whom Asia and the whole world worships"? These are no more.

As Habakkuk wrote about the powerful Chaldean armies (Hab 1:6), he no doubt despaired over their seeming invincibility. A similar feeling must have swept over European Christians in the 1940s when they saw their homelands overtaken by the Nazis. And today the same is surely true of believers in atheistic countries. But for those who trust God, there is always hope. That's why the prophet Habakkuk affirmed that the just shall live by faith. God's people have the assurance that they will triumph—if not here, then in eternity.

Ungodly philosophies and false religions seem overwhelming at times, but they will not last. God has promised that righteousness will prevail. —D. C. Egner (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

That which does not begin with God ends in failure.

Habakkuk 2:1-14

God Still Rules

As the year 1999 came to a close, great leaders of the century were remembered, including Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt. During World War II, they led Great Britain and the United States to defeat Nazism and Fascism.

Did you know that both men nearly lost their lives before the war began? In December 1931, Churchill was struck by a car as he crossed Fifth Avenue in New York City. In Miami in December 1933, an assassin’s bullet barely missed Roosevelt and killed the man standing beside him.

Both leaders could have died, but they survived. Why? I believe God wanted these two men alive to lead their respective nations to victory over the enemy.

The Bible teaches that God causes nations and their leaders to rise and fall (Daniel 2:21; 4:32-35; 5:21). When Habakkuk complained that it didn’t seem right for God to use wicked Babylon to discipline Israel, the Lord assured the prophet that this did not mean evil would triumph. God was still in control and would one day bring about perfect justice (Habakkuk 2:13-14).

We too can be sure that our times are in God’s hands. No matter what may happen in this world, God still rules!— by David C. Egner

This is my Father's world—

Oh, let me ne'er forget

That though the wrong seems oft so strong,

God is the Ruler yet. —Babcock

God's sovereignty overrules any calamity.

D L Moody - Five woes against five common sins:—

- Unsatiableness. Habakkuk 2:5.
- Covetousness. Habakkuk 2:9.
- Cruelty. Habakkuk 2:12.
- Drunkenness. Habakkuk 2:15.
- Idolatry. Habakkuk 2:18.

Habakkuk 2:2-11

Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin! - Habakkuk 2:9

TODAY IN THE WORD

A skeptic once asked a minister if he really believed the Bible. Yes, he was told. “Is there anything you can't explain?” was the next question. Yes again—the minister even showed him the question marks in the margins of his Bible. Surprised, the skeptic asked, “What do you do with all the things you can't explain?” “Very simple,” the minister replied. “I do the same thing I'm doing with this fish I'm eating. I eat the meat and push all the bones to the side of the plate, and then let any fool that wants to choke over them.”

Our finite minds cannot fully comprehend the ways of our infinite God. Even so, He communicates and reveals Himself in ways that we can understand. So God answered Habakkuk's second question, at least as far as the prophet could understand the answer. As we see today and tomorrow, He assured him that the evil instrument of Judah's punishment would in turn be punished and that the scales of justice would balance in the end. Babylon would fall.

God certainly agreed with Habakkuk's moral estimate of the Babylonians (vv. 4-5). They were proud and lusted for power. “He is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied.” This didn't square with the principle that the righteous live by faith (or faithfulness), a truth quoted in the New Testament in several places (such as Rom. 1:17).

That's why God pronounced five woes on the Babylonians. The first (vv. 6-8) said that the plunderers would become the plundered—unjust gains must be paid for. The second (vv. 9-11) indicated that the plotters of ruin would themselves be ruined and that no one is beyond the reach of God's sovereign hand. These “woes” are statements of judgment as well as “taunt songs”—a literary form in which losers are mocked. The wicked will receive justice from the hand of God in His due time. The basic idea is, “They finally got their just desserts, they had it coming.”

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Now that you've asked God your toughest questions (yesterday's “Today Along the Way”), the next step is another challenging assignment: Wait (v. 3). Wait patiently for His answer, whenever it comes, in whatever form it comes. Living by faith means waiting in hope for “that day” to arrive. As with the prophecies recorded by Habakkuk and others, it might be tomorrow, next year, next century, or even farther in the future. But God will answer, and our faith will be vindicated!

Habakkuk 2:2-14 Divine Perspective

By Poh Fang Chia

For the vision is yet for an appointed time; . . . it will surely come. —Habakkuk 2:3

Jason took a trip to New York during spring break. One afternoon he and some friends piled into a cab and headed for the Empire State Building. To Jason, the ride on the ground seemed chaotic and dangerous. But when he got to the observation deck of the skyscraper and looked down on the city streets, to his amazement he saw order and design. What a difference a change in perspective made!

Habakkuk learned a similar lesson. When he looked at life from his earthly vantage point, it seemed that God was indifferent to the evil permeating society (Hab. 1:2-4). But God gave him a divine perspective and showed him that life is more than what it seems. The deeds of men cannot thwart the purposes of God (Habakkuk 2:3).

Those who don’t show any regard for God may seem to prosper at the moment, but God will ultimately right all wrong. God acts sovereignly in all that comes to pass so that everything works toward His good purpose. God’s plan will surely take place and be on schedule (Habakkuk 2:3).

We can’t sort out the whole picture from where we are in life; only God can. So let us continue to live by faith and not by sight. From His perspective, all things are working together for the believer’s good and for His honor.

Sovereign Ruler of the skies,

Ever gracious, ever wise,

All my times are in Your hand,

All events at Your command. —Ryland

Our times are in God’s hands; our souls are in His keeping.

Habakkuk 2:4

TODAY IN THE WORD

Members of presidential administrations often publish “kiss-and-tell” books soon after they leave government. These memoirs typically present the author in a flattering light while reporting their angle on the “truth.” Some authors criticize the

President under whom they served, including David Stockman (budget director for Ronald Reagan), George Stephanopoulos (advisor to Bill Clinton), and Scott McClellan (press secretary for George W. Bush).

What's the real story, we ask? We ask it when we study history or read today's paper, and we have to ask it along our faith journey. Sometimes the struggles of our lives seem to be telling a story from which God feels absent. We lose faith and hope, wondering, “Where is God?” Are we to believe that God has abandoned us when life gets hard?

Obedience to the “Heavenly Vision”

Habakkuk 2:3

I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision —Acts 26:19

If we lose “the heavenly vision” God has given us, we alone are responsible— not God. We lose the vision because of our own lack of spiritual growth. If we do not apply our beliefs about God to the issues of everyday life, the vision God has given us will never be fulfilled. The only way to be obedient to “the heavenly vision” is to give our utmost for His highest— our best for His glory. This can be accomplished only when we make a determination to continually remember God’s vision. But the acid test is obedience to the vision in the details of our everyday life— sixty seconds out of every minute, and sixty minutes out of every hour, not just during times of personal prayer or public meetings.

