

MAJORING ON THE MINORS: HABAKKUK



*A series of sermons by
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Majoring On The Minors: Habakkuk - Chapter 1

"The God-Bound Man Of Burden"

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| Date: Approx 609BC | Habakkuk 1:1-5 | King: Jehoiakim |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. A Man – 'The Embracer Of God' (verses 1) Habakkuk's closeness to God was the reason why he was burdened, however such closeness is not always without its questions and always brings its burdens. | | |
| 2. A Burden – 'The Silence Of God' (verses 2-4) God's silence to Habakkuk's prayers in the face of such wickedness was confusing and frustrating for the prophet and this was a burden. | | |
| 3. A Hope – 'The Promise Of God' (verse 5) In the middle of Habakkuk's despair, God reveals to His prophet that He is already working in a way that will in future days prove to be almost unbelievable. | | |

It's great to see such a good number out with us this evening to study the word of God. We're beginning this evening a study entitled: 'Majoring On The Minors' - the subject of the minor prophets. We're turning this evening to the little book of Habakkuk, found at the end of your Old Testament, the fifth book from the back of it. So from Malachi at the back of your Old Testament, it's book number five, and we're beginning to read this evening at verse 1.

It reads: "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god. Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations? I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved".

We're taking a study this evening, and beginning it tonight, on the book of Habakkuk - 'Majoring on the minor prophets'. We find within the Old Testament scriptures that there are two categories of prophets within it. There are the major prophets and there are the minor prophets. Now those two definitions do not, in any way, define how one is more important than the other - all they simply do is describe the length of them. The longer prophets within the Old Testament are called the major prophets, the shorter prophets are described as the minor prophets. If you were to look at the front of your Bible this evening, you would see that the major prophets consist of the book of Isaiah, the book of Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel, and the book of Daniel, and even - some say - Lamentations. Then there are twelve little books, mainly at the end of the Old Testament, and those twelve - including Habakkuk that we're thinking about tonight - are the minor prophets.

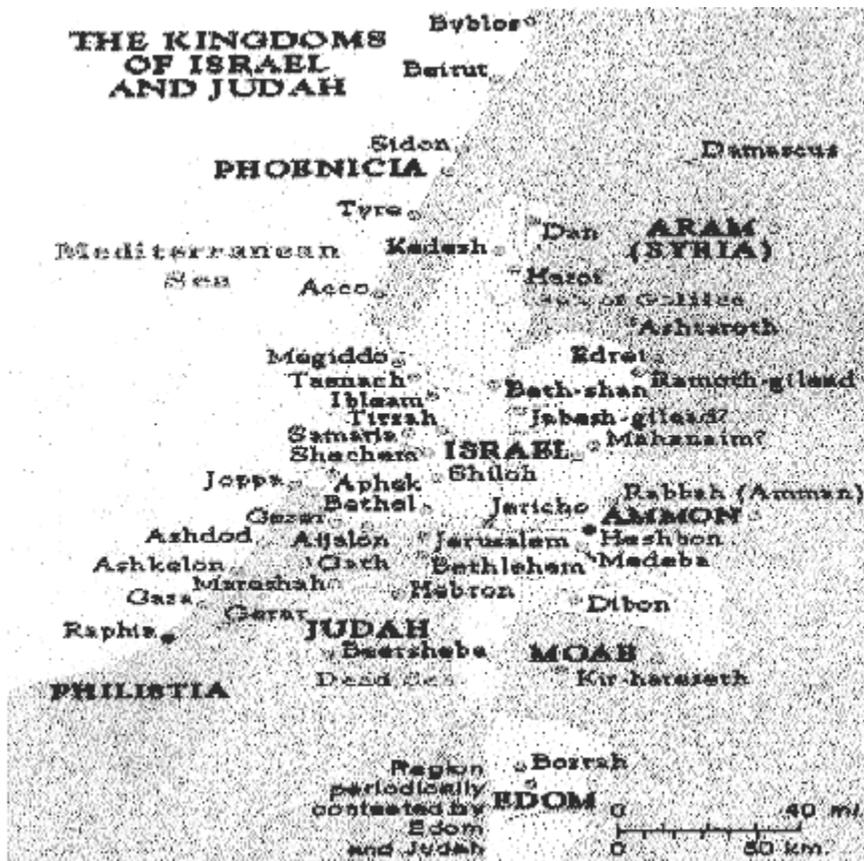


The structure of the minor prophets can be found on the back of your handout there. All of them were not given to the same people, or directed towards the same nation. You see from the little table at the back of your handout that there are some minor prophets that are described as pre-exilic, some that are exilic, and some that are post-exilic. The pre-exilic prophets are simply those that were given to these nations before the children of Israel were taken into captivity into the land of Babylon - before it, 'pre-'. The exilic prophets are those that were written by the children of Israel, and to the children of Israel, in the land of Babylon during their captivity. Then the post-exilic prophets are written after that, when the children of Israel have been delivered and have come out of their captivity in Babylon. You see there that the book of Hosea and Amos was written to the nation of Israel. Lamentations, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk that we're thinking about tonight, were written to Judah. To Assyria there was the book of Jonah, the book of Nahum; and to Edom, Obadiah. During the exile from Babylon, Daniel and Ezekiel. Then post-exile, after they came out of the land of Babylon, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, to the city itself of Jerusalem.

| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Pre-Exile | | | |
| <u>To Israel</u> | <u>To Judah</u> | <u>To Assyria</u> | <u>To Edom</u> |
| Hos, Amos | Lam, Mic | Jon, Nah | Obadiah |
| | Isa, Jer, Joel | | |
| | Zep, *Hab* | | |
| Exile | | Post-Exile | |
| <u>From Babylon</u> | | <u>To Jerusalem</u> | |
| Ezekiel, Daniel | | Hag, Zech, Mal | |

Now, that is not the beginning of our study tonight, but it gives you a bit of a background to what this book is all about, and that these minor prophets were not all written to the same nation, they were not all written for the same purpose, they are entirely different - many of them. What about the geography of the minor prophets? Well, on the back the sheet that you have, you see a map of the kingdoms of Israel and the

kingdoms of Judah. You remember that the kingdom, the one united kingdom under King David, eventually what happened was it split into two, and the northern kingdom was Israel, and the southern kingdom was Judah. So whenever we read that this book of Habakkuk was written to the kingdom of Judah, it means that it was directed specifically to the southern kingdom that you see on your map in green there.



There were many nations, many empires, in these days of the minor prophets. Within the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, we find that the Israelites had three main enemies. There were the Edomites, there were the Assyrians, and there were the Chaldeans who were the Babylonians. If you look up at this map here tonight - don't worry if you can't see it, because I can hardly see it where I'm standing - but if you look at this colour here, that is the Assyrian Empire, then you have the Babylonian Empire. Those are the two main empires that we will be thinking about as we study the book of Habakkuk, and you see down here God's chosen people - Caanan, Israel at the top, and Judah at the bottom. That is the geography of the minor prophets, you can keep that map - you'll be glad to know - at the back of your handout, but use it as we study the word of God together.

We read, as we go through the minor prophets, that the kingdom of Edom - well, it was Obadiah that was given a vision, and a burden, and an oracle, a message from God - Obadiah was the one who delivered the [message of] doom to Edom, Israel's enemy. Then we read that Nahum, he delivered the message of doom to Assyria. The book that we're thinking about tonight is the book of Habakkuk, and he is the one who delivers a message concerning Babylon, and ultimately of their judgement and their doom.

Let's begin looking at the book of Habakkuk: Habakkuk is a lament, it is a Psalm, it is a weeping Psalm - it's not a public address, it's not specifically a message of preaching that was given by this prophet Habakkuk to the nation of Judah, but as we read chapters 1,2 and 3 we find that this little book is a discourse, it's a dialogue, it's a speech, a debate, between this man and God. It seems that there was no one else speaking within the book. What is the time of this book? At the front of your handout you see that it's approximately 609 BC, the king seems to be King Jehoiakim. But to bring it down to our level this evening, it's just shortly before King Nebuchadnezzar, before he came and he ravaged the cities of Assyria, he went through Nineveh, you remember how Jonah prophesied that. This prophecy, this little book of Habakkuk, is just before Nebuchadnezzar came from Babylon and went right through eventually to Jerusalem - he destroyed the temple, and the children of Israel and Judah were taken to the land of Babylon for 70 years captivity. This little book is written just before that.

To give you a summary of this book tonight, it can be split up into three chapters, the chapters that we have. The first chapter deals with a burden, the second chapter deals with a vision, and the third chapter deals with

a prayer. If you like: chapter 1 is sighing, chapter 2 is seeing, and chapter 3 - finally and exultingly - is the prophet Habakkuk singing. This whole book is about Habakkuk's journey of faith - and isn't that what we're all in tonight? We are in a journey of faith, we have been born into the faith, and given as a gift the faith of Jesus Christ the Son of God - and we're all on an adventure, we're all on a journey that has started in our lives when we were born-again. But that journey has bumps, that journey has plains, that journey has difficulties and barriers, that journey has traps, booby traps - it has dangerous wild beasts upon its path, there are many dangers, pitfalls, there are many joys and exaltations. But as we look at Habakkuk's journey of faith, I believe tonight and the weeks that lie ahead, we see in chapter 1: faith - this man's faith, and our faith, grappling with problems. Chapter 2 we find: faith grasping at the solution, and then in chapter 3: faith glorifying in its assurance.

Habakkuk was christened by the reformers as the grandfather of the Reformation, because in Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 4 we have the key verse of the whole book. It reads like this, and it's found in the book of Hebrews, it's found in the book of Romans, and the book of Galatians that: 'The just shall live by faith'. Let's look, tonight, at the God-bound man of burden. We're going to look only this evening at verses 1 to 5, verses 1 to 5 of chapter 1 of Habakkuk. We're thinking tonight, specifically as we start our study proper now, on the God-bound man of burden. If you had a Hebrew Old Testament in front of you tonight, you would notice that every Old Testament book within the Hebrew Bible begins and is titled with the first few words of the book. So, in the Hebrew Bible the book of Habakkuk is actually entitled: 'The Burden Of Habakkuk' - the first few words of the book, the burden of Habakkuk.

There are three things that I want us to notice this evening from these five verses of the first chapter. The first thing is this: a man, the embracer of God. The second thing is: a burden, what was that burden? The silence of God. The third thing is: a hope, the promise of God. Let's look first of all at the man, the embracer of God. Verse 1, it simply reads: 'The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see'. You see, the name Habakkuk, we believe, the name Habakkuk actually means: 'The embracer of God' - embracer! One who embraced God, one who - if I can say it reverently, tonight - he hugged God tight, he clung onto God, he was one who held onto God. Now, friends tonight, we don't know much about Habakkuk. We don't know who his family was, men have speculated, but we don't really know what tribe he was from, we don't know where he was born, or where he lived - we know absolutely nothing about him tonight. But we know this: that his name meant 'embracer of God'.

My friends tonight, that reminds me of a few men in the word of God. It reminds me of John the Baptist, and John the Baptist's forerunner: Elijah - who it was said of him he was a voice of one crying in the wilderness. He doesn't give any qualifications, he doesn't give any genealogies, he doesn't say he was the son of a prophet, or whether he had royal blood flowing through his veins - all the qualification that he had was that he was the bearer of the message of God, he was one crying in the wilderness. Wasn't that who John the Baptist was? He's described simply as a voice, a voice of God, one standing even in the wilderness - no one listening to him, but he was a testimony to the goodness, to the graciousness, to the judgement and the forgiveness of God - he was one standing in the wilderness.

Do you see Habakkuk tonight? We don't know much about him, but friends this tells me something: they may have known him very well in their day, and that's why he didn't need to give an introduction about who he was - but to us, tonight, he is virtually unknown within the Scriptures. He's just introduced to us in this book and this book alone. But do you know what this tells me, that I feel the Holy Ghost of God is trying to bring to our attention tonight? It's this: that the only thing that matters, the only thing that counts upon the face of God's earth, is not where you're born, not what religion you are, not what letters are after your name - but all that matters is that you know your God. Friends tonight, can you grasp that? This man Habakkuk was the embracer of God. He embraced God in prayer, he embraced God in faith, he embraced God in his walk day by day, in his witness, in his preaching, in his living before his family, and if he had children, he

embraced God in everything - and men, women, and children that he came into contact with day after day saw that this man was chained to God.

Friends tonight, this man embraced God, but we see that God embraces those who embrace Him. Because this man embraced God, God in His love, in His Shekinah cloud of glory, He came upon this man and He embraced, He smothered, He nursed this prophet of God. The embracers of God tonight - if you embrace God, and if you seek to embrace Him, and to cling onto Him by faith and in prayer, God will embrace you. God will cling to you, God will hold you, God will come close to you - as the word of God teaches: those who draw nigh onto God, God will draw nigh onto them. Jesu' lover of my soul - but, oh, to have the Lord Jesus Christ as the lover of our soul. To have Him as the intimate One, the Bridegroom whom we have intimate fellowship and communion with on a daily basis, that we get to know Him in that marriage - spiritually speaking - relationship. That we are embracers of Him!

Friends tonight, I find this astounding, but listen tonight: embracers of God are burdened by God. This man Habakkuk, his name means 'embracer', it says: 'The burden of Habakkuk' - the burden! He had a burden because he was so close to God, because he held onto God, it's almost as if he felt the feelings of God. God was imparting to him His feelings, His convictions, what He thought, His viewpoint of the nation of Judah at that particular time. God was sharing it with His friend Habakkuk - because he was an embracer of God, he was burdened by Him. If you're here tonight, and you seek to embrace God, maybe you are an embracer of God tonight, and you're well burdened, and you know all about it - and if you are, you will know about it! But maybe you're not, and you think this sounds great to be like Habakkuk, and to be an embracer of God, and to hold onto God - no matter what life, no matter what Satan throws at you, or your family - to hold onto God. Listen tonight: make sure you know what you're getting into, because embracers of God will be burdened by God. They will receive a burden that is almost - almost I say - too heavy to take, only that the Lord knows what you can bear. He will burden those who embrace Him.

The Hebrew word 'burden' is the word 'massah' (sp?). It's the word that is used within the Old Testament, there's many words for burden, but this particular Hebrew word 'massah', it means 'a load', it means 'cargo' - something that has to be lifted from one place to another. It's the Hebrew word that is used of the Levites when they carried the Ark of the Covenant, they bore a burden. I could turn you to other Scriptures, Deuteronomy 1 and verse 12, Job 7 and verse 20, where men use this word as a burden of the soul - but they describe it in such a way as carrying something, as if the burden that they bear (and the idea is this) is a responsibility. Something that they have been given, not to chide, not to harm, but it's a responsibility given for them to steward and for them to use - they are responsible for it.

The word 'burden' here, there's a meaning within the Hebrew language that suggests that it means 'it's to be lifted up'. Some translations of the word of God say this: that Habakkuk lifted up the burden, he lifted up! The idea here is that it's not something to be hidden - as the Lord Jesus Christ said, you don't get light and then you take a bushel and put it over it, you don't do that! You let your light shine before men, that they may see it and that they may glory in your Father in heaven. What was it that Paul testified to Festus in the book of Acts? What did he say? Paul was standing describing the Gospel, he was testifying like a lawyer of why it was true, and why a Christian should not be put to death, why they should not be punished for their beliefs. What did he said to Festus? He said to him: 'This thing was not done in a corner!' Friends tonight, the burden that we have for souls - or we ought to have - the burden of the Gospel, the deposit, the guarantee that we have been given by the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles themselves, it's not something to be kept within these four walls - it's something to be lifted up that the world may see it and fear, and that many may trust in the Lord!

What a burden he had - but the problem in Habakkuk's day was simply this: the people were ignorant of the real situation, but Habakkuk wasn't. The people were willing to be quiet within that situation, but Habakkuk

wouldn't - and the fact remains that Habakkuk couldn't, because the burden of God was burning in his breast, that he couldn't stand to hold it in, he had to let it out! There's a saying that goes around that: 'Zeal without knowledge is foolish', isn't that right? But my friend can I say to you this evening, I know that is true, but I would rather have zeal without knowledge tonight, than knowledge without zeal! I know that both have their faults, but to know the truth, to hold the truth in unrighteousness and not share it out - to have a burden, or to see something, and not do something about it in the eyes of God.

Friend tonight, do you see that he says that he saw the burden. Look at verse 1, Habakkuk, the burden of Habakkuk that he saw - and that suggests that this burden was an oracle, it was a vision that was given by God. But do you know what I like to see in that? Simply this: that burdens will be given to those who look, burdens will be imparted to those who look, who open their eyes, who see the lost, who see those that are dying in their sins, who see the judgement that is to come in the future if people do not repent, who see the sinfulness of our nation individually and nationally. You can get a burden tonight if you look, if you open your eyes like Habakkuk.

