

FBC POWELL, 9-22-19 AM NOTES
"Hope When It Seems Everything Is Falling Apart"
Habakkuk 1:1 – 3:19
1 in Series, "Hope in a Hopeless World"

"We live in a day when everything that is not nailed down is coming apart and the devil is pulling out nails as fast as he can"
—Adrian Rogers

Jeremiah 15:1 (NASB) "Then the Lord said to me, 'Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!'"

The book of Habakkuk begins with a sigh and a sob, but it ends with a song and a shout of praise.

I. Habakkuk Is Troubled (1:1-17)

A. Prayer Seemed to Be Unanswered (vv. 1-2)

Psalms 13:1-2 (NASB) ¹"How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?
²How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?"

B. Sin Seemed to Be Unrestrained (vv. 3-4)

Jeremiah 8:12 (NASB) "'Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, and they did not know how to blush; therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time of their punishment they shall be brought down,' says the Lord."

C. The Lord Seemed to Be Uncaring (vv. 5-17)

Galatians 4:4 (NASB) "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law."

II. Habakkuk Is Taught (2:1-20)

Habakkuk 2:1 (NASB) "I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved."

A. His Word Is Reliable (vv. 1-3)

B. Resting in Him Is Our Response (v. 4)

"The just shall live by holding on to God's faithfulness."

—Hudson Taylor

C. For The Wicked, There Is Retribution (vv. 6-20)

Habakkuk 2:20 (NASB) "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."

III. Habakkuk Is Triumphant (3:1-19)

A. Habakkuk's Prayer Focuses on God's Character (vv. 1-15)

1. God Is Merciful (v. 2)

2. God Is All Powerful (v. 4)

“...and there He veiled his power.” (ESV)

3. God Is Wrathful (vv. 12-13)

Habakkuk 3:12-13 (CSB) ¹² “You march across the earth with indignation; You trample down the nations in wrath. ¹³ You come out to save Your people, to save Your anointed. You crush the leader of the house of the wicked and strip [him] from foot to neck. *Selah.*”

B. Habakkuk’s Faith Focuses on God’s Care (vv. 16-19)

Sermon 1: Hope When It Seems Everything Is Falling Apart

Habakkuk 1:1 – 3:19

As I prayed and sought the Lord about these last four messages that I would bring to you as your pastor, I really struggled. It wasn’t that I couldn’t think of anything to preach; it was quite the opposite. Of all the important truths I could remind you of, and of all the dangers I could caution you about, none seemed to be what I sensed the Lord wanted me to share. I admit that I got a little nervous and reminded the Lord that “Sunday is coming.” Let me tell you what I believe the Lord is leading me to share with you today and the next three Sundays. It is this: *Hope in a Hopeless World*. If you are a genuine believer and you love the Lord and long to see Him glorified, these are hard days. To quote Adrian Rogers, “We live in a day when everything that is not nailed down is coming apart and the devil is pulling out nails as fast as he can.”

Most every week I take time to listen to *The Briefing* with Albert Mohler, the President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Each morning Monday – Friday, Dr Mohler in less than a half hour gives a worldview analysis of the headlines and happenings around the world. The information Dr. Mohler gives is eye opening and insightful, but it can also be depressing!

Here are a few examples:

- On 9-16-19, Dr. Mohler tells us of an Indiana Doctor who worked in an abortion clinic that had in his home the preserved remains of 2,246 aborted fetuses.

- In Ohio, a young mother was acquitted of killing her newborn baby, but she was convicted of the abuse of a corpse because she buried the baby in her back yard. How can that be?

- An earlier *Briefing* deals with parents allowing their very young children to dress as the opposite of their biological sex and “celebrate their true gender” as pre-teen drag performers.

I could go on and on. In addition, Dr. Mohler tells us of:

- Churches without any theology so that no one is offended. The only ones offended are those who believe that correct theology is of high importance.