“**Though it tarries, wait for it . . .**” (Habakkuk 2:3). We cannot bring the vision to fulfillment through our own efforts, but must live under its inspiration until it fulfills itself. We try to be so practical that we forget the vision. At the very beginning we saw the vision but did not wait for it. We rushed off to do our practical work, and once the vision was fulfilled we could no longer even see it. Waiting for a vision that “tarries” is the true test of our faithfulness to God. It is at the risk of our own soul’s welfare that we get caught up in practical busy-work, only to miss the fulfillment of the vision.

Watch for the storms of God. The only way God plants His saints is through the whirlwind of His storms. Will you be proven to be an empty pod with no seed inside? That will depend on whether or not you are actually living in the light of the vision you have seen. Let God send you out through His storm, and don’t go until He does. If you select your own spot to be planted, you will prove yourself to be an unproductive, empty pod. However, if you allow God to plant you, you will “bear much fruit” (John 15:8).

It is essential that we live and “walk in the light” of God’s vision for us (1 John 1:7). - Oswald Chambers

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Habakkuk 2:4
FAITH FIGHTS

Habakkuk 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

I heard a story about a midwestern farmer 50 years ago. The farmer went to the bank to borrow money to buy seed to plant his whole farm in corn. He fired up the old tractor and plowed for many days. He disced the ground. He spread fertilizer over the whole farm... and planted the corn. The rains came and the corn grew. In one day millions of grasshoppers flew on to his property and his precious crop was being consumed by the grasshoppers. One Sunday at prayer meeting the farmer cried out to God... Father, we will loose the whole farm, I owe money at the bank...The farmer got up from prayer in GREAT FAITH... As he walked home, his heart kept saying, let the chickens out...Now the farmer pondered: HOW WILL LETTING THE CHICKENS OUT HELP ME? The next day the farmer was up at dawn, he opened the doors to the chicken house...The chickens came out and ate the grasshoppers...The chickens thrived... there were many baby chickens hatched. The eggs were plentiful. The farmer started loading up the eggs and chickens and traveled the area selling the chickens...No, the farmers faith never saved the crop, but GOD HAD A BETTER IDEA. For several years the farmer made his living from the chickens that God blessed...
I want to tell you --- FAITH FIGHTS...FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH...

Habakkuk 2:4-5

TODAY IN THE WORD

“Greed is good.” With those words, celebrated Wall Street whiz Ivan Boesky revealed his basic business philosophy to his class of undergraduate students.

Even to the “Me generation” of the 1980s, Boesky’s unapologetic endorsement of old-fashioned greed came as a shock. But the multi-millionaire got a little too greedy and wound up serving time in prison for using insider trading information to his advantage.

Greed ought to shock us. Its place on the list of the so-called Seven Deadly Sins reminds us that for many centuries greed has been considered one of the sins that have the greatest appeal to the human appetite. Given greed’s place of shame in the Bible, it’s hard to argue with that view.

Today’s text is not really a definition of greed, but gives us a fascinating and sobering look at the nature of greed. Habakkuk

was given a hard prophetic message to deliver. God was going to judge sinful Judah by giving His people over to infinitely more wicked conquerors: the cruel Babylonians.

In the process of delivering his message, Habakkuk drew a word picture of the coming invaders. The Babylonians were “puffed up” and “arrogant.” We know what pride does to individuals or to a nation.

But Habakkuk also noted that the Babylonians were “as greedy as the grave.” They were like death, which is “never satisfied.” This is about the best illustration of greed you’ll find. Death won’t stop taking until everyone is in its grasp. We are told in Proverbs 30:15-16 that the grave is one of four things that never says “Enough!”

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - When do you say “Enough”? Most people don’t say it at all. Greed is easy to spot in others but tough to pinpoint in ourselves. Here’s a brief self-test that may help focus the issue. Jot down the three things you want most right now; then ask these questions about each item: 1. Is this a legitimate need or desire? 2. Is this something I want just because I want it? 3. Is the lack of this item standing between me and true contentment? (Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved)

Habakkuk 2:4

Only One Option

If you were to ask several people to draw a crooked line on a piece of paper, no two lines would be identical. There is a lesson in this: There are many ways to be crooked, but only one way to be straight.

The Lord tells us that the righteous person has only one option—to "live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). In the chapter prior to this declaration from the Lord, the prophet Habakkuk had complained about the violence and injustice around him. It seemed as if the wicked were swallowing up the righteous (Hab 1:13).

God responded to Habakkuk by saying that His people were to be "just" and were to live by faith. They were not to be like the one who is "proud" and "not upright" (Habakkuk 2:4). A proud and self-sufficient person will rationalize his faults and imperfections. He doesn't want to admit that he needs God. His ways are crooked.

Wickedness seems to prevail in our world. God urges us to live our lives in faith, taking to heart His assurance to Habakkuk that there will be a day of reckoning for the wicked.

The only way to please God now and to be ready for that day of reckoning is to live by faith.— Albert LeeCopyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved)

Lord, grant me grace throughout this day
To walk the straight and narrow way,
To do whatever in Thy sight
Is good and perfect, just and right. —Huisman

The only right way is the straight and narrow way.

Habakkuk 2:5 - Death and the grave were sometimes personified and described as having insatiable appetites (Isaiah 5:14; Habakkuk 2:5; Proverbs 27:20; 30:15-16). - Warren Wiersbe

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Habakkuk 2:12-20

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. - Habakkuk 2:14

TODAY IN THE WORD

One of the best-known statues in the world, found at many courthouses, features Lady Justice, often wearing a blindfold and holding a sword in one hand and balances in the other. This statue dates back to Greek and Roman times. The balances or scales represent impartiality or objectivity; the double-edged sword symbolizes the power wielded by judges and juries; and the blindfold indicates that justice does not play favorites based on status, wealth, or any other factor.

The scales of justice are divinely guaranteed to balance in the end, God told Habakkuk in today's reading. This is part two of His response to the prophet's second question, as well as the third, fourth, and fifth woes pronounced against the Babylonians. The third woe (vv. 12-14) focuses on the rotten foundations of the coming Babylonian empire. A city built on bloodshed cannot stand. A kingdom built on violence and military conquest will not endure. It is the plans of the sovereign God that prevail, not human endeavors and especially not wicked ones. Such things are merely “fuel for the fire,” a chasing after the wind. In the end, history is about the earth being “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord.”