Let's look secondly - we've looked at the man, the embracer of God - in verses 2 to 4 we find: a burden, the silence of God. We read in verse 2: 'O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth'. Habakkuk had a burden, that's right, but what was Habakkuk's burden? What was burning in this man's soul that made him want to shout, it says in verse 2, to cry to God, to scream and to pray, and to supplicate the throne of grace in such power and such fervency - what made him do it? The silence of God made him do it.

Can you enter into this tonight? His burden was God's silence. He was praying that God would come to the nation of Judah, the Southern Kingdom, he looked at his own people, he saw them sinning, he saw how the nation was sinning in so many ways. He looked, and he cried for God to come - deliver them, save them, judge them, do anything! But there was silence from heaven. What a burden that must have been for him to bear. He was the Lord's prophet, and if the Lord's prophet can't even get a word from the Lord, if God won't even answer him, what does that mean for God? Why is God silent? Why is He doing this?

Habakkuk had some contemporaries of his day. We find them in the Old Testament: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Zephaniah all lived at the same time as Habakkuk. They prophesied to the same situations, and that's why we read in the book of Jeremiah that he was the weeping prophet - he wept for the sins of the nation. That's why he wrote the whole book, Lamentations, in crying for the sinfulness of his people. They were burdened and Habakkuk was burdened, because of the people's wickedness. If you look at this book, and you look at chapter 2 and verse 9 to 11, you see that there were social sins, there were religious sins, there were political sins, there were evils of Judah that you could not conceive. They had abusive leaders that filled their pockets with ill-gotten gain of the people, they robbed them, they fleeced them, they extorted the poor. In chapter 2 and verses 6 to 8 we see that they built cities at the price of human lives. They used drink to coerce lasciviousness and sexual immorality. They raped people after they got them drunk, verses 15 to 17. There was idolatry within the nation, verses 18 to 20.

Habakkuk, the holy man of God, the man who - I can say because of his embraciveness of God - he had a heart after God and like God, and God was sharing with him, God was showing him in this vision, in this burden, in this oracle, the way He felt. He was so burdened that he cried out to God: 'Lord, stop it! At any cost, stop it! Save Your people, or judge them!'. All he could get in the closet, in the quiet place, was silence. If that wasn't enough, there was the burden of history - because this man Habakkuk could remember, maybe his fathers talking about it, or maybe he even remembered it: he remembered a king called Josiah. King

Josiah brought in reforms, there had been many evil kings before him, but he brought in religious reforms and he had taken Baal worship - which was a false God - and he had shattered it. He went through all the cities, and the towns, and the countryside, knocked down their idols and their groves and their worshipping places upon the hills - he destroyed them. He took the prophets of Baal, he put them on their own altars and he burnt them to death, and then he sprinkled their ashes on the graves of their worshippers. What a man Josiah was!

Josiah began to rebuild the temple, to repair the temple. You remember that, as he repaired the temple, Hilkiah, the man in the temple, he found a book - the word of God. He found the Old Testament Scriptures, the Pentateuch, Genesis to Deuteronomy. He opened it and he read it to King Josiah and, to put it in our New Testament language, Josiah was gloriously saved and converted. What happened then in the nation was, he tried to convert everybody else. He brought in reforms and he urged the people of his day to turn to God and to worship God, but sadly what happened - and this is what I want you to grasp tonight - is that Josiah died at the hands of Pharaoh Neco. This was their dream over, they thought God was moving, God was reviving, God was restoring His truth to the nation - and all of a sudden: finished!

Then what happened was Pharaoh Neco rose up and took one of Josiah's sons - his name was Eliakim, and his name is later changed in the word of God to Jehoiakim, the king that is the king during this prophecy. What he did was he proceeded systematically and devilishly to turn and reverse all the godly reforms of his father. He was a godless dictator, he raped the people of wealth, he built a huge palace. He panelled its walls with the most expensive cedar wood, he painted with vermilion, he studded with jewels - he did all these things! Religiously speaking he brought the religion of Egypt, he brought their gods into the very holy place of Jerusalem in the sight of God. To top it all, the book that Jeremiah had written to him of the judgements of God that would come upon the nation if they continued in their sin, he ripped it up into little bits and he burnt it!

If you turn with me tonight to Jeremiah 22, we read here what the word of God says of this man. Jeremiah 22 and verses 17 to 19: 'But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem'. That is exactly what happened. He died and no man, or woman, or child wailed for him. He died, and he was taken and dragged into the street and pulled to bits, and thrown on the rubbish heap of Jerusalem - because he dared to bring into Judah the sins of his father Manasseh, and filled the streets of Jerusalem with innocent blood!

Friends tonight, why did I tell you all that? Because Habakkuk saw it, that's what Habakkuk saw. He saw the wickedness of the political system, the religious system. He had seen the wickedness of royalty and this awful man Jehoiakim. He turns to God, and verse 2 says twice that he cries to God. The first word, Hebrew word for cry is 'shavah' (sp?), which is the word 'help'. He cries: 'God, help us!'. The second cry in verse 2 is the word 'zahag' (sp?), which is the word 'shout' - scream! Imagine this: this man Habakkuk sees all of this, he doesn't ask for help any more from God, but he screams to God! But God doesn't answer.

My friend, do you feel like that at times? Have you screamed to God? Have you cried to God? Have you wept to God? Have you fallen on your face before God? Have you, like this man Habakkuk, even argued with God? - and let me say that that is a commendable thing, if it is done in the context of trust in your God, not trying to call God's bluff, but trying to plead with Him in faith for what He has done. Have you ever done that, like Job, where he says: 'Oh, that I might come before him, and that I may be represented with arguments, and witness, and debate before God'? My friend tonight, have you ever felt like that? That God doesn't listen, that the heavens are brass, that God's not hearing, that your prayers are bouncing off the very

throne of glory and not getting to the Son of God? That's why he said in verse 3, look at it: 'How long?' - 'How long?', he says, 'Lord, how long?'. Then later on, in verse 3, he says: 'Why?'. How long will this go on, and Lord, why will You let it go on and not answer?

In verse 4 he says this: 'The law', it literally means not 'is slackened', but literally, 'is numb'. The very law of God has lost its power, it's lost its edge, it's no more effective - simply because of the godless people that are executing it and the society that is round it. The society has influenced the laws of God. Friends tonight, I want you to see the despair in this man's heart. He cried to God, so much so that he says in verse 3, if you look at it what it is saying is simply this: 'Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?'. He is a man, a man embraced of God, a man burdened by God and by the very burden of God Himself - and do you know what he turns to God and says? 'God, what are You giving me a burden like this for if You're not even going to answer my prayer?'. Friends tonight, that's the way these men talked to God. Not in an irreverent way, not in a familiar way, but because they were so close to God, because they had the promises and the faith in God, they could come to Him and say: 'Lord, Thy name, vindicate it!'

Friends tonight, is God silent in our society? Is He? Is God silent individually in your home, or nationally within our province? Do you not see the evil that abounds within Ulster tonight? - and I will never be political from this pulpit, never. Friends, what we witness day by day is the laws of common decency and morality thrown up and rejected. Friends tonight, we're seeing living before us what Habakkuk saw. We are seeing lawlessness and sinfulness of the deepest dye, and we are crying to God - God knows we're crying to Him - but there's no answer! Why is there no answer for our burden? In the United States of America Pastor Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate. Everyone was expecting the usual politically correct generalities as he stood up to speak. But we read this, that he prayed to God, and listen to what he said:

'Heavenly Father, we come before You today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and Your guidance. We know Your word says: 'Woe to those that call evil good', but that's exactly what we've done. We've lost our spiritual equilibrium. We have inverted our values. We confess that we have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your word and called it moral pluralism. We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it political savvy. We have coveted our neighbour's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honoured values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, oh God, know our hearts today. Try us and see if there be some wicked way in us. Cleanse us from every sin and set us free'.

Is that not a picture of our generation, and our day, and our province? Friends tonight, I want you to learn a lesson. I believe that because of the silence of God that burden of Habakkuk's got heavier. I believe it was like John the Baptist in the wilderness - and you know, if John the Baptist had just gone into that ministry without that time that priceless, precious time in the wilderness, the fire wouldn't have been in him. But he had to take that time in the wilderness for the fire to fester, for the burden to bear upon him, for the fire of God to burn within him. He needed that time. We read the same of Elijah, we read the same of Elisha, as he ploughed in the field, he needed that time at home on the farm, he needed that time to feel the burden of God in his very bosom and breast. Paul needed it in Arabia, where he went for three years, he needed it to get the burden for the Gentiles and for his fellow Jews. Moses needed it as a shepherd in Midian, he needed that time away from Egypt, he needed that time alone with God to look into the very face of God, to get the burden. Gideon needed it as he was behind the winepress, he needed that time. Can I say, reverently, tonight: our blessed Lord Jesus Christ needed it in the carpentry shop. It wasn't until He was 30 years of age,

hammering nails, looking after wood, making chairs and tables, watching His earthly father as he did it, working, dealing with customers - but as He did it, I believe the burden of souls that were dying and on their way to hell, the burden of what He would have to do at the cross, I believe that it was weighing heavily upon Him! During that time the burden was perfected.

Friends tonight, the silence of God to us in our generation, in our assembly, or in our lives - I hope to God tonight, for me, it's because He wants to perfect the burden, not because He's not going to answer. Thirdly, and finally, and I'm not going to spend any time on this really because it's going to introduce us into the study of next week. There's a man, the embracer of God; a burden, the silence of God; and in verse 5 we read these words - a hope, the promise of God. 'Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you' - a hope! At last, a promise from God in verse 5! The verse says: 'Behold ye among the heathen' - and He's saying: 'Look around you at these people, and regard', and the word means, 'weigh up well what I am doing'. 'Wonder marvellously', and it means: 'Be amazed, be amazed, for I will work' - and the tense is this: 'I am working a work in your day, and when you see it come to fruition, you'll not believe it'.

Can you imagine what he would've thought as he heard that promise? My friends, it's not what he thought, because this promise caused another problem for the questioning prophet - because God has said that He's going to take the Babylonians, an even less godly people than themselves, the Judeans, and He was going to bring them to judge them. In the next few verses we will read, in the weeks to come, that the next cry of Habakkuk to God was: 'How can You judge an ungodly nation with an even more ungodly nation?'. My friends, I want you to see very quickly tonight, if in closing you turn with me to Acts 13 and verse 40 and 41 - Paul at Pisidia in Antioch uses this promise in a different way, and I believe that it's the ultimate way to use it. Verse 40: 'Beware therefore, lest', and he's speaking to the Jews now, 'lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets', namely Habakkuk, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath'.

Paul says that the great work that Habakkuk spoke of, ultimately speaking, prophetically speaking, in our generation and circumstance and context today was this, found in verse 38: 'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins'. Friends, that is a more marvellous work than any could conceive, the blessed work of the cross - that our Saviour's soul and spirit was made an offering for sin at Calvary, and God brought all the judgement of unrighteousness upon Him. My friend, does that not make you wonder? Does that not give you a burden for souls? Be an embracer of God. Be a burdened embracer. Be a hopeful embracer. Don't just look at the world around you, but look at what God has said: 'I will work a work' - praise God! Praise God, He's going to!

Let me say tonight, there could be someone here and they don't know our Master. He's a glorious Saviour, and I'm sure you've gathered that tonight. Will you not trust Him? He was burdened for your sin, will you not take Him as your own? Our Father, we thank Thee for Thy word. We thank Thee that Thy word is truth, it's a two-edged sword and it cuts us to the core. But Lord, we thank Thee for it, for if we didn't have it I don't know what we would do. We are fed by it, we are sustained by it, but help us as we inwardly digest it, to take that energy and to use it. To use it for our sanctification, to use it for Thy glorification, bringing souls to Christ. Bless us now as we part, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - March 2001

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Majoring On The Minors: Habakkuk - Chapter 2

"Answer, Yes! But That One? No!"

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Habakkuk 1:5-11

Verses 1-4 record Habakkuk's confusion concerning why God had not answered his cry to intervene in Judah's degrading sinful chaos. God's silence added to the prophet's travail and frustration.

1. God's Strange And Surprising Answer: The Chaldeans (verses 5-6)

Having had his first question concerning God's silence now answered leads Habakkuk to the next question. How could God punish His covenant people by using the barbaric, uncircumcised Babylonians? God answers Habakkuk, but not the way he expected!

2. God's Savage And Sordid Instrument: Their Characteristics (verses 7-11)

The brutality and viciousness of God's chosen vessel, the Babylonians, is outlined in these verses. It is not surprising that this pronouncement caused such wonder and paralysing fear within Judah. Habakkuk did not know the answer to many questions, but at least he found out one very important international spiritual law: Nations will be judged by God for their iniquity.

Now let me welcome you, this evening, to our Bible Study here in the Iron Hall Assembly. I'm very glad to see such a good number out to study the word of God together. We're thinking on the subject of 'Majoring on the Minors', we're thinking of the book of Habakkuk - we have been through verses 1 to 4, thus far, and we're beginning tonight at verse 5, to continue on to verse 11 in the first chapter.

Habakkuk chapter 1, beginning to read at verse 5 - or we'll read at verse 1 to get the context again: "The burden" ...oh, better read from the right book..."The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are they that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it were told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god. Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations? I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved". We know that the Lord will bless His own word.

You'll remember two weeks ago, we thought of verses 1 to 4 of the book of Habakkuk. And we saw within those verses, first of all, the man. He was a man with burden, he was God's burden-bound man, he was actually linked to God in such a way that God trusted him, God imputed to him, a burden that he could hardly bear. What was the burden? The burden was the sin of the people of his nation. And you remember, we traced the history of Judah, and how they had seen so many ungodly kings - and then, all of a sudden, one godly king came along, Josiah, and it was as if there was a revival of the religion of God, and everything was great - and then he was wiped out. There was hopelessness, there was despair, it was tragic. And then his son came along, and he seemed to reverse everything that his father had done, and he brought all the high places and the idols back into Jerusalem, and the place was cursed of God again for their sinfulness - and rivers of blood flowed through Jerusalem once more.

Habakkuk, like you or I, looked to God. And he said: 'Lord what are You doing? Injustice, sinfulness, evil, idolatry - Your people - and it seems that You're doing absolutely nothing about it!'. And as Habakkuk cried to God, as he prayed to God, as he pleaded with God, as he wrestled with God - it seemed that the ground was parched, it seemed that the heavens were brass, it seemed that his prayers didn't go past the ceiling, and there was nothing, not a word from God - but absolute silence. You remember that he was totally perplexed, he didn't know what to do. He wanted an answer from God and he wasn't getting an answer. But we saw, the final point of our last study was verse 5, that God did answer him, and He said: 'Behold ye among the nations, look among the heathen, regard wondrously and marvel: for I will work' - or I am working - 'a work in your days, which ye will not believe, even if it were told you'.

Verses 1 to 4 outlined the prophet's first question, his first question: 'Lord, why? Why won't You answer our prayers and bring justice to our nation?'. Verses 5 to 11 give us God's first reply, God's first answer to His prophet Habakkuk. God was silent; to Habakkuk, God seemed to be inactive, He seemed to be unconcerned, there was violence abounding in society, there was absolute lawlessness that was rife, there were blatant evils that were everywhere, in God's temple, in government, in society - and the prophets of God seemed to be ignored within the church of God of that day, within Israel. God was doing nothing, as far as Habakkuk was concerned, God was doing nothing. Does our world seem like that today? Does it? Now be honest with yourself, as you look at the world, and as you're a Christian, and you have faith in God, and you know that God's word is true, and you pray to God in faith, but as you look at the world at large - and especially the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland - you look around, and you think: 'Is God asleep? Is God silent? Does God not realize what is happening within our nation, within our churches, within the people of God? Does God not know what is going on? Why does God not stretch out His arm, why does God not do something?'

In New York, at this very moment, children are wearing bullet-proof jackets to school. That's New York. A church in New York, last year, spent \$100,000 on church security. It says in statistics, that the violence coming from women, from the female of our species, has increased today more than it has ever done. Teenagers now, one in every five teenagers, in the United States takes a weapon to school. Knives and razorblades are preferred by 55%, clubs by 24%, guns by 21%. We only have to look at our newspapers or the television to see guns in the playground, to see bombs within the sanctuary of God, to see awful sins that we couldn't imagine - we look at our own nation here in our province and we see remission given to murderers who are unrepentant and remorseless. We see so much injustice, so much rampant evil, it seems that evil has been let loose and we as the people of God, perhaps, could be saying upon our knees: 'Lord, what are You doing? Lord, what is going on? Why don't You come and why don't You judge, or why don't You save? Why don't You move, why don't You shake this place for God, for the Gospel, and Christ?'