- One *Briefings* dealt with cloning (really scary).

- Another *Briefing* dealt with an ABC News commentator who got in big trouble when commenting on Britain's six-year old Prince George studying ballet. What was her evil speech? In response to this six-year old boy taking ballet, she said, "We'll see how long that lasts." She had to make an on-air apology for insensitive remark.

Sometimes it seems that everywhere those of us who believe the Scriptures look, we see hopelessness – hopelessness in the moral/sexual revolution, hopelessness as we see younger adults leaving the church in unprecedented numbers, hopelessness as we continually see the truth of Scripture being denied distorted, and even scorned. Is there any hope? It seems that everything is falling apart.

Allow me to introduce to you an Old Testament prophet who was going through some difficult times and was wondering if there was any hope. The prophet's name is Habakkuk. Habakkuk lived in the Southern Kingdom of Israel (called Judah because it was the largest tribe) about 600 BC. In Habakkuk's day Judah was filled with great national corruption, crime, hatred and division. Evil and immorality were flaunted openly as ethical standards rooted in the Scriptures were breaking down. That sounds a lot like us! Habakkuk was horrified with what he saw happening in his nation. Habakkuk was a younger contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah and when you read the book of Jeremiah and his follow-up book of Lamentations, you get an idea of the bleakness and hopelessness of the nation. In fact it was so far gone that we read that God said to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 15:1: "Then the Lord said to me, 'Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go!'" It was in that setting that Habakkuk wrote this short book of fifty-six verses.

The whole book of Habakkuk is a dialogue with God and in that sense, it is a prayer. We have so much to learn from Habakkuk, especially about prayer in a time when we are dealing with hopelessness. Here is why I want you to listen to what this book says. *It begins with a sigh and a sob, but it ends with a song and a shout of praise.* While Habakkuk's circumstances didn't change, his perspective did change as he saw what was happening from God's perspective (the only accurate perspective). I cannot promise you that the circumstances that are causing your hopelessness will change, but I can help you see those circumstances from God's perspective that will enable you to live in biblical hope when it seems that everything is falling apart.

I. Habakkuk Is Troubled (1:1-17)

Habakkuk has been seeking God with a broken heart, but things don't seem to be getting better. Habakkuk was burdened. What was he to do? Habakkuk's trouble was primarily in three areas that we can relate to.

A. Prayer Seemed to Be Unanswered (vv. 1-2)

Our Heavenly Father is not angered when in an attitude of submission and reverence when we bring our confusion, our troubled mind to Him. You see this over and over in the Psalms. Psalms 13:1-2: "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?" You find similar troubled hearts with Jeremiah, Job, Moses, and a host of others. The language here in Habakkuk implies that he has been praying for a considerable amount of time and God seems to not be hearing.

Have you ever noticed that God is never in a hurry? I would quickly add that He is never late, but He does not do things on our timetable. Because of our limited knowledge and limited patience, there is a real mystery for us about God's timing in answering prayer. I have been on a very tight schedule and prayed for a parking place and immediately see back up lights coming on as someone backs out of a spot right in front of me. But I have prayed for a backsliding Christian to repent for years and in some cases, it still has not happened. I have prayed for some whom I deeply love who are in a state of rebellion against God that they would be broken before God and granted repentance, but years pass, and it hasn't yet happened. I have prayed for people under the bondage of addiction to draw on the available, amazing, enabling grace of God to walk in victory over this bondage, and yet some are still in bondage. Yet in each of those categories, I can point to examples of answered prayer where God acted quickly. I know that sometimes God waits until things get much worse before he answers and thus His power and glory is displayed even clearer, but sometimes I have no clue why he delays and why He answers the way He answers. Be a little skeptical of those who have all of God's ways figured out. I know that He does all things well, but I don't understand all the ways He answers and the timing in His answers. Habakkuk is troubled about prayer that is unanswered. Can you relate?