The fourth woe (vv. 15-17) addresses the issue of exploitation. Babylon will be like a person who gets someone else drunk in order to take advantage of them sexually. The picture here implies not just voyeurism but rape—a shameful, sinful, violent, and violating act. This is what it is like to conquer and plunder other nations, and this is why they'll reap what they

sow. Just as they get others drunk, so to speak, so they themselves will drink the cup of God's wrath. The fifth and final woe (vv. 18-20) condemns idolatry. Instead of worshiping handmade “gods,” people are created to worship their Creator. Idols are silent and powerless, but one day the whole earth will be silent before the power and majesty of the one true God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

If the “problem of evil” is something you're interested in learning more about, several good books deal at length with this topic: How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil, by D. A. Carson, which emphasizes theology; The Problem of Evil in the Western Tradition: From the Book of Job to Modern Genetics, by Joseph F. Kelly, which has a more historical focus; and The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil, by Brian Davies, which deals with these issues from a philosophical standpoint.

Habakkuk 2:14

OUR ONLY HOPE

We should live...godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope.- Titus 2:12, 13

An unknown author wrote, "When I was first converted, and for some years afterward, the second coming of Christ was a thrilling idea, a blessed hope, a glorious promise, the theme of some of the most inspiring songs of the church.

"Later it became an accepted tenet of faith, a cardinal doctrine, a kind of invisible trademark of my ministry. It was the favorite arena of my theological discussions, in the pulpit and in print. Now suddenly the second coming means something more to me. Paul called it world."

From the human standpoint, there is no solution for the problems of the world. Leaders seem to be completely frustrated in trying to deal with the unrest and increasing violence in society. The only complete and permanent solution is found in the return of Christ. When He comes, He will set up His kingdom. He will rule the nations in righteousness, and "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

As we await our Savior's return, let us keep on praying, working, and watching, while "looking for the blessed hope" - our only hope for this world. Richard W. De Haan (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

And for the hope of His return,
Dear Lord, Your name we praise;
With longing hearts we watch and wait
For that great day of days! - Sherwood

As this world grows darker,
the promised return of the Son grows brighter.

Habakkuk 2:15-20

QUIET TIME

Be still, and know that I am God (Psalm 46:10).

A group of British miners in Australia heard the sweet song of a thrush one evening as they worked. The lovely sound hushed these hardened men into absolute silence. In the stillness their hearts became tender as memories of their boyhood days in their beloved England swept over them. Similarly, when we are quiet, God speaks to us most clearly and effectively.

Stepping into the stillness of a cold winter morning and gazing upon fields and buildings coated with dazzling frost or covered with sparkling snow have been unforgettable experiences. During the night, the silvery frost had come silently, its unseen fingers deftly touching the landscape. Or feathery snowflakes had descended with-out awakening a single soul. The silence of such a moment brings to mind the words of Psalm 46:10:

"Be still, and know that I am God."

I would also think of Habakkuk 2:20

"The LORD is in His holy temple.
Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

God speaks to us during other times of silence as well. Sooner or later we lie sleepless as a result of illness, grief, or anxiety. These can be precious moments of quiet solitude when we tell the Lord we love Him and want Him to speak to us. In the stillness we can learn lessons we'd learn in no other way. We experience a new peace—a fresh sense of His presence. But we need not wait for a sleepless night! —H. V. Lugt (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The quiet hour is the power hour.

Habakkuk 2:20

August 28, 2005

The Beauty Of Silence

READ: Psalm 62:1-8

Truly my soul silently waits for God. —Psalm 62:1

Written on the wall behind the pulpit of the church we attended in my teens were these words: "The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (Habakkuk 2:20). And keep silence we did! All eight of us boys said nothing to one another as we sat waiting for the service to begin.

I loved this quiet time and often succeeded in pushing thoughts about girls and the Detroit Tigers out of my mind. The best I could, I tried to reflect on the wonder of God and His salvation. And in the silence I often sensed His presence.

Today we live in a noisy world. Many people can't even drive without music blaring from their car, or the beat of the bass vibrating their vehicle. Even many church services are marked more by noise than by quiet reflection.

In ancient times the pagans cried out in a noisy frenzy to their idols (1Kings 18:25, 26, 27, 28, 29). In sharp contrast, the psalmist saw the wisdom of silence, because in quiet reverence God can be heard. In the stillness of the night under a starry sky, in a hushed sanctuary, or in a quiet room at home, we can meet the living God and hear Him speak.

The psalmist's words are relevant today: "Wait silently for God alone" (Psalm 62:5). —Herbert Vander Lugt (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait on Thee;
Hushed my heart to listen
In expectancy. —Grimes

To hear God's voice,
turn down the world's volume.

Habakkuk 2:20

May 25, 2003

Our God Is Marching On

READ: Habakkuk 2:6-20

The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him. —Habakkuk 2:20

In 1861, during the US Civil War, author and lecturer Julia Ward Howe visited Washington, DC. One day she went outside the city and saw a large number of soldiers marching. Early the next morning she awoke with words for a song in her mind.

She was aware of all the ugliness of the war, but her faith led her to write: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." She saw, I believe, that in spite of and through all the ugliness, God was "marching on" toward the day when He will right the wrongs of the ages.

The prophet Habakkuk came to a similar conclusion. Chapter 1 of his book tells us how troubled he was when he learned that God was going to punish the people of Judah by letting them be conquered by the wicked Babylonians. In chapter 2, God assured His servant that—in spite of and through all the ugliness and wrongs of history—He is "marching on" toward the day when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" (Hab 2:14).

If we believe that God is "marching on," in spite of all the brutal conflicts that mark our day, we will not despair. We can quietly await the final verdict from our Lord, who rules the universe from "His holy temple" (Hab 2:20). —Herbert Vander Lugt (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

God rules as Sovereign on His throne,
He judges great and small;
And those who would His earth destroy
Beneath His rod shall fall. —D. De Haan

Someday the scales of justice will be perfectly balance

HABAKKUK 3

Habakkuk 3:3-15 - The Lord isn't likely to give us today a vision such as Habakkuk saw, but because it's recorded in the Word, we can ponder it and let the Spirit teach us from it. (Writing about his experience at the Transfiguration (2 Peter 1:15–21), the Apostle Peter points out that the written Word is superior to glorious experiences. Only a few people can have rapturous experiences, but any believer can ponder them in the Word with the Spirit's help. The people who had these great experiences have died, but the Word lives on. The memories of experiences will fade, but the Word remains the same. We now have a completed Bible, so the New Testament sheds light on the experiences of people like Moses, David, and the prophets; and we can see things that perhaps they didn't see. So, instead of saying, "I wish I could have that kind of experience," we should be asking, "Lord, what do You want to teach me from this experience?") God reveals His greatness in creation, in Scripture, and in history, and if we have eyes to see, we can behold His glory. (These mighty revelations of God in history are called "theophanies," from two Greek words meaning "an appearance of a God." For other examples, see Psalms 18; 68; and 77; and Exodus 15 and Exodus 19; and Deuteronomy 33.) - Warren Wiersbe - Be Amazed, page 130

Habakkuk 3:2

F B Meyer

Our Daily Homily

O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years. Habakkuk 3:2

When we are oppressed with the state of the Church and the world, as Habakkuk was, there is no resource but to turn to God. It is of no use to say to our brother, "What shall we do?" Better at once get into the presence of the Almighty. All conferences with flesh and blood are wasted breath, unless there has been a previous one with God.