I heard a story recently, of one boy who got onto a bus, and he walked straight past the bus driver, and the bus driver stopped him, of course, and said: 'What about your fare?'. And the boy turned to him - and I think this sums up our society today - he turned to him and he says: 'I'm crime and crime doesn't pay'. Does that

not sum it up? There is a word within the Yiddish language - and the Yiddish language is simply a concoction of a language between Hebrew and German that they spoke in Europe, it was a slang in the slums - but there's a word within that language called 'shutzpah' (sp?). One linguist has described it, there's no English equivalent to this word, it's an attitude of incredible gall and presumption. A linguist describes it like this: 'The classic example of shutzpah is a young man who murders his parents and then asks the court to show him mercy because he's an orphan'. Is that not the world we're living in? Extreme presumptuousness, extreme gall and pride, that they think they can get away with anything, our governments, our society, our young people, our children now! And we could look to God, and we could ask: 'Lord, why? What are You doing? Are You silent nationally, morally, spiritually, personally within our lives? Why won't You do something?'

Maybe it's more personal than that. Maybe it's in your life, maybe it's in your illness, and you're asking: 'Lord, why won't You do something? Lord, if You even comforted me - maybe I don't want to be healed, but just if I knew that You were there - if I could hear something from You', but God seems silent to you, no matter how much you pray, no matter how much you get on your knees before God and cry, He seems to be deaf, He seems to be dumb. Is that the way we feel? That may be the way we feel, but can I say - categorically - that we do not rely on our feelings. You see we rely on the word of God, and the word of God says this, that: 'God is not asleep', in fact the Psalmist says in Psalm 121, 'He that keepeth thee shall neither slumber nor sleep'. Praise God! God is engaged in our affairs. It doesn't matter whether we are ignorant to it, it doesn't matter whether we know it or not, but He is there and He always, but always, answers somehow - but He may not answer the way we think.

I've entitled our study this evening: 'Answer, yes! But that one? No!'. Because Habakkuk was crying to God for an answer, but he had certain qualifications on his answer. Not many, but there was one: that the answer that he got wasn't the one [that he wanted]. Oh, answer me any way Lord, every way possible, but just not this one! Have you ever been there? I'll do anything, I'll go through anything, I'll deal with anything, I'll say anything, I will give up anything, but just not this one - anything - but not this one!

Habakkuk couldn't believe what God was saying. 'Lord answer me!', and we see in verse 5 that God said, 'Look I'm going to answer you! And you're going to look, behold look around you, wonder marvellously, for I am doing a work' - he didn't know He was doing it, but God was doing it - 'in your day, and it's such a great work', He says in verse 5, 'that you'll not even believe it'.

What was His answer? The first thing I want you to notice is this: God's strange and surprising answer - the Chaldeans. In verse 5 and 6, look at it, 'Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it were told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs'. God answers, and God's answer, perhaps as Habakkuk heard it, brought hope, 'God's going to do something, God's going to answer my prayers, He's going to come, He's going to revive the people of Judah, He's going to bring them back to Himself'. That was true, He was going to bring them back to Himself, but not by the road that Habakkuk thought. He says 'I'm going to do a work and I am setting it into inauguration now, and it's not revival, but it's a work of judgement. I'm going to come as the Father of My people, as the Shepherd of My sheep, and I am going to spank them, I'm going to chasten them, I'm going to whip My sheep into place'. He says, 'Look, behold, look', He says, 'Watch', verse 5, 'Be utterly astounded', and that command to look is a plural command, which means that He wasn't just simply telling Habakkuk to look, but He was telling the whole nation of Judah, 'Look around you'.

God is full of surprises for His people. You mightn't know that, but if you walk any length on the Christian path you'll know it sooner or later. God is full of surprises for His children. And boy, was this a surprise for Habakkuk, it wasn't what he was expecting, it was a surprise for the whole people of Judah, and he gets his

eyes opened to God's plan, God's world plan for Judah. Look what He says, 'Behold ye among the heathen' - or among the nations, among the despisers, the treacherous ones, among the world. Habakkuk is crying for his own nation Judah, God says don't look at yourself for just one moment, don't look at you, but look at the world around you, behold it, perceive it, regard it - and that word 'regard' simply means 'weigh it up well'. Look around you Habakkuk, look at what I am doing in My world, among the nations, look at the big picture, look at the world view. Prophet and people take note, understand, that I am God and there is none beside Me, I am sovereign, I am omnipotent, and I rule in the kingdoms of men. He's got the whole wide world in His hands - in simple childlike terms - and that's all it is - that's what God was saying to Habakkuk. Look around you in the world, weigh it up well, I am not indifferent to sin, I am not inactive, I am not unjust, no! But look Habakkuk, if I have intervened in the affairs of other kingdoms and of other men's lives, will I not do it in My own people, Judah?

Do we have tunnel vision? As the people of God do we have tunnel vision? Do we look at our own situations, in our own lives, or perhaps in our own communities, in our own province and we forget that there is a world - that is God's - around us, and perhaps God's not moving in the way that we long Him to here, and we keep on praying, and we ought to - but God is moving in His world! God is at work at this very moment, saving men and women, boys and girls, across the face of this planet. God's planet is active, God's planet is having fresh breaths and winds of the Spirit of God in China, in South America, in Vietnam, in Korea, all over God's world, God is in control. Are you a Christian with a world view? Are you a Christian that just looks to yourself, or can you look around? But God is saying to Habakkuk, 'Look I am the God who raises up nations, I am the God who casts them down, and although My justice, the wheels of My justice are slow as they move, they keep on grinding - and one day they will catch up with all nations'. Let me say this: we look at the United Kingdom, and you watch the news today, and do you know what they're debating today? Whether homosexuals - or sodomites - in the army, should have married quarters. That's the nation we live in, and you look at that and I look at that, and God doesn't come down, and as you look on your television screen you don't see a hand coming out of the sky and crack the man away. You don't see fire and brimstone come, you don't see the ground open and disappear, and you think 'Why is God not intervening, why doesn't God do something?'. Do you know what God says? 'I am doing something, My machine of justice is slow, but it is moving and there will come a time when the iniquity of the nations is rife in such a way, and the cup is filled up, that I will move, I will judge' - and He will judge the United Kingdom.

If you were to turn with me to Amos chapter 3, Amos chapter 3 and verse 6, there's a verse here that states very clearly, that when law breaks down and when there is an injustice in the government, and in the legal system of a nation, there is absolute disaster and chaos breaks out. But it tells us more than that, because it actually tells us that when disaster breaks out within a nation, God has done it. Amos 3 verse 6: 'Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?'. F.F. Bruce translates it like this, 'Does disaster befall a city? The Lord has done it'. If lawlessness breaks down, do you think God will come in and save the people? Do you not think God will permit it, and let it happen? And God as He does that is acting with a world view in sight, He knows what His sovereign plan is. He is acting, He is taking kings away, He is rising governments - and Tony Blair, and all the nations of the world, and politicians, whether they believe it or not is irrelevant - God has them where they are. Not only has He them where they are, but He can take them away in a stroke.

That's God's planet, God says to Habakkuk, 'You're to look at God's planet', and then He says, 'You're to look at God's power'. Look at verse 5, 'Be amazed', it's twice there, 'Be amazed, be amazed', it means 'Be dumbfounded!'! What do you think Habakkuk was saying? His first question was, 'God why aren't You answering?'. God answers and He says, 'I'm going to raise up the Chaldeans', verse 6. Habakkuk's second question is this, 'How can God raise up this evil people to judge His own people? How could God do it? How could God? His own children, His own spiritual people, how can He raise up a nation that is a thousand times more wicked than us?'. Is this not the story of history? Nation after nation, have been warned. Do you

remember Noah before the flood, when he preached for years and years, and he never saw one convert - not one convert. No one believed him, they laughed him to scorn, and [it was only when] the rain came down and the floods went up, that they realized that God was true to His word and it would come to pass. What about Lot? Well he had faith that's true, a certain amount of it. But he was sitting there in the seat of Sodom, and it wasn't until the fire and brimstone was coming from heaven that he realized, that what God says is absolutely true. The ten tribes of Israel, what about them? It wasn't until the Assyrians came and invaded them that they realized that God's word must come to pass, 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but My word will stand forever'!

People don't believe God today, they never did. The United Kingdom doesn't believe God, and there's maybe some people here tonight and they don't believe God - well let me tell you: God's word is true. God's word will come to pass, and when the Lord Jesus Christ says, 'Repent, or ye shall likewise perish', He meant it, and it will come to pass, and for some damned souls at this moment in time it has come to pass! There are even some that believe that we are the lost tribe of Israel - Ulster - 'God's chosen people' - a lot of nonsense! That God couldn't judge Ulster? That God couldn't come, that God couldn't judge us for our sinfulness, for our iniquity, for our wandering from God? That He couldn't do it, if He did it to His own people, the Jews that He had chosen, can He not do it to this nation? Sure in Acts chapter 13, if you turn to it, and verse 41, Paul quotes this verse. He doesn't quote it as a literal fulfilment of Habakkuk's prophecy, but he quotes it as an analogy. To the Jews he is saying, 'I'm going to do a work in your day', in other words, 'If you reject Christ, I'm going to raise up another people - the Gentiles - and you'll not believe that God could have them as His own people'.

The prophecy that Habakkuk received was fulfilled, the Babylonians came into Jerusalem and they destroyed the temple. It was a foreshadow of the Roman destruction in 70AD, after the Lord died and then went to glory. It was a foreshadow of that event, and God's word came to pass, and what God was saying is in verse 6: 'I have a plan, not only do I have a planet, not only do I have power, but I have a plan, and My plan is this: I will raise up the Chaldeans'. Now do you know who these people were? If you look at the Old Testament, they were a Semitic people, their history was: Abraham's brother, Nahor, that you find in Genesis 22 and verse 23, he began that nation. They settled in an area known as Babylon, you can see it - the dark green just there. You can see it on your map what it grew to. They settled in that part of the world, the capital was Babylon, it was the city of Babel that we read about in the early chapters of Genesis. And from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation, it is an actual place, but it also is a symbol, it is a symbol of human society trying to live independently of God.

Are we not there folks? What is wrong with television? I'm not saying that you [shouldn't] have a television, but one thing that's wrong with television is this: it portrays a lifestyle independent of God. Independent, there's no thought of God, no mention of God, only in blasphemy, or in sacrilegious terms, or as a joke - it is life, it is Babylonian, without God!

Babylon twice became a great power in the ancient world. Significantly 2000BC was the first time - 2000BC. Strange that 2000AD may be the time when it raises its head again. Life without God - life now in 1999. The first empire, in 2000BC, was in our Southern Iraq at this moment in time. And many events that took place in the book of Genesis, the first book of Bible, especially connected with the patriarch Abraham and his family, were around the whole area of Babylon. What was God doing? An evil people, a sinful people, a rotten people, a people that had been cursed from the very start of time, what was God playing at? How could God do such a thing? Do you know what God was saying - and I want us to hear it. He was saying three things. First: 'I am God'. Without putting it too bluntly this evening, 'I am God and I can do what I like. I have no obligations to humanity or to a spiritual world'. God was saying, as He said to Job, in chapters 38 to 42 of the book of Job - you will not find a reason in the book of Job for his suffering, no reason given. The book of Romans chapters 9 to 11, you read there that God let His people Israel go, and in

chapter 11, if you look at it very quickly, chapter 11, chapter 11 of the book of Romans, you read these words, where God has said that He's letting go of His people Israel, He'll come back to them in a day that's still to come. But He gives the reasons for it, and His reason is simply this: I am God. Verse 33, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?' - who has given God advice? - 'Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen'. He says first of all, 'I am God'. Secondly, He says, 'My ways aren't yours'. You'll find it in Isaiah 55, turn with me, Isaiah 55 and verses 8 to 9. Verses 8 and 9, listen this is the word of God: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts'. I am God, and I have no obligation, My ways are not your ways, and thirdly He says this in verse 5 of Habakkuk: 'Even if I told you, and explained My thinking and My thoughts, you wouldn't even believe it. I am God, My ways are not your ways, and if you knew what I was going to do you wouldn't believe it'.

The holocaust - 1933 to 1945 - 6 million Jews, wiped off the face of the earth, it's been fifty years since it, fifty-five, and there is no satisfactory answer as to why it happened. What I mean is: there is no answer that satisfies the awesome suffering that there was. And the reason why is simply this: that we have not the mind of God, and there are things in your life, things that may enter my life, there are things in this world, and when we face them there is not an A, B, C categoric, easy, calculated answer that we can give. You might be a Christian, and you think that we need to have an answer for everything - but we are not God, and if we had an answer for everything we would set ourselves up as God - and we would be in the running.

But the reality is this: that the life of this planet and this universe dwells within God, and it's like a large picture show, we only see frame by frame. We don't see the whole picture. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, 'The secret things belong unto our God', and God - this is the message that Habakkuk received in his first answer - God is sovereign, and God is in control. I think we've lost that today, as we thought yesterday morning, we thought of the first beatitude, we thought about how this can be: that we have a selfish society, that everyone looks to self - but as the church of Jesus Christ today, we need to look to God, because God is in control, God is sovereign, God is powerful!

Now we're running swiftly out of time, and we're still to get on to the second point - look at it: God's savage and sordid instrument. In verses 7 to 11 we have detailed, very specifically, their characteristics, look at verse 7 '...they are terrible and dreadful...', in other words, these Babylonians were savage characters. They became devoid of mercy, devoid of compassion. One writer describes their cruelties, that they were especially revolting, and when they would have conquered a city, they would have made up pyramids of heads - decapitated heads - to mark their path through it. Boys and girls would be burnt alive, would be sacrificed, and some that were less fortunate would be kept for other worse fates. Men were impaled, they were flayed alive, they were blinded, they were perhaps deprived of their hands, their feet, their ears, their noses - while women and children were sent into slavery. They captured a city, they plundered it, they pillaged it, then they burnt it down, and then they made the ashes - and the trees around, and the forest, they chopped down. How deeply seated their thirst for blood really was. There's one king of Babylon that it's described that he conquered one of the Elamite kings, and he and his queen - man and wife - as they sat and ate their meal, sat with his head dangling over them. That is the evil nation, the Chaldeans, the Babylonians. Look at their description, it says in verse 7: 'Their judgement and their dignity proceed from themselves', in other words, they were a law unto themselves. They recognized no authority, no power, but themselves - like Nebuchadnezzar, they recognized no god but me.

That's our world today, is it? Is it not? You are your own god, you are your own boss, look at verse 8. God says - the swiftness of these Chaldeans is described in animalistic terms, as if it had already happened - you'd

think it had happened here! He says that they're swifter than leopards or panthers. A panther is an animal that is so swift, that its feet hardly touch the ground, that's how quickly it came upon the people of God. He goes on and says in verse 8, that they were more fierce than evening wolves. Evening wolves are wolves that couldn't get anything to eat all day, so they're out at night, bloodthirsty, hungry, ready for the attack. In verse 8 it says again, they'd come from afar, and they shall fly like the eagle. What is an eagle? An eagle is simply a big vulture, looking for the dead prey, and when the moment comes that it circles over them - and as the Chaldeans circled over the little nation of Judah, they were ready for the pounce - is it any wonder they were terrified? It was even worse, perhaps, than Europe as it faced the captivity of the Nazis. Can you imagine what it would have been like, to have been in France, or to be in Belgium, or Holland? Can you imagine what it would have been [like] if it had happened that down Templemore Avenue the tanks of the Nazi regime would have come, and the goosestep would have marched? What that would have felt like? Can you imagine what it felt like for the people of God to stand, and look, and see this? Look at verse 9, God says that their forces resemble the east wind, indicating their ferocity in their attacks. It says - and that literally means, where it mentions violence - that they come simply for violence. Bloodthirsty, cold-blooded men. Look at verse 10, 'They shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it', in other words, they have absolute scorn for all authority but their own. They captured the princes, the kings of the small nations around, they used them like pawns in their massive chess game to take over their part of the world. They were the bulldozer of an empire, that nothing would stop, and nothing did stop.

Look at verse 11, 'Then shall his mind change', or that literally means 'a wind storm will pass through', 'and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god', and that literally is translated - 'who make their own strength their god'. They look to themselves as doing everything, they mark themselves, today's nation, today's human, self-sufficient, self-adulation was their cry. Was that not the cry of Nebuchadnezzar? I think he personifies, he epitomises, the whole nation of Babylon - and as you look at your map you can see how large all those little dots around that map, the dark dots, signify the size of this Babylonian kingdom. But turn with me to Daniel 4, Daniel 4 verse 30 and following through to verse 33, and this is glorious. For we have here Nebuchadnezzar, in verse 30 it says this, 'The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times', or years, 'shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will'. Isn't it interesting that in Habakkuk chapter 1 and verses 7 to 11, these people are described as animals, and God turns the chief of them all to an animal, eating grass in a field. Praise God! What a God we have!

And as you look at our nation - and I'm finishing now - but when you look at our nation, and we cry for an answer, we ask God to come, make Thine arm bare either in salvation or judgement, right the wrongs that are here, do something Lord, anything! Will it surprise us what He does? How can God's judgement be stemmed? You know, I believe that God's judgement is rife, and I believe that it's not very long [before] it'll pour like a hot cauldron right over this land. But there's an exception clause, and it's simply this as we close, 2 Chronicles 7 verse 14, 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land'.