B. Sin Seemed to Be Unrestrained (vv. 3-4)

It seemed to Habakkuk that the wicked outnumbered and out influenced the righteous. There was violence, injustice, strife, the rich oppressing the poor, and wickedness seemed to have the upper hand. Does the seemingly unrestrained sin of our day grieve you as it did Habakkuk? Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down Main Street. Habakkuk was perplexed. Let me take a side road here for a moment. Some people approach prayer as a bunch of formulas – find a promise, claim it, thank Him, check it off the list and move to the next item. There certainly is validity to finding promises and claiming them by faith, but genuine prayer also involves times where we just pour our hearts out to God laying out our confusion and sharing our hearts desires. Listen carefully: Prayer is communication in a love relationship, not a bunch of formulas thrown up to a God who is detached and only answers when we conjure up the right formulas. Habakkuk was troubled over unanswered prayer and unrestrained sin.

C. The Lord Seemed to Be Uncaring (vv. 5-17)

This is not the answer that Habakkuk wanted to hear. God says, "Here is my sovereign plan and you will find it difficult to believe. I am going to deal with the sin of Judah, but I am going to do it by raising up and giving Judah over to the Chaldeans (Babylonians)." One Bible commentator entitled this section of Habakkuk, "The strangeness of God's ways." Habakkuk no doubt expected God to send a great revival to Judah, or perhaps He would use a "natural disaster" to wipe out Judah's enemies. It was unbelievable to Habakkuk that God, who is holy, would use an evil, arrogant, pagan nation like Babylon to discipline Judah. Judah was bad, but they were not as bad as Babylon! God did use the Chaldeans and in 587 BC they made a final defeat of Judah, took most of the people captive, destroyed the temple, and tore down the walls around Jerusalem. God accomplishes His sovereign plans the way He chooses. In the whole sweep of history, we see that God raised up the Chaldeans to be His instrument of discipline against His people and then he raised up the Medes and the Persians to destroy Babylon and allow the Jews to leave captivity and go back to Jerusalem to eventually rebuild the temple and the walls around the city. All of this fit into His plan to do what is described in Galatians 4:4: "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."

II. Habakkuk Is Taught (2:1-17)

After presenting his perplexing problem to God, Habakkuk does something that few people do; he listened for God to answer. Habakkuk 2:1: “I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reprov’d.” Habakkuk says that he is simply going to wait on God to help him understand this unbelievable plan. I love his submissive spirit before the Lord. Because he thinks God’s plan is unbelievable, he waits to be corrected because he knows that God is always right. There is no anger, bitterness or rebellion toward God. He simply says that he will listen and, in his listening—God changes Habakkuk’s perspective. What did God show him?

A. His Word Is Reliable (2:1-3)

God is saying, “I will do what I say; write it down in large letters so runners can proclaim to everyone; what I say will come to pass!” When it seems that your world is falling apart and that evil has the upper hand, get into the word of God and cling to its promises. Be radically biblical! Let God teach you His perspective. He is still in control! He has a plan! There is no panic in heaven, only plans! God’s Word is reliable. His perspective is the true perspective.

B. Resting in Him Is Our Response (2:4)

When we find ourselves in trouble and confusion, God says, “Trust Me.” The last part of verse 4 is probably the best-known passage in Habakkuk. It is quoted three times in the New Testament (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). This is called “Martin Luther’s verse” and though it is an oversimplification, it is called “the verse that started the Protestant Reformation”. In Luther’s day, the true Gospel (man is justified before God not by his own works, but by Christ’s work on the cross and the receiving of that work through faith alone in Christ alone) was obscured by the traditions of medieval Catholicism. Luther was a Monk in the church and was tortured by his own sense of sinfulness. He followed the works and rituals of the church, but he was still miserable and overcome with his own sense of lostness. It was while reading these words from Habakkuk (quoted in Romans 1:17), “But the righteous will live by his faith”, that the Holy Spirit turned on the light and he realized that salvation was by faith in what Christ had done and not based on his following traditions and trusting in his own merit. This converted Monk then became the recognized leader of what was eventually called the Protestant Reformation.