Note also the unselfishness of the prayer which precedes revival. We must not pray "Revive my work," lest the insidious temptation come in of using the stream of God's blessing to turn our own tiny water-wheels for our own profit. Let us get beyond the narrow limits of our church or section, and ask for a revival of God's work everywhere.

We do not need a new Gospel, but a revival—a revivifying of the old Gospel. If any preach another Gospel than that which the apostles preached, let him be accursed; he is selling bran for wheat; he is filling cartridges with sand. We want nothing but the Gospel of the Cross of Jesus Christ, proclaimed from lips which have received a new baptism of heavenly power.

Note the time. Not at the end of years, but in the midst. This is a prayer for those in middle life. They are apt to think that their power for service has passed its prime, and that the successes of their early days cannot be paralleled. But let them remember that in the midst of the years God can revive his work, and ask for it.

What an argument! "Remember mercy." We cannot appeal to merit, but can lay great stress on mercy. Lord, have mercy on thy Church—revive her; and ere the dispensation close, may she arise for one great work of soul-salvation!

In an eyewitness report of the great Welsh revival of 1904, G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "The horses are terribly puzzled. A manager said to me. 'The haulers are some of the very lowest. They have driven their horses by obscenity and kicks. Now they can hardly persuade the horses to start working, because there is no obscenity and no kicks.'" - D.J.D. Our Daily Bread, September 26.

Lady asked Billy Sunday: "Why do you keep having revivals when it doesn't last?" He asked her, "Why do you keep taking baths?"

Revival is the people of God living in the power of an ungrieved, unquenched Spirit. - James A. Stewart

A true revival means nothing less than a revolution, casting out the spirit of worldliness, making God's love triumph in the heart. - Andrew Murray

In revival, the minds of people are concentrated upon things of eternity, and there is an awareness that nothing else really matters. - Brian Edwards

Revival restrains the righteous anger of God, restores the conscious awareness of God, and reveals the gracious activity of God. - Stephen Olford

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Habakkuk 3:1-7

I stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy. - Habakkuk 3:2

TODAY IN THE WORD

Keith and Kristyn Getty are a husband-and-wife team of Irish Christian songwriters who are committed to composing contemporary hymns. You may have sung some of their work in your church, including "How Deep the Father's Love for Us" and "In Christ Alone." Keith recently told an interviewer, "A song has to be easy and inspirational to sing, and lyrically it has

to teach the truth of God in a way that is emotionally engaging and poetic." The Gettys also want their hymns to appeal to entire congregations: "We look for songs that bring all ages together because singing is an act of unity." They see worship as "singing with the generations that have gone before us, and we're singing as a foretaste of what will come after us."

The book of Habakkuk ends not with more questions, but with worship. The final chapter is a psalm of praise to the Lord! This is a helpful reminder: while we see the prophet can ask God tough questions, we also see that he knows when to stop. From a philosophical standpoint, the dialogue could continue, but theologically the time had come for a Job-like silence before the Lord (2:20). The key theme of this chapter, as one might expect, is justice, and the main point is that justice will be done, as guaranteed by the person and character of God. The opening invocation (v. 2) recalls His awesome deeds on Israel's behalf in history and pleads for a renewal of those inspiring days. Though wrath is coming, Habakkuk prayed and believed that mercy would win out.

Verses 3 through 7 present a poetic picture of God's coming. He is glorious, like the sunrise, with light flashing from His hand. He is powerful, as the earth shakes, the nations tremble, and the mountains crumble. If nature is brought low, fear and reverence by people is inevitable. "His ways are eternal"—nothing human, natural, or supernatural can stand against Him.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

he glory of God's coming in today's poetic reading should fill our hearts with joy and anticipation. Think of a time when He entered your life with just such power and awesomeness, a time when He made His love and presence known in unmistakable ways. Have you shared this story with your friends or family? God's work in our lives is not solely for our benefit; He gives us a story to tell in order to encourage others and bring glory to His name. If you have a testimony of His work, share it and praise Him!

Habakkuk 3:8-15

Sun and moon stood still in the heavens at the glint of your flying arrows, at the lightning of your flashing spear. -

Habakkuk 3:11

TODAY IN THE WORD

The children are restless. They bounce from toy to toy, occasionally running to the front window to look out at the empty street. They are full of questions: "When are they coming?" "Did they forget?" "What time is it now?" "Are they driving fast enough?" At last the moment arrives. The sun flashes off the windshield of a familiar green sedan as it turns into the driveway. "They're here, they're here!" the kids shout. Grandma and Grandpa smile and wave as they step out of the car.

Waiting impatiently for important people to show up makes their coming all the sweeter. That's the background feeling for today's reading, in which God Almighty arrives in power to save His people. Pictured as a Warrior, He fights on their behalf and wins the victory, just as He did during the conquest of the Promised Land. Some of the pictures are military, such as God riding in a chariot or shooting a bow and arrows. Others are supernatural, such as God splitting the earth with rivers and using other elements of nature as weapons. And some can only be called sovereign, such as God threshing the nations like a farmer harvesting wheat.

Many commentators see specific historical references in these verses. For example, the mention of rivers (v. Cool alludes to when God turned the Nile to blood and later parted the Jordan so the Israelites could cross. The sun standing still (v. 11) recalls the victory at Gibeon. The sea (v. 15) brings to mind the miraculous parting of the Red Sea in the escape from Egypt. The verbs in this passage are powerful: God "rages" in righteous wrath in order to "deliver" or "save" His chosen people. He used a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to protect and guide them during the Exodus, and Habakkuk's continuing prayer is that those days would come again. His faith was strong—he believed that God would bring future restoration as surely He brought past deliverance!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The book of Habakkuk, like many of the Psalms, uses the history of God's work with His people to inspire praise and worship. Do you ever review God's work in your own life as a source of praise? You could compose your own hymn of praise that acknowledges God's character and work. If writing words or music doesn't seem like your strong suit, you can at least approach the praise time during the next church service with a fresh perspective on reasons to give praise to the Lord.

Habakkuk 3:11-19

Yet I Will Rejoice

Life in our world can be difficult. At some point, most of us have wondered, Where is God in my trouble? And we may have thought, It seems like injustice is winning and God is silent. We have a choice as to how we respond to our troubles. The prophet Habakkuk had an attitude worth following: He made the choice to rejoice.