May we heed God's voice in those words this evening and trust Him for all that is to come, for Christ's sake.

Our Father, as we are like Habakkuk, and we cry to Thee, and sometimes we tell Thee how to answer our prayers - dear God forgive us. Lord, help us to realize that Thou art God, and there is none other. Shall the

clay say to the potter...? Lord, we ask for humility to realize what we are, for the grace to realize what our God is, and who He is - that He ruleth in the kingdoms, and the affairs of men. And as the prophet Ezekiel was told, 'I am doing this that they may know that I am the Lord'. Lord, we pray that we may know that Thou art the Lord - and whatever this nation needs, we realize that it needs judgement, and I'm sure that it must be nearly ripe for judgement now. But Lord we pray, oh God help us to get on our knees, help us to humble ourselves and break ourselves, contrite spirits You will receive. Lord, let the waters flow, oh God pour water upon this land that is thirsty, and come and revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee. Bless us now as we part for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Majoring On The Minors: Habakkuk - Chapter 3

"Watching And Waiting"

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Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

Habakkuk's ultimate question has changed now from 'Why is God silent?', to 'How can God use the Babylonians to judge Judah?'. How does he react to this unbelievable news?

1. He Encourages Himself In The Lord (verse 12)

Habakkuk reminded himself and God of the Almighty's attributes, especially His holiness.

2. He Links Himself With The Lord (verse 12)

Habakkuk takes assurance that there is an unbreakable covenant promise between God and His people.

3. He Questions The Actions Of The Lord (verses 13-17)

Has God forgotten His people and left them to the savagery of the Babylonians? Habakkuk argues with God concerning his many questions.

4. He Awaits The Answer Of The Lord (Chapter 2 verse 1)

Habakkuk sets himself as a 'watchman' to wait in prayer for an answer from God to his arguments and objections. No matter how long it takes, Habakkuk will wait until God answers.

Now let me take this opportunity of welcoming you to our Bible Study here in the Iron Hall Assembly. We're very glad to see such a good number gathered out this evening to study the word of God. We're continuing this evening in our study 'Majoring On The Minors', we're looking at the book of Habakkuk and we're finishing off, this evening, chapter 1 - we're not finishing the book - but chapter 1, we're ending it and entering chapter 2 this evening - and the subject tonight is 'Watching And Waiting'. If you're a visitor with us we give you a special welcome and hope that the Lord blesses you, as you study the word of God with us here in our Assembly.

We're turning to Habakkuk chapter 1, Habakkuk and chapter 1, and we'll take time to read the whole chapter again together, 'till we get the context of what we will be thinking about this evening. And it begins, verse 1:

"The burden" - or the vision, or the oracle - "which Habakkuk the prophet did see. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me: and there are they that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked" - and we saw that that word literally means 'numb', it's of no effect at all - "and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth. Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work" - or 'I am working' - "a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it were told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans" - the Babylonians - "that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves." - in other words they will worship themselves, they're their own boss and they don't have any other authority - "Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them:...for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god." - and we saw that literally meant 'He makes his own strength his god'.

These are the verses we'll think of this evening, concentrate on them: "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth" - or the ground open up and swalloweth - "the man that is more righteous than he? And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with their angle" - their fishing rod - "they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations? I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."

One of the pictures that is given to us, within the word of God, is the picture of the shepherd and his sheep. Why do the sheep have a shepherd? It's illustrated for us in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah - that all we like sheep have gone astray, and we know sheep wander wherever they will, they have no guidance and, unless they have a shepherd, they will go everywhere and follow every whim, every distraction. So sheep need a shepherd, and a shepherd is given to sheep to guide them, to protect them from harm, to bring them from one place to another, to guide them on their life's journey and so forth. And he is a figure of protection, he is a stronghold for them that will guide them and be with them all their days. Of course, that is how the Lord Jesus is for us - isn't that right? But to see a picture of a shepherd turning on his sheep, is an awful picture. To see one who is meant to care, who is meant to concern, who is meant to comfort and protect, turn upon the objects of his protection and hurt them, is something that is awful. Think of it this evening - a child and their parent - child abuse is a terrible thing. When we hear about it, when we see it depicted in advertisements on the television to warn that it is going on all across our land - why does it strike fear within our breast, within our very soul? It is simply this: that the one who is meant to love the child, protect the child, look after the child and lavish their parental love upon the child is the very one that is turning to harm the child. Of course we know, that there is a grave difference between child abuse and child discipline. Child abuse is something that is unnecessary, it's criminal, it is sinful - but child discipline is something that is needed, to train up a child in the way that they should go. If we spare the rod we spoil the child - and we have it throughout the word of God, but it's common sense, that every child that grows needs discipline, it is something that is needed.

Habakkuk had a great question, didn't he? What was his first question - the first question we thought about was the burden that he had in verses 1 to 5. His burden was this: that there was violence across the land, that all immorality and amorality seemed to be let loose within the land of Judah, and he got on his knees, he shed his tears, he lamented before God and ripped his clothing and cried, 'Lord, why won't You do anything? Are You going to let this go ahead Lord? Are You going to turn a blind eye at all the injustice and unrighteousness that prevails within Your land, Judah? Will You not come and revive Your people? Will You not come and judge them even?'. You remember, as he cried to God, his burden increased - and the reason why his burden increased was that there was no answer that was coming from heaven. And God was not answering him, no matter how much he cried in such fervency, in such energy - so much so that he turns to God and in verse 3 he says, 'Look Lord, why are you giving me a burden if You're not going to answer my prayers?'

We thought of how God, so often in our lives, He doesn't seem to answer our prayers. But as we looked further, we saw in verse 5 that great promise that God said: 'Listen, you may think I'm doing nothing at the moment' - but He says - 'I, look around you at the world, I am at this moment working a work in your days, and if I were to tell you now, Habakkuk, what it is you wouldn't even believe My words - even though they're God's words!'

What was this great work that God was going to do? Maybe Habakkuk got excited, I don't know, maybe he thought that God was going to revive His people again and bring a revival like in the days of Josiah that he could remember. But, oh, as God expanded and in verse 6 He said, 'For, lo, I raise [up] the Chaldeans' - and all of a sudden Habakkuk's mind and dream is shattered - 'You can't do this!' - and this raised Habakkuk's second question. His first question was: 'God, why won't You answer me?', and his second question was this: 'Lord, yes answer me - but no! Not this one! - You can't send the Chaldeans, sure they're a more wicked people than we, Judah, are that are being judged!'

To Habakkuk it was as if the Shepherd was smiting the sheep. To Habakkuk it was as if the Father, their Heavenly Father, their God - oh God our help in ages past, their hope for years to come - it was as if God had turned, in all His anger, all His displeasure and wrath and was about to just pour it and exhaust it over His own children. To Habakkuk, God was abusing them. This questioning prophet was perplexed, he was absolutely stunned, he was, perhaps, silent as he heard. And he said to himself and to God, 'How can God tolerate, even, the very habitation of the Chaldeans upon the earth. But let alone tolerating their presence, He is actually using them to discipline, to abuse the people of God'. That led Habakkuk into more questions - and I'm sure that Habakkuk began to question himself and say, 'I wonder have I misunderstood God's message to me?' And as he thought about it and as he analysed God's word to him, he realised no, he had not misunderstood it - God had said, 'For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans' and we remember the awful, savage, sordid description of their characteristics throughout those verses that we thought about last week.

'No, I didn't misunderstand God. He said He was going to do it, and He is going to do it' - and I think that what happened was Habakkuk went from questioning whether he had misunderstood what God had said, to actually asking himself whether he had misunderstood God Himself. Have you ever done that? Have you ever asked yourself - perhaps it's because of certain circumstances that enter, maybe don't enter, but actually divulge into your life, break in without expecting it - and you begin to question God, and you ask yourself, 'Do I really know who this God is? Do I really know whether He loves me? Do I really know how much He cares, if He's concerned about my life, if He is actually directing the steps of my way?' Have you ever done that?

All these questions, all this frustration, all this confusion in the faith of this prophet, now - Habakkuk - leads him to explore his God. Let me ask you: do you know your God? Do you know your God? Do you really understand Him? Do you know how He works? Have you any idea of His principles, of His characteristics, of His attributes, the things that He has, the things that He says? We have been given the things that He said, and few of us even know what He said - [not even] the way that He is.

Do you know your God? Do you know His characteristics? Do you know how - in some measure - God thinks, how God moves? And Habakkuk as he looks at this problem, this perplexity, it is the question of all mankind: Who is God? What is God like? And as we look at mankind, we find as we study all the religions of the world that human beings, and man at large, does not transcend his religion. What do I mean by that? Well, men never transcend their idea of God. If you're Islamic, you have a picture in your mind of a philosophical god that is cruel, of a god that makes women dress in black, and only their eyes are able to show, that denies them the pleasures of marital relationships - that denies them so much, that puts restrictions and laws and petty indulgences [necessities] upon a person - and because they have a god like that you find that the Islamic nations are some of the most wicked and cruel in the world. The people become like the god that they worship. A society or religion will never excel its picture of their god. But if you were even to come near - and you'll never do it, and I'll never do it - but if we were ever to strive to be like our God, would we know enough about Him to become like Him?

As Habakkuk was frustrated, I wonder did he think and did it cross his mind that the people that know their God shall be strong. Do you know that? If you know your God you'll be strong! If you're bound to your God

like Habakkuk, you will do great exploits for God - you will move, you will shake, like the apostles, you will turn the world upside-down for God! This is the mightiest thought that a human being can entertain: thoughts of God. I love the little story, maybe I've told you it before, about A.W. Tozer - and he had an old rug within his study and he bought it for two dollars, and he lay it out and every morning from eight o'clock until twelve in the afternoon, he said, he lay on his belly and he simply adored Him! Have we any idea what that is? He didn't ask God for anything, he didn't plead to Him for anything. He simply lay prostrate before Him without a word uttering from his mouth and he worshiped his God - a creature to his Creator. Do we know our God?

How does Habakkuk face this big problem that he has? The first thing that's on your notes is this: he encourages himself in the Lord. He encourages himself in the Lord, and he's asking the question, 'Do I really know my God? Do I really know who He is?' So he begins to explore his knowledge of who God is. The first thing that he looks at is in verse 12: 'Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God?' First he says, 'Well, this God, I'm possibly misunderstanding Him, but this God, I know, is an eternal God'. God is eternal. What does that mean? Psalm 90 says, 'From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God'. 'From ever to ever Thou art God', and what that means is, 'From the vanishing-point to the vanishing-point Thou art God', and the vanishing-point is the part that you can't see beyond - the horizon. From horizon to horizon God is God and He's God beyond it. 'In Him we live, we move, we have our being'. That means that we dwell within Him, He is bigger than all of us, He is beyond us - but it also means that everything was created by Him, and there was nothing created that was not created by Him, and there was nothing created before Him - and that means that time was created by Him. Have you ever thought about that? Time was created by God! In fact time dwells within God - that means that from your birth to your death God has been there the whole time, but He's been there before it and after it. Before the garden of Eden, when all creation was made, God was there before it and He will be there after it - and the whole timeline of the history of the universe dwells within God. That means this: that God dwells in an 'eternal now'. Do you know what that means? Right now, here and now tonight, in our sphere God is at the Red Sea where Moses is crossing. Here and now from God's perspective, because He is in an eternal now, He is there as He watches the Lord Jesus Christ come and return and His feet land on the Mount of Olives. He's there. He's at your birth, and for anybody that's not saved here this evening, He's at your death. You mightn't have thought about it, but God can see it right now. What a great God!

But why is Habakkuk meditating upon this - do you know why? He is thinking to himself, 'God must know that if these Chaldeans come down from Babylon and they raid us, they rape us, they pillage us, He must know what will happen! If He is an eternal God, as He says so, surely He would not bring this upon His own people!' Not only does he know He's an eternal God, but he looks and we see, 'Thou art from everlasting oh Lord my God, mine Holy One'. He thinks, 'Well God is eternal, but God is also holy. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity!', and holiness just means total, absolute separateness from anything that is sin. Now listen, the Israelites had this drummed into them from day one, through the Levitical law, they were told what was clean to eat, what was unclean to eat, what was clean to touch, what was unclean to touch. They were shown through these various lessons and object lessons within everyday life that God was holy, that God could not abide, or look upon sin, but He abhorred sin itself. They saw it through the priesthood, they saw it through the sacrificial system, they saw it through the purity laws, they saw it through the Tabernacle, they saw it through the feast days, they saw it through everything - that God was pure, that God was holy.

And thirdly, as you look at verse 12, he goes on to say, sorry verse 13: 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity'. That means this: that God can never look upon, with approval, any form of sin - never! His eyes cannot behold sin in an approving way, He cannot look and legislate, or put His stamp upon something that is classed as iniquity. Therefore Habakkuk concludes that God can never be implicated in a sinful act. 'Now hold on a minute God', Habakkuk says, 'You're an eternal God so You know what's going to happen if these boys come down from the North. You're a holy God, and they are more sinful than we are, so what are You doing using them?' And thirdly, 'You can't look, or legislate, or be implicated within a sinful act, yet You're going to let them come down and murder us alive!'

And then fourthly, he explains and he declares in verse 12 that God is a mighty God. God is a mighty God - do you know what that literally means in the Hebrew? It's the word 'rock'. God is a rock! What does that speak of? Well, it speaks of immutability - if you were to go to the book of Deuteronomy and chapter 32 and verse 4, we read this: 'He is the Rock, His work is perfect, all His ways are just - judgement - a God of truth without iniquity, just and right - upright - is He'. He is sinless, He cannot do wrong, He is just, He is righteous, He is pure, He is perfect, He is immutable. What does immutable mean? He is unchangeable - He is the same yesterday and today and forever! Our God is the same as He was when He did the miraculous things, He is the same as He will be as we stand before Him in judgment. He never changes, He is a sure foundation, He is a rock of refuge, He is stable. The Lord Jesus said in the parable about the wise and the foolish man, that God - the Lord Jesus Christ - God in flesh and His word is the Rock on which we can build our lives. Paul describes Him as the Rock that followed - the Rock that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness - the Lord Jesus was the Rock of refuge who protected them. Can you see what Habakkuk's thinking? 'You're the cleft of the rock, yet You're going to murder us!'

My friends, we could never exaggerate what was in the mind of this prophet. 'How could God do this? How could God who is in relationship with us smite us in such a way - His own children, a Father abusing them? The sheep of His pasture, the Shepherd whipping them and stripping them and fleecing them - how, God, can You do this?' He really asked the question that maybe you've asked in your life and in your circumstances now: 'Do I really know this God?' That leads him to think about how he is linked with God. And secondly he links himself with God, he's encouraging himself in the Lord, of who he thinks God really is, but he is questioning it deep down. But then he links himself with God in verse 12, he says, 'Oh Lord, mine Holy One', he says, 'God, Jehovah, the Holy One is mine - we shall not die!' You see Habakkuk realised as you read on down the verse that God had ordained the Chaldeans for judgment. That there was a future day, look at it, 'Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction'. Habakkuk knew deep down that God was righteous and that one day He would judge the Chaldeans - they would get their just deserts - he knew that. He also knew that God's people - the Judeans - were in for correction. Habakkuk knew, among all the sinfulness, among all the wrath of God, among all the threats of the Babylonians and their filthy, sordid, savage ways and brutalities, he knew - and this is immense and beautiful - he knew that he was God's! He knew that Judah and Israel were the chosen of God - that God had revealed to them in Exodus that they were a special, a peculiar people, they were a jewel to Him, they were bound with Himself. They were a people whom with God had made an unconditional covenant, He had given them His word that He would never leave them, that He would never forsake them - and if they wandered away, that one day He would bring them back to Himself. Now that might have been a hard pill for Habakkuk to swallow here - but deep down he knew it.

My friend tonight, I don't know what you're going through, I don't know - I can't enter into what is in your mind, whether you're doubting yourself, whether you're doubting the God that you serve, I don't know what it is - but whatever you do, never lose the sense that you're God's. Never lose the sense that you're the apple of His eye, and no-one can touch you, no-one can do anything to you, unless God says - and even if a whole army of savage barbarians is at your back door, you're God's! Hebrews chapter 12 testifies to this, read it with me, chapter 12 and verse 5 on - that we as God's people and God's children, we may at some time enter into what the Judeans entered into, and what Habakkuk failed to realise was that God was not out to abuse His people, but He was doing what was necessary, which was discipline His people. The writer to the Hebrews says: 'Ye have forgotten the exhortation' - verse 5 - 'which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son' - My children - 'despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto

the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby'.