I believe that one of the greatest things any of us could be taught about God and the situation we are in is this: *God is faithful; you can trust Him!* Hudson Taylor the Godly missionary to China used to interpret this passage as meaning, “The just shall live by holding on to God’s faithfulness.” [Martin Lloyd-Jones, *The Doctrine of God the Father*, pages 77-78]

It will be a great day for any Christian when they come to make a once for all decision, “God is right, God is good, God is faithful, God is sovereign, and God knows what He is doing. I am going to rest in Him and trust Him when I can understand what He is doing, and when I cannot understand what He is doing. This is how we live by faith; this is how we continue on even in troubling times.

C. For the Wicked, There Is Retribution (2:6-20)

When Habakkuk is taught by God, he sees that the Chaldeans, the enemies of God aren’t going to get by with anything. God will deal with them even more harshly than He deals with Judah. The greatness of Babylon was short lived; in about seventy years they were defeated and were

never again a world power. God concludes His teaching to Habakkuk in Habakkuk 2:20: “But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.” God is saying to Habakkuk, to the Chaldeans, and to us, “Hush! I am in control; I know what I am doing whether you understand it or not. I am faithful and you can rest in my faithfulness even when it seems that everything is falling apart.”

III. Habakkuk Is Triumphant (3:1-19)

While we are not going to look at every verse in chapter 3, I want us to understand how Habakkuk prayed because it is the way we must learn to pray.

A. Habakkuk’s Prayer Focuses on God’s Character (vv. 1-15)

We don’t have time to examine these verses, but Habakkuk is focusing on three of the attributes of God. Those three attributes are God’s mercy, His Power, and His wrath. If you would have hope in troubling times, meditate on, rejoice in, and praise God for these three attributes.

1. God Is Merciful (v. 2)

Even if your troubling times are because of your own sin, if you come to Him in repentance, you can experience His mercy.

2. God Is All Powerful (v. 4)

The last part of verse 4 in the ESV says “and there He veiled his power.” If God did not veil the glory of His power, we could not walk with Him.

3. God Is Wrathful (V12-13)

The CSB says in Habakkuk 3:12-13 (CSB): “You march across the earth with indignation; You trample down the nations in wrath. You come out to save Your people, to save Your anointed. You crush the leader of the house of the wicked and strip [him] from foot to neck. *Selah.*”

B. Habakkuk’s Faith Focuses on God’s Care (vv. V16-19)

This is one of the most amazing passages in the Bible! If you are losing hope, look to these verses! This is how we live when everything seems to be falling apart! In verse 16, he confesses his fear and dread, but then he confesses his faith in God’s faithfulness. He is in an agricultural economy giving a *worst-case scenario*. This is the worst that can happen and yet even in that he can rejoice in the Lord because He will give strength and the ability to do whatever is required. If we took this prayer in verses 17-19 out of an agricultural setting and brought it into suburban America, it might sound something like this: “Though the economy worsens and never gets any better, though I lose my job, though Social Security goes bankrupt and my retirement funds cease to exist, though the whole world goes to war, I will rejoice in the Lord and give praise to the God of my salvation. He will give me the strength to get through; He will give me wisdom to make right decisions and not fall. He will bring me through triumphant.”

Conclusion

What is your “worst case scenario” that you are anxious about? Is it the changing culture and values of our nation? Is it divorce, cancer or cancer returning, fearing that you’ll never get married, losing your job, never getting a job, the death of your spouse or child? When it seems

that everything is falling apart, learn from Habakkuk. He says, Habakkuk 3:17-18: “Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, *though* the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.” There is biblical hope even when it seems that everything is falling apart.

NASB (New American Standard Bible)

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