Habakkuk saw the rapid increase in Judah's moral and spiritual failings, and this disturbed him deeply. But God's response troubled him even more. God would use the wicked nation of Babylon to punish Judah. Habakkuk did not fully understand

this, but he could rejoice because he had learned to rely on the wisdom, justice, and sovereignty of God. He concluded his book with a wonderful affirmation: “Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (3:18). Though it was not clear how Judah would survive, Habakkuk had learned to trust God amid injustice, suffering, and loss. He would live by his faith in God alone. With this kind of faith came joy in God, despite the circumstances surrounding him.

We too can rejoice in our trials, have surefooted confidence in God, and live on the heights of His sovereignty.— by Marvin Williams

Be this the purpose of my soul

My solemn, my determined choice:

To yield to God’s supreme control,

And in my every trial rejoice. —Anon.

Praising God in our trials turns burdens into blessings.

Habakkuk 3:16-19

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. - Habakkuk 3:17-18

TODAY IN THE WORD

Are you having trouble remembering things? Try some blueberries! Scientists at the University of Reading in England have found that adding blueberries to a regular diet helps improve memory. It increases memory capacity and can even reverse memory loss. The key is flavonoids, which are known to boost the part of the brain that controls learning and memory. The researchers are planning to investigate next whether these findings might help people with Alzheimer's disease.

The Israelites could have used some blueberries in their diet, at least to judge from how frequently they forgot about all the incredible things God had done for them. Habakkuk was so overcome by the memory that his heart pounded and his legs trembled (v. 16). This physical picture shows a combination of awe—God's deeds are amazing and overwhelming—and holy fear—God's power and wrath are about to punish Judah's sins in the same ways as described in this chapter—as well as eagerness for the day when the prophesied judgment would be past and God would gather and restore His people.

Verses 17 and 18 are perhaps the best-known and best-loved verses in the book, and seem more relevant than ever in these difficult economic times. They are an unequivocal statement of faith in God despite circumstances. Things are as bad as they can possibly be. The trees do not bud, the crops do not ripen, and the livestock are dead. A modern paraphrase might read: “Though the cupboard be bare, the bills coming due, my car repossessed, a pink slip in my hand, and no jobs in town, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.” To be clear: this isn't “grit your teeth and hang on” mentality, nor does it ignore the reality of the situation. Instead, this is joy! The bottom line is not circumstances but God (v. 19). He is our source of confidence and strength, the only Rock on which we can rely.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

This kind of hope and joy and faith is supernatural; we cannot bring it up out of ourselves on our own. Are you struggling to rejoice in the Lord because your situation seems overwhelming? God doesn't promise to sweep our problems under the rug, nor does He promise “health and wealth” to His followers. But He does promise to be faithful, and He promises to be with us (see John 14). He has given us His Holy Spirit, who comforts us and enables us to look at the very real trials of life and still be joyful in God our Savior.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Faith the Works

I read about a family who lost three children to diphtheria in the same week. Only a 3-year-old girl escaped the disease. On the following Easter morning, the father, mother, and child attended church. Because the father was the Sunday school superintendent, he led the session when all the classes met together. As he read the Easter message from the Bible, many were weeping, but the father and mother remained calm and serene.

When Sunday school was over, a 15-year-old boy was walking home with his father. “The superintendent and his wife must really believe the Easter story,” said the boy. His father answered, “All Christians do.” “Not the way they do!” replied the young man.

How we react under trial demonstrates the depth of our convictions. This is not to say that a true Christian will not weep at the loss of a loved one. However, knowing that all believers who die go into Christ’s presence, we need not “sorrow as others who have no hope” (1Th 4:13-**note**). We can say, “Thank You, Lord,” because we know He can be trusted to do what is best. The prophet said it well: “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord” (Hab. 3:17-18). — by Richard De Haan

The sweetest fragrance often flows

From those who feel life's pain;

They firmly trust in God's great love

And in that love remain. —DJD

Faith in Christ knows that the best is yet to come.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Above the Circumstances

I remember a story about a woman who was very discouraged because of the many problems in her life. As she was walking down the street, she met a fellow believer who asked, "How are you doing today?"

With a sour look and a bitter shrug she replied, "Oh, not too bad—under the circumstances."

The other person quickly countered, "Well, get above the circumstances! That's where Jesus is."

The prophet Habakkuk was of the same mind. He refused to let circumstances dampen his faith or crush his hope. He looked to the future not with pessimistic fears of what else could go wrong, but with faith in God no matter what would happen. Even if he lost all his possessions, Habakkuk proclaimed that he would continue to trust the Lord to meet his needs (vv.17-19).

Our eyes are to be focused on the Lord, not on our circumstances. We are to live above the shadows of fear and bask in the sunlight of faith. Even though we, like Habakkuk, may have a long list of troubles, faith's answer to disappointment must always be: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (v.18). That type of attitude will enable us to live above the circumstances instead of under them.— by Henry G. Bosch

Although my trees are fruitless,

No grapes are on the vine,

Yet Christ is all my fullness,

And all His sweetness mine. —Anon.

As you go along life's weary road, let Jesus lift your heavy load.

Habakkuk 3:16-19 The Voice of Faith

February 19, 2016

Though the fig tree does not bud . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord. Habakkuk 3:17-18

The news was numbing. The tears came so quickly that she couldn't fight them. Her mind raced with questions, and fear threatened to overwhelm her. Life had been going along so well, when it was abruptly interrupted and forever changed without warning.

Tragedy can come in many forms—the loss of a loved one, an illness, the loss of wealth or our livelihood. And it can happen to anyone at any time.

Our God who has proven Himself faithful throughout the years is always with us.

Although the prophet Habakkuk knew that tragedy was coming, it still struck fear in his heart. As he waited for the day when Babylon would invade the kingdom of Judah, his heart pounded, his lips quivered, and his legs trembled (Hab. 3:16).

Fear is a legitimate emotion in the face of tragedy, but it doesn't have to immobilize us. When we don't understand the trials we are going through, we can recount how God has worked in history (Hab. 3:3-15). That's what Habakkuk did. It didn't dispel his fear, but it gave him the courage to move on by choosing to praise the Lord (Hab. 3:18).

Our God who has proven Himself faithful throughout the years is always with us. Because His character doesn't change, in our fear we can say with a confident voice of faith, "The Sovereign Lord is my strength!" (Hab. 3:19).

Dear Lord, when my world is turned upside down, help me to trust You. You have always been faithful to me.

We can learn the lesson of trust in the school of trial.

INSIGHT: Habakkuk's prayer in chapter three is the prophet's response to a conversation he has been having with the Lord about justice—for Israel and the surrounding nations. After God responds to Habakkuk's two complaints, the prophet launches into this song of praise for God's righteous deeds and character. Habakkuk rehearses the great deeds of the Lord in protecting His people (Hab. 3:1–15), but he also admits his fear when he sees the demonstration of God's power and judgment (Hab. 3:16). But his fear does not control him, because God is his hope and strength (Hab. 3:16–19).