We as the children of God may face the same thing - but we need to get beyond what Habakkuk saw, and all he could see was the rod of God, but he couldn't see that behind that frowning providence was a God of love, a heart of compassion, of mercy and love for them. Isn't it beautiful? Is it not what Paul said in Romans, 'Nay, nay in all these things - no matter what they may be in our lives - we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus! There is nothing, nothing in hell, nothing in heaven, nothing upon the earth that can separate us from the love of God. Death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.' Hallelujah! 'Mine by covenant, mine forever, mine by oath and mine by blood, mine nor time the bond shall sever, mine as an unchanging God'. Charles Wesley put it like this:

'Arise my soul, arise.
Shake off thy guilty fears,
The Bleeding Sacrifice
In my behalf appears.
Before the throne my surety stands,
My name is written in His hands.

My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear,
He owns me for His child,
I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh
And Father, Abba Father cry'.

Are you downhearted? Encourage yourself in your God. Are you discouraged? Link yourself with the Lord and remember that He died for you, His blood's shed for you and you're His.

But I'm sure that yet with all that knowledge that Habakkuk had of who his God was, of what his God had done in his life, that he was still asking the question 'Why?'. And even though you're saved and you know the gospel, even though you may have a smattering of knowledge about who your God is, it still does not eradicate or erase the big question of life: 'Why?'. Did the Lord Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross, not know who His God was? Of course He did. Did He not know why He was there, did He not know the special relationship that He had between Father eternal and Son eternal? Of course He did, but He still cried, 'Why hast Thou forsaken me?'. And that led Habakkuk to question God even more, and in our third point we see that he questions the actual actions of God.

It is the cry of the barren womb: Why? It is the cry of the bereaved parent: Why? It is the cry of person in a tragic accident, disabled: Why God? What is the purpose, what is the logic behind all of this? And what Habakkuk tried to do was he tried to bring God down to his own logic, and tried to put Him in a box to understand Him. It's interesting that as people's faith gets greater, as people come to know the Lord more and more, and in a more deep way, they end up with more questions. You would think as you came nearer the Lord, and you knew Him deeper you would get more answers - and everybody runs to this one and that one who they think knows the Lord for the answers, but what can actually happen is you get filled more and more with questions because God is so apart from us, He is so transcendent of us, that the more we know Him, the less we understand about Him.

It was fresh in Habakkuk's mind, that the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by the Assyrians, and he saw what they went through. He thought of this great tragedy upon his mind, coming from that Northern Kingdom, of the Babylonians. And he thought about if it had happened, like it happened to them, and he had the prophets speaking to him of it - he knew what they went through, and oh, how he feared it. But he could not understand, he couldn't understand that if the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and if the Chaldeans destroyed the Southern Kingdom of Judah - where would God's people be? Where would God's role in history and upon the face of the earth be? Where would His light be among the darkness of the Gentiles? And so, in verse 13, he says 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?' Do you know what he's saying? 'Lord how can You judge - OK I'll give you this: we're a sinful nation (Judah) - but how can You judge a sinful nation with an even more sinful nation? How can You judge an unrighteous nation with an even more unrighteous nation - the Chaldeans? How can You do it? It just doesn't work - You're a God who cannot behold or look upon iniquity'.

Habakkuk's problem was that he was asking the wrong question: 'Why?'. You see the question was not this: 'Who was more righteous?', because the Bible says this - and if we could let this sink within our souls: 'There is none righteous, not one'. And in God's book all that mattered was this: who sinned less and who sinned more - but there was none more righteous than the other. And when God deals with men and women, that is not what is upon His mind - who is more righteous than another. It was a misconception, because in God's sight it wasn't one nation over another, but all were in His eyes, all were sinners - and all that God was interested in was repentance. God wasn't asking how full your bucket of sin was - and when you got saved that wasn't what God was asking. He didn't ask how deep-dyed, how hell-damned you were - all He wanted to know was how sorry in your soul, how mournful you were, how repentant you were.

He asked the wrong question. And then in verse 14 we see this, he actually accused God of letting go of His creation. He says: 'And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?' He is saying, 'Have You suspended the laws of Your providential care? Lord, have You let go of everything? Are You going to let chaos dominate?' He felt that God had let go, and the fish of the sea that are left to the accidents of nature - He was treating His own people like that. You're walking down the aisle, outside tonight, and I don't know how many bugs that you'll kill on the way - but you'll kill some. And to a certain extent that's an accident of nature and Habakkuk is saying, 'Lord, You're treating Your own people like this! Like the fish of the sea!' And then in verse 15: 'They take up all of them with the angle' - the fishing rod - 'they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad'. He says, 'The Chaldeans are going to come and they're going to take a net, a fishing net and they're going to catch us all'. The predator of the Chaldeans, but more than that if you look at Jeremiah 16 verse 16, you'll find out that God said, 'You see the ones that aren't caught with the fishing net - I'm going to send hunters out and they're going to go to the crevices, the rocks, the clefts and the caves and they're going to hunt out every single one that gets through the net'.

How bad this picture was. Habakkuk finally cries in verse 16, 'Lord, how can You let Your people be swept aside like insects, like germs?' -- 'Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous'. Why can You let this happen Lord? And in verse 17, they're sweeping, these people are sweeping the nations away from them and they're attributing it not to even their own god, or to Israel's God, they're attributing it to themselves - they're burning incense and sacrificing to their net. Think of a fisherman tonight, who does he accredit for pulling the fish in? He accredits himself, his own wisdom about where the shoals are, and where he takes the boat and casts the net. And these Chaldeans were praising themselves for what they were doing, but little did they know that they were pawns in the hands of an Almighty God. Does it not remind you of communism, of the former Soviet

Union? They denied God, they prohibited belief in God and they swarmed across Eastern Europe with their false doctrine and beliefs - and they forbade the name of God to be worshipped, to be adhered to, or even to come out of their lips - and they brought themselves up as a god, they were self-deifying and they worshipped their own achievements. Just like the Babylonians.

Now quickly this evening, I've so much to say, but one of the greatest problems that Habakkuk had was this: God was bringing upon them something that He had forbidden Himself. Does that sound strange? Think of it for a moment. First of all: Habakkuk was saying, 'Look, God is not to look upon perverseness' - verse 13 - 'Purer eyes than to behold iniquity'. 'You're not allowed to look at perverseness' - but if you look at verse 3 you see he says, 'Why dost Thou show me iniquity?' He says 'Lord, You're not meant to look at it, yet You're letting me look at it'. And then secondly, the Lord had declared in Leviticus chapter 5 and verse 1 that a witness of a town, and a witness could be a prophet, if he was to see a sin and was to keep silent he was breaking the law. Yet God was letting this prophet see the sin, and when the prophet shouted out against it, God was silent. Then thirdly in the verse that we read, in verse 14 we see, I beg your pardon verse 13, that it says, 'thy tongue when the wicked devoureth' - and that word 'devoureth' literally means 'swallow up'. And I believe that what was going on in Habakkuk's mind was, he was going down the annals of Old Testament history and he was looking to the Red Sea, where Pharaoh and his armies were swallowed up by the sea, by God. 'Praise the Lord for that!' they said. And then they look as Dathan and Abiram, the very ground opened up because they offered false fire to the Lord and they were swallowed up - 'Praise the Lord for His victory!' But to Habakkuk's awesome despair - God was swallowing His own people up! And he literally accuses, almost accuses God of maltreatment, maltreatment.

I can't answer those questions for you this evening. But Habakkuk was turning to God, and he could turn, and we could turn almost today, and turn to our God and get on our knees and cry, and put sackcloth and ashes on, and we could look to the Almighty in heaven, and we could say like Habakkuk, 'Lord Your name is at stake! Your reputation is at stake! What are You going to do about it?'

Quickly, and finally - the only way we really can understand these verses is from Romans 11 and 33 'O the depth, the depth of the riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his ways, and his judgements past finding out!' But fourthly as we close, he awaits the answer of the Lord - this is beautiful. This is a great lesson for us as believers, as we are perplexed and frustrated - torn apart by circumstances of mind, of health, of family relations, whatever it may be. Even in our own land, the religious situation or the political situation - notice that Habakkuk, he didn't despair. He didn't panic, He was not impatient with God, He did not become assertive with God, He did not demand God, but praised God - he knew that he had a faithful God!

What was a watchman to be? Look at verse 1 of chapter 2, he said, 'I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and I will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.' If you look at the book of Ezekiel, you find the watchman in chapter 3 and chapter 33 - and you see there that if the watchman didn't warn about the enemies coming and people were slaughtered, the blood would be on his hands. A watchman was to be responsible, a watchman was to be vigilant, he was to spot imminent danger. A watchman needed to have nerves of steel, because as he saw the enemy coming he had to stand and not move, and cry that they were coming. The watchman had to be trusted, the watchman had to not love sleep, otherwise it could be the death of the whole town, the watchman had to be faithful to his commission. The watchman ought to miss nothing. Why did he go up there? Why did he stand? He had questioned God, and we see in verse 1 that he's saying, 'I've questioned God, I've asked Him, I've argued with Him and do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to sit here and I'm going to wait, and whether God reproves me or whether God answers me, I'm going to wait 'till He answers!'

We find in the book of Isaiah and chapter 40, verse 31 these words: 'They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength'. Can I say this: He didn't become an atheist, he didn't become an agnostic - but more than that for us today in our situation as the church of God, he didn't become cold-hearted! And no matter how many questions he had in his faith, his faith was being tried, his faith was being tested, his faith was having to grapple with the problems of contemporary life in his day, as we have to do today - but he remained on fire for his God! That's what mattered.

Moses, hid in the cleft of the rock. What was he told when he hid in the cleft of the rock? He stood waiting, it says, 'till he saw the glory of God parade by him in all His majesty. It says of Balaam that he went aside to stand, and I quote, in waiting for the revelation that God would bring to him in Numbers 23 verse 3. It says of Elijah, that he was commanded to go to the mount and stand in waiting for the revelation, that God would come! But he had to wait.

Friends tonight, do we lean on our own understanding, or do we wait on the Lord? John Calvin said these words: 'All who indulge themselves in their own counsels, deserve to be forsaken by God, and to be left by Him to be driven up and down and here and there by Satan. For the only unfailing security for the faithful is to acquiesce in God's word'. The wonderful thing about God's silence, as Habakkuk stood waiting for an answer from God, and there wasn't a word uttered from his lips, and for some long time not a word uttered, if I can say, from God's lips themselves. But as he sat there in the silence, something marvellous, I believe, happened - the stillness of God entered into his heart. There was there in the depths of his soul an assurance and an awareness in the silence that the answer was coming. Someone has said that our prayers are like the wee fellow that runs up to the door, rings the doorbell and runs away. We don't wait on the Lord, do we? We don't wait until we get tired, until our knees get sore, until we get weary, until we get hungry, until we get thirsty. When we get cold, when it's uncomfortable we don't wait on the Lord - old Leonard Ravenhill said: 'Men and women go into some room for one week, and eat only bread and drink only water, and read the word of God, and seek God's face and pray - and you'll either break down or you'll break through!'

J.D. Smith put it like this, and with this I finish: 'Waiting, yes, trusting, trustfully waiting. I know though I've waited long, that while He withholds His purpose, His waiting cannot be wrong. Waiting, yes, waiting, still waiting - the Master will not be late. He knoweth that I am waiting for Him to unlatch the gate'. Friends, tonight, whatever you are praying for, listen to the word of God to your heart: 'Behold, regard and look ye among the heathen, for I am working a work in your day, that if you saw it, you wouldn't believe it'. May God bless His words to our hearts.

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Majoring On The Minors: Habakkuk - Chapter 4

"Doing It God's Way"

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Habakkuk 2:2-4

1. Publish It (verse 2)

Habakkuk had to ensure that God's message was clear, plain and understandable for all to see.

2. Patiently Wait For It (verse 3)

The fulfilment of God's word would come in the future, so Habakkuk was told to wait under the assurance that – yes – the answer would come in God's time.

3. Patiently Live By It (verse 4)

Habakkuk receives a partial answer in the present. He is not to live like the Chaldeans, as his own god, but rather to live by faith.

The book of Habakkuk. We've now reached chapter 2 and we've been thinking - if it's your first time here this evening - on the subject 'Majoring On The Minors' and we've been going through the book of Habakkuk. And we will hope, before Christmas - God willing - to get through also the book of Haggai. We've gone through, right through chapter 1, we just started chapter 2 last week, chapter 2 and verse 1.

Let's read from chapter 2 and verse 1, we're just reading down to verse 4: "I will stand", and it's Habakkuk speaking, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he", God, "will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith".

Just to recap for those who are perhaps here for the first time, in chapter 1 of Habakkuk we have the questioning prophet. He was questioning because there was such evil, such degradation and injustice within his nation, Judah, at the particular time that he was a prophet. He was crying to God in prayer, asking that God would come and in some way - even in revival - that God would speak to His own people, that God would heal them, that God would revive their souls and bring them back to Himself. No matter how much Habakkuk prayed to God, no matter how much he cried unto God with fasting, with prayers, with tears, in sackcloth and ashes - it seemed that the heavens were brass and that God was not answering him, there was absolute silence from God and from heaven. Of course, this was the great burden of Habakkuk and he went on to say: 'Lord, why have you given me such a burden? Such a burden in my heart, on my soul and on my back, that bows me down day by day and humbles me - why do You let me see what is going on in our nation, in our country, in Your country and You won't do anything about it? You won't answer our prayers'. God yet remained silent.

But God did not remain silent for too long, for you remember in verse 6 - after verse 5, where God had said: 'I'm going to do something, something marvellous and wonderful in your day, and if you saw it, if I told it to you, you wouldn't even believe it! And it's actually happening now, I've put it into sequence here and now'. Here it is in verse 6: 'Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans' - and we saw what an awful nation the Chaldeans, the Babylonians were. How they would come from the North and how they would be God's instrument of judgement upon His own people. And this created a second question from Habakkuk's lips, he asked: 'Lord,

You haven't answered me for so long, and now when You answer me, You answer me in a way that I cannot believe! How can You, a Holy God use an instrument to discipline Your sinful people, an instrument that is more sinful than we ourselves?'. We saw that Habakkuk couldn't make head nor tail of it, and so what happens? He goes in on himself and he begins to question himself, perhaps, and if he understood the message aright - but then he begins to question his God, and he sees that God is holy, God is eternal, God cannot look on sin and he asks: 'Lord, if this is You, if this is what You are like, why are You using these people to judge Your own nation?'

Habakkuk got so confused, so frustrated, so perplexed that he did the one thing that we all only can do in such a situation: he got on his knees, he put his face in the dust before God and he cried upon the living God. He argued with God, he wrestled with God, but he got onto his watchtower, it says in chapter 2 and verse 1, he got onto the watchtower and he cried to God - and after it he said: 'I'm going to sit here and I'm going to wait 'til God answers me! Even if it means that I am reprov'd, I will wait'.

We're picking up the reading at verse 2. 'Patience is a virtue, possess it if you can, seldom found in women and never in a man' - isn't that right? Patience! Patience is something that is seldom found, not only in women and men, but in our world today. And as we look around, not only in the world but in the church, and you look into McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken that is meant to be a fast food outlet - all you can see is impatient people! No matter how fast it's coming out, there are still impatient people! You go to a bank - and now in the banks they've got the money so much at hand that it's even in a hole in the wall, that you don't have to go during the day - but often there's queues at it, and there are still people pulling their hair out in impatience to get the money out of the wall. Traffic jams - and today's generation and world, what do we have? 'Road rage', people that are so impatient - we have faster motorways and highways and roads than ever we have had, yet still people are impatient! Someone put it like this: 'Modern advertising has created an expectation gap within young people, that they have been taught through advertising to expect instant solutions'. Instant solutions! 'You need this! You can have this! If you have this price, you can have it! It'll change your life! It'll make you lose weight! It'll make you clever! It'll do all sorts of things! It will change your world!' - and what it really is, is attempting to reach the top at one single leap, and that - I believe - is one of the reasons why there is so much misery within our world today. People who want everything now! People who want success now! And let me say this: Christians who want Christian maturity and growth right now.

As Christians, what do we expect? We expect the world to be transformed and changed instantly, don't we? We expect instant answers to our prayers, we expect instant salvation for our loved ones, we expect instant healing of illness, we expect in our personal lives instant guidance to every obstacle, every situation and every decision that we have to make. And even when we ask God for patience we say: 'God, give me patience and do it now!'. We are people with little patience. Let's learn a lesson from Habakkuk, this man was prepared, he got up on his watchtower, he brought to God real questions, he wasn't point-scoring, he wasn't trying to call God's bluff - but he got onto the watchtower and eagerly, not apathetically, eagerly and earnestly he waited for an answer, he waited for his God! And his patience paid off - why? Because God said this: 'Habakkuk, lift your pen', and we see it in verse 2: 'And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it'. And that's the first point this evening - he was told to publish it.

'Habakkuk, here's your answer. Have you got a pen and a paper? Are you ready to take what God is going to say to you? Are you ready for the answer to your prayers, for everything that you have longed for?'. God's message, at last, was coming to Habakkuk! Incidentally, when you go into the quiet place with God do you take a pen and a piece of paper? For if God was to tell you what God told Habakkuk, could you remember it half an hour after your quiet time? Do you have a pen and a paper? Do you know what God's going to say? Are you so earnest to expect something from God that you're ready to write it down? Habakkuk was, and the

message came in a vision. Isn't that interesting that it says, in verse 2, 'write the vision'? Do you know what that tells me? That this message of Habakkuk's, it wasn't a military message, it wasn't a social message, it wasn't a political message, it wasn't a philosophical, educational message - but it was a spiritual message, it was a message that men needed to hear. Men don't need an educational message today, they don't need politics - sure, look what politics has done for our land: nothing! They don't need psychology, they need Christ! They need God, they need a spiritual message, a spiritual vision and that's what Habakkuk got.

It was a vision and it was spiritual - but look at verse 2: it was plain. He said: 'when you write the vision, make it plain upon tables' - write it upon tablets, it's plain! It wasn't a complicated message, it wasn't a message with extravagant language that [you] needed a code or a dictionary to interpret, it hadn't a vocabulary of its own. It was something that the ordinary man in the pew, the ordinary 5' 8", ordinary working class person knew what it was - and like Martin Luther, Habakkuk was told: 'Preach to the simplest farmer in your pew'. Friends, is our message plain? 'Is the message clear and plain, Christ receiveth sinful men' - is it clear? Is it plain? Can everyone understand it? Do we bring it in a message that is palatable for our contemporary society today? I'm not saying you change the message, I'm not saying you water it down, or you change it, or you make it acceptable - but is the message clear and plain?

He said: 'Take a pen, write it down, make it plain and clear' - but it was written, it was written, it was objective, it was something that he could hold and it was something that other people could read - and it was written simply because God wanted his message to be permanent. Isn't that why in business we insist on so much to be written in black-and-white? Because the word is the bond and we want to hold people to it. And God wanted to be held to His word, He wanted His written word to be His bond - and praise God tonight that His word is permanent! See if it hadn't been permanent, everybody under the sun, every religionist, every cultist, every humanist and pagan would have been changing it all down [through] history - but praise God, God wrote it down so that we would know what His message was!

It was to be written, but it was to be run with. Look at verse 2: 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it' - it was to be read challengingly. It was a message that, when someone read it, he ran with it, he published it, he proclaimed it, he preached it with joy because it was such good news! Is that not the Gospel? 'Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord' - do we? 'Jesus saves, Jesus saves, tell it out far and near, across the sea, across the land that Jesus saves'. 'Send the light, the blessed Gospel light, let it shine from shore to shore' - listen: verse 2 says this to me: do you publish it? Do you gossip the Gospel? Do you preach the Gospel? Is the Gospel part of your life, through your words, through your very man or woman, your person? Do others around see that you're Christ's and that Christ lives within you?

Do you know what Paul said? Look quickly at 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 20 - listen to this, this is Paul the apostle - and let me say this: this is the same apostle that wrote in Corinthians chapter 11 about the Lord's Supper, it's the same apostle that wrote about the headcovering, it's the same apostle that wrote about eldership ruling within the assembly, it's the same apostle that forbade women to have leadership within an assembly or to speak within an assembly. It's the same apostle, but look what he says with regards to the Gospel: 'Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some'. Friends tonight, can I ask you - and I ask this of myself, but I ask it sincerely and I must ask it of us here - do we bring people, do we gossip the Gospel, do we by all means and by any means bring people to Christ? Or is it by no means? Let's face it, let's ask ourselves it personally: no means - is it no means in our life that we try to bring people to Christ? Or is it by every means possible?

Can I go off on a detour for one second? A few weeks ago there were two souls saved in this place, and can I say quite simply: God saved them, but do you know what we did? Two people brought one person each. There was a message - it's written down by God - and those two people realised how important that message was, what it could do for a life, and because of it they ran, they published it by bringing someone to hear the Gospel - and praise God, God saw fit to save their lives! But friends tonight, if we don't bring them they'll never get saved - and in fact, more than that, if we don't go to them, that is the message of the Gospel - to go, not to bring, to go! To go to them were they are and by all means to seek to reach them for Christ.

He was told to publish it, but let's look secondly at this: he was told in verse 3 to 'patiently wait for it'. Verse 3, God says: 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry' - he was to patiently wait for it. You might say: 'Hold on a minute, was God not giving him the message to write down? Had God not already given it to Habakkuk?', well, yes He had, but no He hadn't. Because although God was giving him the prime substance of the message that He was telling him, it was something that would have its fulfilment, its culmination in an appointed time in the future. What do I mean by that? Well first of all, what I mean by that is this: there is a time for all things and God has a time for everything. Harry Ironside said that: 'There's nothing harder for a man to do than to wait on God's time' - isn't that right? We are very impatient creatures and we can't wait on time, our own time, let alone God's time. To wait on things that God is bringing in time, seems to be to us as time that is wasted. But to Habakkuk - he was willing in verse 1 to stand, to sit, to kneel on that watchtower for no matter what time it took, until God answered him - and such an attitude was right, it was proper, it was the condition of the soul on the watchtower. And as he stood on the watchtower, he was above the world, the cares of the world, he wasn't weighed down with the affairs of this life. He was away from the sniping of the world, the influences of the world, the mindedness of the world - and because of that he could get to God - from the thoughts of men, from the thoughts of psychology and sociology, from the thoughts of liberal theology, from the thoughts of all things - he could get away from it and get to God, and he was willing to wait, and such an attitude assures of God's answer.

It's a simple as that, friend - it assures of God's answer, it is a guarantee that God will answer you. Now, can I ask all of us here: have you ever - and it pains me to even ask this question - but have you ever, in some remote way, waited upon God like this? Have you? Now be honest, I'm not talking to the person beside you, I'm talking to you: have you ever waited upon God in an attitude that says, 'I don't care whether I die on my knees here, I will stay until God answers me, until I have the assurance in my heart that God has answered me' - have you ever done that? For that's the only attitude whereby God gives the assurance of answered prayer, and He said to Habakkuk: 'Yes, this promise, it's for an appointed time'. And God was speaking to him of a definite time when - yes, as He had promised and prophesied and as we'll see in the weeks to come from verse 5 of chapter 2 on - that the Chaldeans themselves were going to be judged by God and by another nation. You can read about it in Daniel chapter 5, verses 25 on. What happened was: the Medo-Persians, another empire, was to rise up and what actually happen was this: they diverted the river Euphrates that ran underneath the walls of the city of Babylon, and when it had dried up they came down it in the middle of the night, and they ransacked and entered the land and into the city and destroyed it. The date was October the 13th 539BC, and praise God - Habakkuk didn't know about it, but all Habakkuk could see was the promise of God - but in the future, in 539BC, God was going to do it. God had promised and, because God promised, it was going to come to pass for an appointed time.

God was giving the promise: 'Write it down, Habakkuk, the promise - here it is, show it to everybody around for I'm going to do it in the future'. Can I show you, this evening, how the writer to the Hebrews applied this? Look to Hebrews chapter 10 for a moment, and I think this is beautiful. You've heard it said - and I think it was Augustine that said it - that the Lord Jesus Christ is concealed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament. And we see here how the writer to the Hebrews, how he applies this word of Habakkuk's in chapter 10 and verse 37: 'For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry'. Look

back to Habakkuk, quickly, Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 3: 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it' - look at the change in word. Habakkuk says 'it', the writer to the Hebrews says 'he shall come' - isn't that beautiful? Who is it speaking of? The writer to the Hebrews takes and plucks this sacred verse of Scripture from Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 3 and what does he do? He applies it to the Lord Jesus Christ! He applies it to Jews that didn't know whether to go back into their Judaism or whether to go forward into Christianity and trust the promises of God and Christ - they were standing in a stalemate betwixt two. God was saying through His word: 'Choose you this day whom you will serve' and He takes an Old Testament promise to the Jews and says: 'He will come'. Christ is coming again, He will not tarry - and though He tarries, He won't tarry because He will come - and just you wait for it! Be patient because He's coming - praise God! He's coming again!

Jesus will return and just as the Medo-Persian empire came and destroyed Babylon, we read in the book of Revelation from chapter 17 on to chapter 20 that Babylon will arise again, and Babylon will be a power in the world - and you remember how we saw that Babylon was a prideful power that looked to themselves, their own achievements politically and religiously, and worshiped themselves just like our world today. That world system Babylon will rise again, will begin to conquer the world as it has done before and the church of Jesus Christ will be taken, for they are not appointed unto wrath - they'll be raptured to glory to be with Christ - but Christ will return again to this earth, and when He comes He will be the rock that will destroy Babylon. He will be the one that it will be testified of Him: 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!' - and it's been Christ that'll do it! Isn't that wonderful?

'And though it tarry' - do you hear the message here? We're sitting in this awful world, full of sin and sickness and disease and debauchery and all abominations imaginable - and God is saying: 'Look, look up, though it tarry, it will not tarry, He will come - wait for it!'. That's how the writer to the Hebrews applied it. And therefore, what do we say to ourselves today? We say, 'Don't be discouraged. Don't be discouraged at the delay of the Lord Jesus Christ'. Look at verse 3, he says: 'it will speak', and the word there in Hebrew is 'breathe', 'it will pant, it will hasten' - it's the idea of an animal, the idea of a greyhound panting around the stadium, panting to get to the finishing line. And what the Bible is saying here is that it will come, the promise of Christ's coming, the promise of deliverance, it will come - He is panting, He is hastening, He is chomping at the bit to come and take us to be with Himself.

If you turn to 2 Peter we see what the world says about this matter - and you know, we're not particularly interested in the world in some respects, but we ought to know what the world thinks. In 2 Peter and chapter 3, 2 Peter and chapter 3 and verse 4, we have here what the world in the apostle Peter's day said and what the world in our day says - as the word of God says there's nothing new under the sun: 'Where', verse 4, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation'. That's what men say today: 'Where's Jesus Christ? It's 2000 years since He was born, almost 2000 years since He died and you Christians are shouting on about the coming of the Lord Jesus - where is He? Everything is going on as normal, nothing's changed in history'. 'For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. But', verse 8, 'beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness'. He is coming, and it doesn't matter what the world says, it doesn't matter what the church says, it doesn't matter what an angel from heaven might say - for Christ has said: 'I will come again'.

Now there are two things why God said this to Habakkuk and why God says it to us, to patiently wait for Him, two reasons why. The first is this: for we are to rest upon God's word. Look at Habakkuk 2 again, verse 3: 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie' - this promise is not a lie. God's word is sure, it standeth as the ages roll, and when this earth is gone and burnt in the smoke it will still remain! Psalm 138 bears that out, look at it, Psalm 138 verse 2 - I think this is remarkable, think about this, Psalm 138 and verse 2, the second half of the verse says this: 'For thy truth', speaking to God, 'thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name'. You think of that for a moment. You know what God's name is: Jehovah. You know it means: He has been, He is and He ever shall be. We thought about all sorts of attributes of God last week: that He is eternal, from eternity past to eternity future, He's always been here; He is holy, He cannot look upon iniquity - so many attributes of God, He is everywhere, He knows, He sees our mind, He knows all things - yet God Himself has placed His word above His name! Isn't that remarkable? That is how holy, how powerful, how magnificent His word is - and the Lord Jesus Christ said it's greater than His very works, His very creation, everything around us and even ourselves, His word is greater than that! What did He say? 'Till heaven and earth has passed away, not one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the word of God, from the law, till all be fulfilled'.

Do we take encouragement from God's word? That's why it's there! It's our food, Job said I'd rather have it than my very food, my meat and drink, I'd rather have it than my breakfast - because I need it in this world, I need it even more than food. It's above God's name but so many of us, as that old song said, have dust on our Bible! Do you know what I read this week, and it grieved me? It was a Christian tract for believers and it was encouraging - at least it was trying to encourage - believers to read their Bible. Do you know what it said? 'Believer, read the word of God at least once in your lifetime. Read it right through at least once in your lifetime'. Do you know something? We should be reading it through once in a year - at the least. Brethren, this is our meat and drink - how often do you eat in a day? For this is more necessary, this is more necessary.

We need to rest on God's word, that's the first reason He told him to tarry and wait, and patiently wait for it. Secondly, we need to wait on God's time. The word of God bears it out that all life has an appointed time - Ecclesiastes 3 verse 1: 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven'. Reading today, in my reading - Genesis 18:14 - that it was appointed, an appointed day for Sarah to bear Isaac, the promised child. Also, in Genesis 24:14, there was an appointed day for Isaac to see his wife, and to get his wife Rebekah. There was appointed time in Job's life, and he even said in his trial, with his sores from the tip of his head to the tip of his toe, lying with everything lost that he had in his life, he said: 'For He', God, 'performeth the thing that is appointed for me'. Again Job, in chapter 7 and verse 1, says this: 'Is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth?'. Ecclesiastes 3 and 2 says again: 'There's a time to be born, there's a time to die' - and if you're not saved here this evening, or if you saved and you're carnal, listen to this: that there's appointed onto man once to die! We'll all die if Christ doesn't come, and after that there's a judgement for you and for me. There is an appointed time for everything but we creatures of clay are so impatient, aren't we? And we never want to wait for God's time. Do you know something? Abraham, he had to wait 25 years for the promise of a son - could you wait 25 years? That's the man of God, Abraham, the friend of God - yet He made His own friend wait 25 years for his son! Joseph was sold into slavery and it wasn't until near the end of his life that he knew why God had done it, why it had happened. Moses was 40 years in the Midian desert being prepared for God - God made him wait 40 years, yet we can't wait a week! Christ waited 30 years in that carpentry room in Nazareth, unknown, He waited for God's time.

Friends, God's disappointments - someone said this - are God's appointments. God's delays are not God's denials. Dr Edmund put it like this: 'Delay never thwarts God's purpose, it polishes His instrument. Delay does not forget God's servant, nor cause His faithfulness to fall, rather it fortifies their soul and vindicates His name. Delay instructs, it prepares - it saves time, it never loses it'. Here's my message to you, and I believe it's to some people here tonight - listen: you've been praying for something, you've been asking God for something - listen! - wait for it! Tarry and wait for it! For it will come! It will come.

Thirdly and finally, he published it, he was told to patiently wait for it and thirdly he was to positively live by it. This is dynamite, brethren. Verse 4: 'Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith'. This was part of the answer - if you like, this was the blueprint to the answer that God would give in the future. Now there are two types of people, look at the verse, two types of people that the verse speaks of. The first section: Behold, his soul, him which his soul within him is lifted up is not upright in him - and then there's a second person: the just who live by their faith. Two types of people - interesting, thousands of years ago there were still only two types of people: there were the saved and there were the lost. Nothing has changed - fashions change, Christians may have changed, opinions may change but God's word never changes.

Sinners, how are they described in verse 4 - look at it - they are described as being lifted up within themselves, puffed up, yet they're not upright. In other words, they are people that are proud, they're people who are rebellious - in fact, they are people that are rejecters of Christ and of God, and of everything that is of God, His word, His wisdom, His witness, absolutely everything. Who does that describe? It describes the Chaldeans. They were puffed up within themselves, weren't they? They worshipped their own net, the achievement of their own hands, they worshipped everything they did - and God was saying to Habakkuk: 'Well here's your answer. Here's what I'm going to do: you see these sinners that are puffed up, they're not upright within themselves'. Who was the epitome of puffed up? Was it not Nebuchadnezzar? Didn't we read about him a few weeks ago, that he had puffed himself up so much, he had put himself in heaven and upon the throne of God as the ruler of the nations and the universe - and what had to happen was God had to bring down a peg, God had to humble him, God had to take his kingdom off him, God had to drive him into a wilderness, God had to treat him and make him like a wild beast and for seven years he ate of the grass of the field. Let me say - saint or sinner - God might need to do that with you! That's how bad we can get sometimes as Christians, we can get so proud that God needs to humble us. Now look at this, God brought him so low, so low, that king Nebuchadnezzar had to acknowledge, all throughout the book what God had said - the book of Daniel - God reigns and rules in the kingdoms of men! Finally, Nebuchadnezzar said: 'Those that walk in pride' - Nebuchadnezzar, from his own lips - 'Those that walk in pride, God is able to abase'!