By Poh Fang Chia

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Undeserved Blessings

Tennis superstar Arthur Ashe died of AIDS, which he contracted from a blood transfusion during heart surgery. More than a great athlete, Ashe was a gentleman who inspired and encouraged many with his exemplary behavior on and off the court.

Ashe could have become embittered and self-pitying in the face of his disease, but he maintained a grateful attitude. He explained, "If I asked, 'Why me?' about my troubles, I would have to ask, 'Why me?' about my blessings. Why my winning Wimbledon? Why my marrying a beautiful, gifted woman and having a wonderful child?"

Ashe's attitude rebukes those of us who often grumble, "Why me? Why is God allowing this to happen?" Even if we're suffering acutely, we must not forget the mercies God pours into our lives—such things as food, shelter, and friends—blessings that many are deprived of.

And what about spiritual blessings? We can hold the very Word of God in our hands and read it. We have the knowledge of His saving grace, the comfort of His Spirit, and the joyful assurance of life everlasting with Jesus.

Think about God's blessings and ask, "Why me?" Then your grumbling will give way to praise.— by Vernon C. Grounds

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?

Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?

Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,

And you will be singing as the days go by. —Oatman

With unwanted burdens come undeserved blessings.

Habakkuk 3:14-19

Joy-Even in Poverty

In the book 450 Stories for Life, Gust Anderson tells about visiting a church in a farming community of eastern Alberta, Canada, where there had been 8 years of drought. The farmers' economic situation looked hopeless. But in spite of their poverty, many of them continued to meet together to worship and praise God.

Anderson was especially impressed by the testimony of a farmer who stood up and quoted Habakkuk 3:17-18. With deep feeling, he said, "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Anderson thought, That dear saint has found the secret of real joy!

It's not wrong to find pleasure in the good things money can buy, but we should never rely on them for happiness. If our fulfillment depends on material possessions, we are crushed when we lose them. But if our joy is found in the Lord, nothing can disrupt it, not even economic distress.

Yes, those who know and trust the Lord can rejoice—even in poverty!— by Richard De Haan

Pleasures of earth, so seemingly sweet,

Fail at the last my longings to meet:

Only in Thee my bliss is complete;

Only, blest Lord, in Thee.—Anon.

Happiness depends on happenings; joy depends on Jesus!

Habakkuk 3:17-19

God is Good

I have often joined in singing the chorus “God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, He’s so good to me.” I could sing this with sincerity, thanking Him for my family, my fulfilling occupation, my many friends, and above all my salvation. But one day a feeling of guilt swept over me as I sang. Would I sing these words if I were living alone, felt unloved, and had little to eat?

I hope so. I am confident that the Lord, in whom I have placed my trust, would give me the same grace He’s given to millions who have nothing but Him. Imprisoned for their faith or undernourished or ostracized or painfully ill, they can rejoice in the Lord and declare His goodness.

A friend who has been working with Christians in India told me that hundreds of thousands of new converts reflect a joy and gladness that puts him to shame. Could it be that because they are desperately poor they focus more fully on Christ? This friend and I have Jesus Christ plus many earthly possessions and pleasures. They have Christ plus nothing. He’s all they need, and so they sing with greater fervor than I, “God is so good!”

Yes, God is good, no matter what our circumstances. It’s a lesson we all must learn sooner or later.— by Herbert Vander Lugt

O taste and see that God is good

To all who seek His face;

Yea, blest that one who trusts in Him,

Confiding in His grace. —Psalter

Even when everything looks bad, God is good.

Habakkuk 3:17-18
Alex Grant, pioneer missionary to the Straits Settlements and China, once got up in a meeting in Singapore, and read solemnly Habakkuk 3:17—“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall...yield no meat: the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: YET WILL I REJOICE IN THE LORD.” Pausing a moment, he said: “What could the Devil do with a man like that?” and sat down. A sermon in a sentence.—Acts and Facts

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Habakkuk 3:17-19 (Read Hab 1:1-4)

The Secret of Joy

One of the shortest books in the Old Testament is the book of Habakkuk. In its three brief chapters we see an amazing transformation in the prophet’s outlook on life. His opening words express depths of despair, but at the close of the book he has risen to heights of joy.

What caused this remarkable change? Why did Habakkuk begin with a complaint and end with a song of praise? The answer lies in three verses in chapter 2. In addition to God’s message of judgment on the wicked, the Almighty told the troubled prophet, “The just shall live by his faith” (v.4). He also promised that someday the earth would “be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (v.14). Finally, He assured him that “the Lord is in His holy temple” (v.20). These wonderful truths were just what Habakkuk needed to lift him out of his deep depression. By fixing his eyes on God, he rose above his discouraging circumstances and found a source of lasting joy in the Lord.

Like the prophet, we too must walk by faith and look forward to that glorious time when Jesus will return to earth to set up His kingdom of peace and righteousness. Maintaining our confidence in Him is the secret of true joy!— by Richard De Haan

Rejoice in Christ the Lord, again

The Spirit speaks the word;

And faith takes up the happy strain:

Our joy is in the Lord. —Anon.

To improve your outlook, keep looking up.

Habakkuk 3:8-19 Faith That Works

August 3, 1994

Though the fig tree may not blossom, . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord. —Habakkuk 3:17-18

I read about a family who lost three children to diphtheria in the same week. Only a 3-year-old girl escaped the disease. On

the following Easter morning, the father, mother, and child attended church. Because the father was the Sunday school superintendent, he led the session when all the classes met together. As he read the Easter message from the Bible, many were weeping, but the father and mother remained calm and serene.

When Sunday school was over, a 15-year-old boy was walking home with his father. “The superintendent and his wife must really believe the Easter story,” said the boy. His father answered, “All Christians do.” “Not the way they do!” replied the young man.

How we react under trial demonstrates the depth of our convictions. This is not to say that a true Christian will not weep at the loss of a loved one. However, knowing that all believers who die go into Christ’s presence, we need not “sorrow as others who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). We can say, “Thank You, Lord,” because we know He can be trusted to do what is best. The prophet said it well: “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord” (Hab. 3:17-18).

The sweetest fragrance often flows
From those who feel life’s pain;
They firmly trust in God’s great love
And in that love remain. —DJD

Faith in Christ knows that the best is yet to come.

By Richard DeHaan

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Counterfeit Happiness

It’s easy to fool people about how we really feel. Simply wear a deceptive smile or hum a cheerful song like this one that was very popular during World War I and many years afterward:

What’s the use of worrying?

It never was worthwhile,

So, pack up your troubles

In your old kit-bag

And smile, smile, smile.

Those words, written by British vaudeville actor George Powell, were set to a cheerful melody by his piano-playing brother Felix. It earned them $60,000.

Yet one day years later, Felix sat down at a piano and played his well-known melody “Smile, Smile, Smile.” Then he went into a room where he was all alone and shot and killed himself.

Troubles can’t be packed away and magically forgotten. A smile and a song may camouflage deep unhappiness, but only God can lift the burden of gnawing worry from our hearts. Knowing that He cares for us, we can cast all our anxiety on Him (1 Pet. 5:7). If in our difficulties we trust in the Lord as our strength, He will do even more than give emotional relief. He will enable us to rejoice (Hab. 3:17-19).— by Vernon C. Grounds

A smile can conceal pain

And camouflage despair,

But trust in God gives inner peace

And joy beyond compare. —Sper

Joy is the byproduct of trusting God.

Habakkuk 3:18

October 3, 1998

The Choice To Rejoice

READ: Habakkuk 3:1-19

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. --Habakkuk 3:18

When a grief-stricken woman was sharing her feelings, her friend said sympathetically, "Sorrow does color life, doesn't it?" "Yes," the woman agreed, and then added, "but I intend to choose the colors."

In today's Bible reading, the prophet Habakkuk expressed the same intention. Facing the possible loss of crops and livestock, he declared, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab3:18).

The words "I will" revealed Habakkuk's belief that he could choose his response to loss--either to sink into despair or to rejoice in God's redeeming power. His decision to rejoice wasn't a denial of the pain. It was a decision of trust based on the truth that God would remain with him to be his strength and enabler (Hab 3:19).

The choice to rejoice is with us every day. To refuse to choose is itself a choice. It's an unconscious consent to be overcome rather than to be an overcomer. I recently met a disabled elderly woman who exemplified this. When I inquired, "How are you," she replied cheerfully, "Just fine! If I were any better, I'd have to be twins!"

Loss and pain do color life, but we can choose the color--joy! —Joanie Yoder (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

When rough the path from day to day,
When sorrows fill our eyes with tears,
Our choice to find our joy in Christ
Can soothe our soul and calm our fears.
-DJD

When you choose to rejoice,
your life takes on a beautiful color.

Habakkuk 3:14-19

July 1, 2005

Joy—Even In Poverty

Though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; . . . yet I will rejoice in the Lord. —Habakkuk 3:17-18

In the book 450 Stories for Life, Gust Anderson tells about visiting a church in a farming community of eastern Alberta, Canada, where there had been 8 years of drought. The farmers' economic situation looked hopeless. But in spite of their poverty, many of them continued to meet together to worship and praise God.

Anderson was especially impressed by the testimony of a farmer who stood up and quoted Habakkuk 3:17-18. With deep feeling, he said, "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Anderson thought, That dear saint has found the secret of real joy!

It's not wrong to find pleasure in the good things money can buy, but we should never rely on them for happiness. If our fulfillment depends on material possessions, we are crushed when we lose them. But if our joy is found in the Lord, nothing can disrupt it, not even economic distress.

Yes, those who know and trust the Lord can rejoice—even in poverty! —Richard De Haan (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Pleasures of earth, so seemingly sweet,
Fail at the last my longings to meet:
Only in Thee my bliss is complete;
Only, blest Lord, in Thee. —Anon.

Happiness depends on happenings;
joy depends on Jesus!

Habakkuk 3:17-19

May 24, 2006

Can We Rejoice?

READ: Habakkuk 3:17-19

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord . . . . The Lord God is my strength. —Habakkuk 3:18, 19

I'll never forget the question our Bible-study leader asked: "What do you fear would test your faith in God the most?" We were studying Habakkuk 3:17, 18, where the prophet said that even if God sent suffering or loss, he would still rejoice.

As a single woman in my twenties, my answer was “I don’t know if I could stand the pain of losing my parents.” But I told God that day that even when they died I would rejoice in Him. I found out too soon that it’s easier said than done.

A month later, Dad learned he had heart disease and didn’t have long to live. He didn’t know Jesus as his Savior, so I begged God not to let him die without coming to know Him. Not only did he die that year, so did Mom, who was a believer. I didn’t know if my prayer for Dad was answered. I couldn’t rejoice; I wondered if God had even heard my prayer.

As I wrestled with Him about my questions, I experienced the Lord as my “refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). I found hope in the truth that God, “the Judge of all the earth,” would do what was right by everyone (Genesis 18:25).

We can rejoice—when we are rejoicing in the Lord, our strong refuge and righteous Judge. —Anne CetasOur Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Why must I bear this pain? I cannot tell;
I only know my Lord does all things well.
And so I trust in God, my all in all,
For He will bring me through, whate’er befall. —Smith

God tries our faith so that we may try His faithfulness

Habakkuk 3:17-19

January 6, 2005

Undeserved Blessings

God . . . has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. —Ephesians 1:3

Tennis superstar Arthur Ashe died of AIDS, which he contracted from a blood transfusion during heart surgery. More than a great athlete, Ashe was a gentleman who inspired and encouraged many with his exemplary behavior on and off the court.

Ashe could have become embittered and self-pitying in the face of his disease, but he maintained a grateful attitude. He explained, "If I asked, 'Why me?' about my troubles, I would have to ask, 'Why me?' about my blessings. Why my winning Wimbledon? Why my marrying a beautiful, gifted woman and having a wonderful child?"

Ashe's attitude rebukes those of us who often grumble, "Why me? Why is God allowing this to happen?" Even if we're suffering acutely, we must not forget the mercies God pours into our lives—such things as food, shelter, and friends—blessings that many are deprived of.

And what about spiritual blessings? We can hold the very Word of God in our hands and read it. We have the knowledge of His saving grace, the comfort of His Spirit, and the joyful assurance of life everlasting with Jesus.

Think about God's blessings and ask, "Why me?" Then your grumbling will give way to praise.—Vernon C GroundsOur Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by. —Oatman

With unwanted burdens come undeserved blessing

Habakkuk 3:17-19

February 13, 2000

Always Thankful

READ: Habakkuk 3:17-19

I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. --Habakkuk 3:18

Perhaps Habakkuk 3:17-19 was an unusual Bible passage to read as our family and guests sat down to a traditional feast of turkey with all the trimmings. But I had a reason for choosing it. Simply to bow my head and give thanks didn't seem to be enough. Compared with the poverty of many of the world's people, I am wealthy.

The prophet Habakkuk was awaiting the destruction of his country by the ruthless Chaldeans, whose army was called by God to punish His people for their disobedient and evil ways (Hab. 1:5-6). He said, "Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off

from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls--yet I will rejoice in the Lord" (3:17-18).

Those words made me stop and ask, "Am I thankful to God regardless of what He gives or withholds?" Habakkuk pondered how he would respond to the loss of every material blessing. He concluded, "I will joy in the God of my salvation" (v.18).