Those were the sinners. God was saying to Habakkuk: 'Don't you worry about it Habakkuk, the fact that they are reigning now, that they are ruling now, that they seem to be succeeding and plunging in the dust the people of God, and casting them out and abusing them and destroying them and killing them - don't worry about that now, because in the end they will have their just dessert!'. And then there are the saved, what does it say about the saved? Verse 4: 'The just shall live by his faith' - that word 'just' is the word 'righteous'. What is a righteous person? The word of God testifies that there is none righteous, no not one - therefore the righteousness that a righteous person has to have must be given to him, if there is no one righteous, no not one. What is it? It's a person that acknowledges their sin, it's a person that sees themselves as they are, a person that repents from their sin, turns to God and trusts Him, trusts the blood of Christ and the sacrifice of the cross, and turns to God in Christ for eternal life! Now I want you to see in this verse that Habakkuk was not emphasising the fact of faith itself. He was saying this - because he mentions the word just, righteous people, first - so he's saying this: that we're not made righteous by faith, although that's true, that's not what he's saying here - he is saying the people that are made righteous live by faith. That's what he's saying: people who live by faith are people that have been declared righteous before God. You see, there is no Hebrew word for faith in the Old Testament, but the word really means this: faithfulness, firmness. Of course, for any Old Testament saint to be saved they have to be justified by faith - we read in Genesis 15 verse 6 that Abraham believed and God counted it for his righteousness - but the word here really is 'faithfulness'. It means the same thing but it's describing that when you get saved you ought to live after it by faith - who was He speaking to? The Judeans. What's He saying? 'Listen Habakkuk, you're crying to Me for this people - but look at the way this people is living. And if you want them to live, if you want them to live they must live by faithfulness to Me, by firmness to My covenant. They have to be faithful to My word'.

Here's Habakkuk's question answered - and it's the greatest question of all time, and it's the greatest answer all time - pride is sinful! Pride will lead to death and, ultimately, to hell and judgement of God - but faith leads to righteousness, it leads to life, it leads to peace! I want to quickly, in our closing moments, take you to three verses, because the New Testament writers quote this verse three times within the New Testament. Turn first of all to Romans 1 verse 17, Romans 1 and verse 17 - and each time, there are three times that New Testament writers mention this little verse from Habakkuk, but each time the emphasis on the verse is different - look at Romans 1 verse 17: 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith'. Now Paul, in the context of chapter one of Romans, is emphasising the 'just'. What's he saying? He's saying what the whole book of Romans is saying, that it's only people that are just and righteous that are being enabled to live by faith, that's what Paul is saying in Romans. It's only someone who has been justified by God, only someone - that means simply - who has been declared righteous. You go to the bank, don't you? I hope you do! And you take a cheque with you, and there's an amount written on the cheque, and you take it to the banker, and the banker takes it and he credits it to you, into your account, and he puts it into the bank. When we come to Christ by faith, repenting of our sin, we bring to Him faith, we bring to Him ourselves and our sin - but we come to Him and, like Abraham, we bring our faith and God takes it and He credits it to our account and He puts it into our lives, the very righteousness of Christ. Isn't that remarkable? He puts the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ into your account, into your life. The just - that's what Paul is trying to get across - that it is the just people, the only people in the world who are declared righteous, that are able to live by faith!

Turn to Galatians 3, remember it's the same writer - Paul - Galatians chapter 3 and verse 11, and he says: 'But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith'. Now what is Paul emphasising? In Romans 1 he was emphasising the just, but in Galatians 3 and verse 11 he's emphasising 'shall live'. How do I know that? Well, Paul is writing in the book of Galatians to a church that has been ravaged by false wolves, ravaged by what were called 'Judiasers' - these were men that had come in and that said simply this, like many are saying today: 'Yes, you've got to trust Christ by faith. Yes, that's how you get into the kingdom, that's how you get saved and come into the church of God. It's only by faith in the cross of Christ that you can be saved - but you see after that? You've got to live by the law. You've got to keep the commandments. You've got to be circumcised, men. You've got to follow all the cleansing rituals and ordinances of the Old Testament. You've got to do all that! - and Paul says: 'Rubbish! The just shall live by faith!'. What's he saying? He says: 'You see, the faith that was good enough to save you, it's good enough to keep you'. The same way that you couldn't be saved through the law and through the works, you can't go on, you can't be kept through the law and the works, there's no power in it - but the just shall live by his faith! And don't you pity anybody tonight that has to live by their works? Don't you pity any Christian that believes that they're saved through the blood of Christ, but the blood of Christ can't keep them? That they have to work for their salvation and they can be saved today and damned tomorrow - don't you pity them? But - praise God! - this man, because he continueth forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood wherefore He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them - praise God!

Let's look at the third verse, Hebrews 10 and it's a direct quotation, Hebrews 10 verse 37: 'For yet a little while and', we read it already, 'he that shall come will come, and will not tarry', and then he quotes verse 4, 'Now the just shall live by faith'. The writer to the Hebrews here is now emphasising not 'the just', not 'shall live' but he's emphasising 'by faith'. These Jews didn't know whether to go back or whether to go forward because they were being tried by their fellow Jews for following Christ, they were being persecuted, but the writer to the Hebrews was saying this: that if you walk on for God, if any man draw back My soul will have no pleasure in him - but if you walk by faith you'll inherit the blessing. Was that not what Martin Luther did? And the Holy Spirit brought to him and opened his eyes to this little verse in Habakkuk. His knees were bleeding, trying to work for his salvation - and the Holy Spirit of God whispered into his ear: 'The just shall live by faith'.

It's great that it's not feelings tonight, isn't it? Because if it was feelings I would be damned today - there's times, today, that I don't feel too great; there's times, tomorrow, that circumstances, like Habakkuk, like the Hebrews, come into my life and they take the feelings away - but as the poet put it, speaking as it were to Luther himself, he says:

'Someone asked Luther, Do you feel that you have been saved, forgiven?
He answered, No, but I'm as sure as there's a God in heaven,
For feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving -
My warrant is the word of God, none else is worth believing!'

'Though that my heart should feel condemned for want of one sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart whose word cannot be broken.
I'll trust in His unfailing love 'til soul and body sever.
For though all else shall fall away His word shall stand forever'.

Praise God! I've finished - one Jew, Rabbi Samoliah (sp?), said this in the third century: 'Moses gave us 365 prohibitions, 248 positive commandments. David, in Psalm 15, reduced them to 11. Isaiah in chapter 33, verses 14 and 15 made them 6. Micah, in chapter 6 and verse 8, binds them to 3. But Habakkuk, by the Holy Ghost of God, brings them to 1: the just shall live by faith'. My friend, whatever's in your life - whether it's sin, sadness or sorrow - faith in God is the only answer.

Our dear Father, we thank Thee for the faith of the Son of God that has been imputed to our lives, and for His righteousness that is our righteousness, and for that faith that we can live by. Lord, help us to go on, it is hard, there are things in life: illness, sickness, sorrow, grief, temptation, perplexities, trials, problems of all sorts - but Lord, the just are to live by faith. Help us to look to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary and draw from Thee and none else. For Christ's sake, Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - November 2000

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Majoring On The Minors: Habakkuk - Chapter 5

"The Welcome Woes"

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Habakkuk 2:5-20

1. *Woe To Ill-Gotten Gain (verses 6-8)*
2. *Woe To Inhumanity (verses 9-11)*
3. *Woe To Iniquity (verses 12-14)*
4. *Woe To Intoxication (verses 15-17)*
5. *Woe To Idolatry (verses 18-20)*

If you don't know where Habakkuk is now, you'll never know where it is! Habakkuk chapter 2, and we're finishing - God willing - this evening, chapter 2 of Habakkuk. You'll remember that there's three chapters to this little book. The first chapter dealt with the problem, the burden, of Habakkuk. Then the second chapter dealt - we've seen a little bit of it, verses 1 to 5 - it deals with the vision that Habakkuk was given. Then we'll see next week - God willing - the prayer that Habakkuk prays.

Let's look at chapter 2 again, we'll begin reading at verse 5. You remember last week we dealt with verses 1 to 4, and we thought about the vision that was given to him: that he was to write it down, he was to publish it, it was to be clear and plain, it was for an appointed time - he was to be patient, he was to wait on it. And you remember that we saw that the message and the answer that Habakkuk was given, is the answer of God to all ages, and all people - that the just shall live by faith.

So we pick up the reading at verse 5, and we're reading right through to verse 20: "Yea also, because he transgresseth" - that's the Chaldeans, the Babylonians - "by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! How long? And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory. For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him".

Let's come before the Lord, and ask His help in a word of prayer. Let us pray: Dear God, we acknowledge that the Lord Jehovah is in His holy temple, and we bow in silence before Thee to hear what Thy word would have to say. Lord speak to us, we wait for Thee, we ask that Thou mayest come, in Jesus' name, Amen.

If you were to turn now with me to Acts chapter 17, for a moment, Acts chapter 17. We don't have time to read the whole passage, but we have there the account of Paul the apostle. Paul the apostle is standing in main street in the city of Athens. He stands there and, as we read in verse 16, he is absolutely angry and livid for some reason. This ancient classical city is walled with temples and false gods. What was Paul's reaction? He went into the city and he saw altars, he saw statues, to an 'unknown god'. All the gods of Rome, all the gods of Greece in different names, all the gods of Babylon that there have ever been - all set before him, temples to different deities, statues to a god that they did not know, in order to be on the safe side, in case there was one that they hadn't found out about. But as we find Paul in Acts 17 and verse 16, we read this - it says that his spirit was stirred within him. J.B. Phillips translates it like this: 'While Paul was there, his soul was exasperated beyond belief at the sight of the city completely given to idolatry'. The Amplified Bible puts it like this: 'Now while Paul was waiting upon them at Athens, his spirit was grieved and roused to anger as he saw a city full of idols'.

Why was Paul angry? That's what verse 16 of chapter 17 of Acts means: Paul was angry, his blood, his righteous blood, boiled at the sight of such idolatry in this city - but why was he angry? There are several reasons. He was angry at the power of false religion to delude people - are you not angry at that? As a believer in Christ are you not angry at the cults, and the false religionists, and the apostate protestants - are you not angry at it? How they delude men and women and send them to hell - he was angry at the reckless devotion to those powerless gods that men, women and children were bowing down to. He was angry at the staggering wealth that was sacrificially given to build these temples, to these fraudulent deities before him. He was so angry that Christ was not given the love and the devotion that He ought to have been given as the God of all eternity. He was angry that men's hearts of flesh were crying out in their need, but they were crying out to gods of stone. He was angry that the atoning blood of Christ was trampled underfoot. He was angry that the intellectuals mocked at the resurrection, at the ascension of the living Son of God. He was angry that people that were walking around in this city were one heart's beat from an eternal, inconceivable, horrible hell - yet one heartbeat away, they could eat, they could drink, and they could be merry.

Paul was angry that the devil had a hold on men and women - that men were captives to fear, to lust, and then the devil himself would take them to the bottomless pit. Is it any different today? Did the prophet not say that there is nothing new under the sun? We as God's people, and God's children - as we look into a world that is more godless than our generation, or indeed this century has ever known - do we not look and does it not stir us up? Do we not stir ourselves as we look to a world that will give money, that will give devotion to any god, any pastime, any intellectual belief, they will do anything for some kind of notion of salvation - but they will never bow the knee to Christ! Does that not make you angry? Can I ask you: are you angry? As a Christian, are you angry? Have you anger within you? And if you're not angry, why is it? Why is it that the church militant today, is no longer militant? Why is it that we do not go on the attack? Why is it that we fear? Why is it that we hesitate? What is it that chills our urgency? Have we not got a message? Why do we keep it within four walls? Why do we feel fear as we come to a loved one, or even to someone that we do not know, and we try to share the Gospel - why is it that in today's generation we can't find the guts to do it?

What were David's words to his brother? Remember young David, and he went and he took the lunch, the bread and cheese, to his brothers at the order of his father. They laughed at him because he was saying: 'Well, what are you going to do about this big guy, Goliath? Are you not going to face him?' - and they

laughed at this young whipper-snapper that was talking big. David turned round to him and he said: 'Is there not a cause?'. Friends tonight, is there not a cause? Is there not a cause to be angry? Is there not a cause to have our spirits stirred within us? What we need today is a baptism of holy anger! There is a command in the word of God - there are many commands: there is the command to be saved, there's the command to be baptised, there's the command to be ye filled with the Holy Spirit - but there is also the command to be angry and sin not! Of course, many of us get angry and sin - because we get angry at the wrong times, at the wrong things, with the wrong motives. But there is an anger, the anger of God Almighty, the anger that is in a heartbeat, a drumbeat, with the very heart of God - an echo of God's heart within our hearts and souls, a heartbeat of holy anger - the actual anger of God, by His Spirit, within our beings. Do you have it?

Are you angry? If there's anything wrong with Gospel preaching today - and there's plenty wrong with it, but if there's one thing wrong with it, it's this: that the anger of God is no longer preached. The anger of God, the wrath of God, and that is depicted in the law of God. Whenever the law is not preached - and let me say: when the Gospel is preached, we are not saved through the law, but the law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. If we do not preach the law, death will not be realised by the person we are preaching to. If they don't hear that they have broken every law of God, that they have fallen short of God, that they have angered God, that the condemnation and the wrath of God is upon them, they have no hope of being saved! One scholar put it like this: 'The Gospel that is preached today, it neither wounds nor heals'. A strange thought, that the Gospel should wound a person, isn't it? But the Gospel wounds a person to the deepest depths of their soul, when they realise that they can do nothing, when they realise that they are so depraved before God that even their very righteousnesses are as filthy rags in His sight - and nothing from themselves, within themselves, or that they can create, can be acceptable in the sight of a holy God.

Do we preach the anger of God? Do we preach that you must die to live? Do we preach that God is holy, and in order to come to Him, we must be holy as He is holy - but we cannot be holy because we are sinners, and the only holiness that we can have is the imputed holiness of the righteous, sinless, spotless Lamb of God? That's the Gospel! It wasn't realised as much in the Old Testament, of course, but it was still the Gospel. This was the way the prophets preached, you know. Look with me quickly to a few passages of scripture in the minor prophets - Hosea, straight after the book of Daniel: Daniel, Hosea - Ezekiel, Daniel, then Hosea. We notice from the minor prophets, and indeed the major prophets, that when these prophets were delivering their message they always began with the law. They always began with the sin of the people, how the people had broken God's law, God's anger towards the people, the wrath that was abiding on them at that moment.

[In] Hosea chapter 1 and verse 2 you see it, the second half of the verse - right through it, but look at the second-half: '...for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord'. Turn to the next book, Joel, Joel chapter 1 and verse 5, again in the first few verses starting off this book you can see it. Straight away the prophet Joel hits them between the eyes with their sin: 'Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth'. Turn to the next book, Amos chapter 1, Amos chapter 1 and verse 3: 'Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof' - verse 6 - 'For three transgressions of Gaza' - verse 9 - 'For three transgressions of Tyrus' - verse 13 - 'For three transgressions of the children of Ammon' - and so on throughout that book, continually Amos presents them with their sin.

Look at Obadiah, the next book, chapter 1 and verse 3 - and straight away, as soon as he opens his mouth, he is confronting the people with their sin. Verse 3: 'The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?'. Jonah is the next book, who in chapter 1 and verse 2, Jonah is told by God: 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me'. The next book is Micah, in chapter 1 and verse 5 and verse 7: 'For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of

Judah?' - the places where they worshipped false gods - 'Are they not Jerusalem?', verse 7, 'All the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot'.

Do you see the pattern? I could go on right throughout the Old Testament prophets, all of them, and that is the pattern. They preached the holiness of God, they preached the failure of men and women, of boys and girls, to reach the holiness of God - but today in our generation, it is not 'PC', politically correct, to preach sin, to preach the righteousness of God, and to preach the unrighteousness of men. These preachers preached against sin. Hamish McKenzie said that this type of preaching, hell fears it, earth requires it, heaven ordains it - and do you know what I have found in my short lifespan? God blesses it. It's the only message that God blesses, because if God is to save a sinner and heal a sinner, they must be wounded from their own self-righteousness, their own sinfulness, their own lack of being able to approach into the very presence of God. Woe is onto me if we preach not this Gospel!

So, now God answers Habakkuk. Habakkuk's question was what? 'What about these wicked people? What are You going to do about them, Lord? Are You not going to come in judgement? Are You not going to come upon them and judge them?'. I've called our study: 'The Welcome Woes', because Habakkuk - although they're not very nice things that are said to him - Habakkuk welcomed them because they were God's answer to his prayer. I want to look at these five different woes. It's interesting that history is punctuated with nations who trampled, time after time across the world, countries under their feet, men's blood and bodies beneath their armies - but God says: 'Woe unto you'.

The first woe that Habakkuk is given by God, that he delivers, is: woe to ill-gotten gain - it is found in verses 6 to 8 that we've read already. First of all, in verse 6 you see halfway through God says: 'Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his!'. In other words, ill-gotten gain. God pictures Babylon here as deceptive moneylenders, who are heavy with the debts to the nations that they have conquered. They have conquered so many nations, they have raped and pillaged them, and ravaged them of all the wealth that they have, that now they have amassed such a wealth, such a great weight, that he says: 'ladeth himself with thick clay!' at the end of the verse. It's like pouring mud upon you, the wealth that they have accumulated by taking from others. But God says that this great debt that they have accumulated through their wars, and their empire seeking, in verse 7 He says that one day is coming when the debts will be collected. The day is coming, and He uses two words, where there will be a nasty bite, and they will be vexed suddenly - verse 7: 'that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them'. There is a day coming when all those that they have robbed, and fleeced, and mistreated in ill-gotten gain, when they will turn like an angry dog upon them and bite them like a serpent. That word 'vex' means to shake violently, to pick up a man and turn him upside-down and get the money out of him! To take every debt that they had, and what God would do is He would throw the Chaldeans to the nations - as the verse says - as booties unto them.