Circumstances may change, but God remains the same. That's always cause for thanksgiving. —David C. McCasland (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

We can give thanks in every trial
And say, "Your will be done,"
For God's at work in everything
To make us like His Son. --DJD

**Thankfulness depends on what is in your heart,
not what is in your hand.**

Habakkuk 3:17-19

The Smile Of Joy

These things we write to you that your joy may be full. --1 John 1:4

Remember those round, yellow, happy-face stickers that showed up frequently on stationery and postcards? They were often accompanied by the one-word message, "Smile." They implied that you can put a smile on your face as easily as you can put a hat on your head. In a sense, that is true. A good actor can look happy even when his heart is breaking.

Favorable circumstances can also produce smiles. A person with good health, an adequate income, and a nice house finds it easy to look happy. The best smile, though, comes naturally from within. It reflects a joy that remains even when a person has few of life's material blessings. It comes from knowing God, believing and obeying His Word, being assured of sins forgiven, possessing eternal life, and anticipating the glories of heaven. The believer who depends on God for these blessings can smile despite adversity.

In today's Scripture reading, the prophet Habakkuk declared triumphantly, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:18). Even if everything were taken from him, the Lord would be his strength. He didn't need to "put on" a smile, because the joy in his heart would do it for him. —Richard De Haan —Richard De Haan (Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

A smile can conceal our pain
And lighten our despair,
But trust in God gives inner peace
And joy beyond compare. —Sper

**Happiness depends on happenings,
but joy depends on Jesus.**

Habakkuk 3:1-19

The Sovereign Lord is my strength, . . . he enables me to go on the heights. - Habakkuk 3:19

TODAY IN THE WORD - Physicist Stephen Unwin recently wrote a book entitled The Probability of God. “I don’t consider anything to be understood until numbers have been applied,” he said. “I have made a career of understanding and analyzing uncertainty and probabilities. Therefore, it seemed obvious to apply these methods to the ultimate uncertainty–whether God exists.” Using something called Bayes’ Theorem as well as other equations, he reviewed evidence from observation and experience in an attempt to assign a mathematically rigorous number to the probability of the existence of a personal God. He concluded that the probability of God’s existence was 67 percent.

People wrestle with their spiritual doubts in many different ways–the prophet Habakkuk took his questions directly to God. Habakkuk ministered around the same time as Jeremiah. In his book, written mostly as a dialogue, he asked and argued about the comprehensibility and justice of God’s ways–especially regarding His punishment of Israel through conquest and exile–and God answered. This prophecy encouraged the faith of the godly remnant of Israel.

Today’s reading is a prayer or psalm that was Habakkuk’s concluding response to God’s answers. His central petition was for God to do what He had done in the past, that is, to show His power and love in the lives of His people in order to make His name known in present times: “Renew them in our day, in our time make them known” (Hab 3:2). His poetic recounting of the Exodus in Hab 3:3-15 described God’s unstoppable power exercised on Israel’s behalf–it was a faith-boosting recollection of what God could do. These memories made the prophet’s heart pound with excitement, even though he would have to wait for God’s judgment on Babylon (Hab 3:16).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Did you know you’re allowed to ask God tough questions? Even to express doubts? God is far

bigger than all your questions and doubts–He can handle them, and your faith will be strengthened as a result. (Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved)

Habakkuk 3:2 - O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

The name Habakkuk means “to wrestle” or “to embrace,” and in his book, he does both. In the first chapter he wrestles with the Lord because he cannot understand why a holy God would allow the pagan Babylonians to conquer Judah. God said, “I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you” (Hab. 1:5). In chapter 2 Habakkuk gets God’s view of the situation, and in chapter 3 he “embraces” the Lord and prays that his work would go on! “Keep your work going” is his prayer. No matter how we serve the Lord, we must never forget that it is God’s work and not ours. Jesus made it clear that he was doing the Father’s work (John 4:32–34) and Paul followed his example (1 Cor. 15:58; 16:10; Phil. 1:6). When we realize that we are doing the Lord’s work and not our own, it will bring some encouraging changes into our ministry.

We will move from arguing about God’s will to accepting God’s will. The prophet Habakkuk was walking by sight in the first chapter, trying in his own power to understand God’s plan. Surely the Lord would not allow the godless Babylonians to defeat his chosen people, but he did. He also allowed them to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, places where his chosen people were worshiping idols. Because they were blind, unconverted people, the Babylonians worshiped idols; but the Jews knew the true and living God and so their idolatry was worse. The prophet knew the terms of God’s covenant with the people, so he should not have been surprised. Our task is not to explain but to believe and obey. We live on promises, not explanations.

We will stop complaining and start rejoicing (Hab. 3:17–18). Once the prophet submitted himself to the Lord, his whole attitude changed. “ ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD” (Isa. 55:8). Now he was praying, “Your will be done. Keep your work going!” In chapter 3 Habakkuk saw the Lord marching triumphantly through history, and at first he was gripped by fear (v. 16). But when he realized Jehovah was working for his people and not against them, he began to worship and celebrate. Habakkuk couldn’t rejoice in his circumstances but he could rejoice in the Lord (v. 18).

We will depend on God’s strength and not our own (v. 19). “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). It is God’s work we are doing and he will provide all that we need, including the strength and wisdom required for each day. We live and work a day at a time, and “as your days, so shall your strength be” (Deut. 33:25). How many times I have looked at a week’s schedule and wondered if I could make it—but with God’s help, I did! “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

We will move from pleasing ourselves to giving God the glory. When we look ahead, we will say, “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). When we look back, we will say, “This was the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:23). When the Lord’s work is done the Lord’s way for the Lord’s glory, all is well.

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Romans 11:36 Warren Wiersbe in Old Testament Words for Today: 100 Devotional Reflections (recommended)

Habakkuk 3:19

Fast Feet

While in Chile for a Bible conference, I was resting at the hotel when a rugby match came on the television. Though I don’t fully understand rugby, I enjoy it and admire the courage it takes to play such a dangerous sport.

During the match, one of the French players was injured and had to be taken to the sidelines. As the trainers attended to him, the camera showed a closeup of his shoes. With a black marker the player had written the words: “Habakkuk 3:19” and “Jesus is the way.” Those expressions of faith and hope were a strong testimony of that young athlete’s priorities and values.

The verse cited on that rugby player’s shoes is not just one of heavenly hope and persevering faith. It is one of practical value—especially to an athlete dependent on speed for success. It says, “The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.”

In all of life, we need the strength and supply of our God. He alone can give us “feet” that are swift and strong. He alone can equip us for all of the uncertainties of life, for He alone is our strength. With Paul, we can be assured: “My God shall supply all your need” (Phil. 4:19).— by Bill Crowder

In You, O Lord, I take delight,

My every need You will supply;

I long to do what’s true and right,

So, Lord, on You I will rely. —D. De Haan

We always have enough when God is our supply.