These five woes, before we go any further, they're easy to apply to Babylon, aren't they? They're even easy to apply to Judah, and we ought to apply them to Judah, because these sins were happening within God's people - but what about us? I want, as we go through these five woes, to ask ourselves as individuals, as the nation of the United Kingdom, do we think we are getting away with it? It may be debts to ourselves, it may be national debt, but one day - God says - that those who have ill-gotten gain, the divine Debt Collector will bring pay day! People may forget, history might forget, but God never forgets. God says in Numbers 32:23 - and let every person dabbling in sin listen how serious it is - God says: 'Be sure your sin will find you out'. How many Christians are there in business - since I have come into the Lord's work it makes me ashamed - 'Tell it not in Gath' - of Christian businessmen who fleece their employees, who stick the boot in at every opportunity. You know about, don't you? The testimony that they bring before them and after them, because of the way that they treat people - and God says, whether it be in a personal, moral way, or in business, or

wherever, God says: 'God is not mocked, His name will not be trodden in the dirt - but whatsoever a man or a woman soweth, that shall they also reap'. One day, no matter how unfair it may seem at this moment in time, internationally or individually in your personal life, one day the tables will be turned. Woe unto ill-gotten gain.

Secondly: woe to inhumanity. Verses 9 to 11, look at it: 'Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!'. The Chaldeans, the Babylonians, had become covetous - they were self-exalting, proud people - and what that usually brings is unfairness and inhumanity. Look at verse 9, God describes them like eagles, eagles who set up their nest on a high mountain, and they do it for the purpose, that they think it will be impregnable to predators. If they go up on a mountain, if they go high enough, nobody will be able to get to them. Verse 10, it says that: 'Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people'. Did you know that Nebuchadnezzar made his house of all the plundered remains of the conquered cities that he trampled underfoot? God says to this great empire: 'You may set yourself like an eagle upon a mountain, and think that nobody will touch you, and nobody will get to you. You may make yourself luxurious by the spoil of your enemies and your victims, but God says: 'Woe to inhumanity'. You may have carried many people away with you, but He says in verse 11, that the very stone of your habitation - your house - will 'cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it'. In other words, the very masonry, the very timber within your house will testify to what you are doing to those around you. Verse 10: 'Thou hast sinned against thy soul'!

You remember Cain slew Abel? The first murder, the first murderer, and what happened? God summoned Cain before His holy face, and He asked him: 'Where is your brother?'. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' - and what was it that God said to him? In Genesis 4 and 10, He said: 'The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground'. There is the blood of millions, there is the cry of unborn babies, there is the cry of the exploited poor that we were thinking about last night, there is the cry as we thought about last Monday night of persecuted Christians, of victims of terrorism, of personal abuse - there is the cry of a multitude of innocents that have cried in righteousness to God, but God has heard them, and God will answer! And woe to all those who partake in inhumanity! You're here tonight, you might not be saved, you might be dabbling in the world, you might be a backslider - well, look at verse 10, because it says this: 'Thou hast sinned against thy soul'. The sooner the better that people who are sinners, and dabbling in sin, realise that they don't just sin against God, they don't just sin against the people that they're exploiting or harming, but they actually sin against their eternal soul - and the end thereof, the wages of that sinning and harming and mutilating of that soul, will be hell! Beware that you do not sin against your soul.

Obadiah spoke to another empire, it was the Edomite empire, and he spoke in the same way - talking about them in verse 3 of the chapter as eagles. But He said that you're setting yourselves up as eagles, God said: 'Though thou exalt thyself as eagles from there will I bring thee down'. Their sin in verse 9, look at it, was covetousness - it was the sin of their age, it is the sin of our age, of every empire, of every government, and of every individual, I believe, that does not have Christ in their life - it is their sin! You think about it for a moment, is it not the sin of the age, the cry: 'More, more, more!?' Is it not the cry of even the church of God: 'More, more, more!?' And, God forgive us, even some of the preachers of the word of God: 'More, more, more!?' And how many preachers, pilgrim characters, Christian servant-like attitudes, have been destroyed because of the love of money and things? You know the tele-evangelists, the evangelistic statesmen, with the fancy rings, the fancy suits, the fancy hair - destroyed because of covetousness. Woe to inhumanity.

Thirdly: woe to iniquity. Verses 12 to 14, look at it, you see what God is saying here: 'Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!' - He is saying that the cup of iniquity, Babylon's cup of iniquity, is swiftly filling because they are building their great empire, their cities, with blood. They are establishing them by iniquity, they have used the riches of plundered cities to build Babylon. But look at verse 13: 'Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and

the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?' - what does that mean? 'Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire', what does that mean? Think about these Chaldeans, going through cities, poor people, rich people, plundering all the riches, their temples, their jewels, bringing them back to their home city of Babylon, living around it all - they're building their city bigger and bigger, the skyscrapers, the institutions, the government, everything they're building bigger and bigger - do you know what God says in verse 13? They're doing it for the fire.

What does He mean? God is permitting them to do it for His big bonfire. One day it's all going to go up in smoke, it's going to be the end of it, and this great city that historians tell us was 15 square miles, with 350 foot high walls, 87 feet thick, six chariots could go along it at one time - they were 35 feet below the ground, the walls, so that no one could tunnel under into the city! There were 250 watchtowers, 53 temples, 180 altars to Ishtar (sp?). Isaiah, in chapter 14, describes this great city of Babylon as the golden city - but God says, listen to this! God says: 'All the blood, all the sweat, all the tears, of this world, of Babylon, of any world or country, of any man or woman who was without Christ, all of it is in vain!' Why? For except the Lord build a house, they labour in vain that build it. Oh, the sooner this old world realises this the better. The sooner that they realise that it's nothing without Christ in this world - and Babylon, you know, is a type, it's a picture of all of the worldly religion, the worldly system that is a living without Christ, a godless power that denies Christ and lifts themselves up as God. But this word, and even the rest of the word of God, especially the book of the Revelation, testifies that soon it will all perish! Why? Because Jesus is coming again, the word of God says in Daniel chapter 2 and [verse] 45 that He, the Lord Jesus Christ, is that great stone that is cut out of the mountain without hands - and He will break to pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, the gold - He'll destroy all of the nations of men, and He will set Himself up as Lord and Master of them all. Hallelujah!

Verse 14, is that not what He says? 'Habakkuk, this is your message, this is your answer. Look into the future, you see what's happening now, but look up' - and let me say that this was the message of the book of the Revelation, because we forget sometimes that the book of the Revelation is a letter. It is a letter to persecuted Christians, and what John - and what the Holy Ghost, the Lord Jesus Christ through John - was telling these Christians: 'You're being fed to the lions, you're being put to the sword and crucified upside-down - but look up! Look at God's programme, look at what's happening up here, and know that in end I will triumph'. That's the message, that's God's message to you. If you're going through trial, if you're going through tribulation, if you're going through all sorts of perplexities and temptation, the message is this: 'Look forward, for there is a day coming when there will be no more pain, no more exploitation, there will be no more injustice or cruelty, no more sorrow or sinfulness - but the Lord shall reign!' - and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge, not of sin, but the knowledge of the glory of God. What a day that will be, when the Lord Chief Justice will reign in His earth, and even the animals won't exploit one another! Isn't that amazing?

But fourthly and quickly, look at it: woe to intoxication. Woe to ill-gotten gain, inhumanity, iniquity - verses 15 to 17: woe to intoxication. You see, what he is saying here is that alcohol was used to entice others to sin. Verse 15: 'Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!'. If you look at verse 5, you see that that's how the Babylonians rose to power: 'Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people'. His drive, his desire, to inhabit the earth and swallow it all up as his empire was driven by alcohol. You can see it within the word of God, and throughout it, that these men were given totally to wine, wine motivated them to their brutish behaviour that we've already studied.

You can see it in Daniel chapter 5, that it went right throughout the whole Babylonian empire - and in the end, in Daniel chapter 5 at the very end of the chapter, you find that it was the downfall of the very

Babylonian empire. You remember Belshazzar, in his debauched drunken orgy, and he cursed God and he mocked God in blasphemy and sacrilege - and there was the writing on the wall, and maybe it's God saying to someone here that you're weighed in the balance and found wanting. 'In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old'. What does that mean? It means this: that Belshazzar was killed, the empire changed from the Babylonians to the Medo-Persian. They began through drink, but they were damned through drink.

I can't stress this enough, but there are four things that I want to say from this passage about alcohol. The first thing is this: that it entices sexual sin. Look at verse 15, it says that they were making people drunken that they may look upon their nakedness. You see, what alcohol does, as an intoxicating poison, it lowers our personal inhibitions about certain things - and we do things when we are drunk that we would not even consider when we are sober. You don't believe me? Look at the word of God, Noah - he didn't do it, but he had something done to him. He was in his tent because he had made a vineyard to himself and planted it after the flood - imagine the man of God, Noah, he'd got drunken from his own hands. He was in the tent, and it says that his son uncovered his nakedness - I'm not saying and going into what this is this evening, because it's not appropriate at this moment in time, but it was the sin of homosexuality I believe, and drink was the origin of that sin.

Lot: you remember? He's drunken, from whose hand? Not even his own hand, but the hands of his very daughters - why? Because they wanted to raise up seed from him - and drink was the origin of incest, as the two of them in a cave slept with their own father. This is what drink brought into the world - such sexual sins, and you've only to look outside of this hall this evening to see it. How many girls are taken unawares, because they can't even remember what happened the night before?

Secondly: there is shame, because it says that they uncovered their nakedness, and that was a shameful thing to do. That was their motive in doing it - but God was saying: 'What you have done to others, taking advantage of them, that will be done unto you'. Verse 16: 'Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory'. Have you ever seen a drunk man being sick? It's a detestable thing. God's saying: 'You have filled My cup of wrath so much, that you're going to drink it my boy, and you're going to spew it - and that will be the glory that you have left'. God doesn't mince His words, does He? In verse 17 we see that their drinking brought squander, because they spent all that they had on their drunkenness, they wasted the resources that had been delivered and achieved by their conquering of other nations.

Let me say this - I couldn't find any statistics for the United Kingdom, but in the US of A at this very moment alcoholism is the number three health risk after heart disease and cancer! Every twentieth alcoholic is under the age of 13! 3.3 million teenagers have drink problems! More than 42 million children live in alcoholic-dependant houses, and 50% of them will become alcoholics themselves. Four out of ten hospital admissions, 50% of car accidents, 55% of arrests, 64% of murders, 60% of child abuse cases, are all alcohol-related - and every 23 minutes someone dies because of a drunk driver. Is it any wonder, that in Proverbs chapter 20 - and listen to this, Christian - in verse 1 God says: 'Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise'.

Let me say, that one thing that has grieved me is the Christian that likes a tittle. I have heard of youth leaders bringing their Youth Fellowship to the pub in this land, in this city. I have heard of them bringing them to their home, sending them to the fridge to open it and to take a beer - youth leaders! People who feel that there's nothing wrong with a social drink, denominations that have shares in breweries, the social drinking trend - what is it? It's from the devil himself! God has said what drink is, God has said what drink brings, and if you're the Christian and you're dabbling in it - you're a fool! For in verse 15 you read that

you're not to take it because it's to take advantage of the weaker brother, and if you're a Christian and you're drinking socially, or you're drunken on a regular basis - you are sinning against God and His word. Because there is the law of the weaker brother, and you could be causing another weaker Christian - you might think you can handle it - but you could be causing them to be a drunk. I don't know, but there's very few things grieve me more than this. The word of God pronounces upon you, I believe, that if you cause one of these little ones of Christ to sin, it were better that a millstone were put around your neck and you were thrown into the sea.

Quickly, my time is running on - as usual! The fifth woe is this: woe to idolatry. Verse 18 to 20, look at verse 18 and 19: 'What profiteth the graven image' - this is their last sin that He condemns - 'that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it'. Sure, we all know that, don't we? Sure, you make something with your own hands - whether it's a wooden god or not - you've made it, how can it be a god and better than you if you've made it? Yet there are thousands of people all over our land, and every week they bow before idols. All over the world, and it does them no good - but it does do them evil, because the word of God says that behind every idol there is a demon, there is a system of evil. There is nothing in them of themselves, but it is absolute foolishness - can an idol talk? Could an idol answer Habakkuk? Could an idol teach the word of God to Habakkuk? Of course it couldn't! But an idol is just like the world, isn't it? What does it say in verse 19? That they are over laden with gold, precious things, to the outward appearance they are so appealing, they're so beautiful - you could almost fall down and worship them - but there's not a breath in them. It's just like the world, isn't it? Whether it's a tittle, whether it's illicit sexual behaviour, whether it's gambling that we were talking about last evening - no matter what sin it is, even self-righteousness 'church-ianity' - no matter what it is, it's nice on the outside, but there's not a breath of life in it.

I think this is tremendous in verse 20. We see this, that there may not be a word of exhortation, or encouragement, or direction, or anything from a wooden dead idol - but listen, there's a God in heaven who knows what is going on, who knows your heartaches, who knows your concerns, your temptations, your tribulations - there is the Lord Jehovah who is in His holy temple, and let all the world keep silence before Him! Christian, take encouragement: God is in control. He is on His throne, He - if I can say it reverently - is in the driving seat, and He in His own time will answer. He says: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay' - and as Habakkuk was told, though it tarry, Christian, though it tarry - wait for it.

Can I saying in closing: have you idols in your life? Have you? Let me put it another way - you might say: 'Of course I don't have idols in my life, David, what do you think I am? A pagan?' - let me ask you this question: has Christ got all of you? For that's the same question. What does the hymnwriter say?

'The dearest idol I have known,
What'er that idol be.
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee'.

Do you have them? Do you know what the word of God says, and I want us to think about this for one minute. It says this - you've been listening to five woes - do you know what the word of God says? Judgement begins in the house of God, with you. Do you want a revival? Do you? I would love a revival, but it will never happen if we don't deal with our sin - won't happen! We've got to deal with the sin that is in our lives, and as the word of God says: we've got to break up that fallow ground, that ground that hasn't been farmed on for years has to be broken up - break it up, for it's time to seek the Lord until He come and rain righteousness upon us! Charles Finney said: 'Take a pen and a paper, and write on one side of a page sins of

omission - the things that you don't do - and sins of commission - the sins that you do do. Write them down before your eyes, think about them, try to recollect them, and look on them, and weep upon them, and confess them before God' - that's breaking up the fallow ground, mourn and confess your sin!

Joel chapter 2 verses 12 and 13 put it like this: 'Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments' - I don't want words, I don't want prayers, I don't want sermons, I don't want books, I don't want reputations, I want your heart - 'turn unto the Lord for he is gracious and merciful'. In the revival in Lewis - and you've heard me talk about it before - the fire came down, and I heard Duncan Campbell on a tape preaching on that subject of Elijah on Mount Carmel, and the fire coming upon the sacrifice. Now he said something, and it was his own imagination, but it was a good illustration. Here it is: he likes to think that after the prophets of Baal were cutting themselves, and crying and weeping, for their god to answer by fire - when Elijah came up and he made the sacrifice, and you remember what he did, he poured all the water three times around it and on top of it to make it hard for God. He likes to think that the animal sacrifice that was on the altar, all those little bits of meat, flesh, that were placed all over - that perhaps there was one little bit of meat that was just lying at the side of the altar. It wasn't until Elijah took that bit of meat and just placed it onto the altar, until the fire came.

Friend, Christian friend, the fire of God will not come upon your life until all the flesh is on the altar. What about it?

Let's pray, and let us all ask ourselves as our heads are bowed: is everything on God's altar? You can fool me, you can fool yourself, but you can't fool God. Let's face it: He isn't going to bless without it. It's as simple as that. There might be a backslider here this evening, and they know all too well what we have been talking about - because God's woe has been on their life because of the sin that's in it. You're maybe not saved, and you recognise what we're talking about - well, why not get right with God tonight, and come to Christ? You can speak with me at the door, you can get saved right where you are, where you sit - but listen: Jesus Christ is coming again, and He'll reign here, and if you're not His you'll not reign with Him.

Our Father, we thank Thee for this word - oh, it's powerful - and all we can say is this: in this sin cursed world we ask for a breath of Thy Spirit. Come and revive us, oh Lord, mercy drops are just about round us falling - but, oh, for the showers we plead. Lord, save souls here tonight if souls need to be saved. Bring backsliders back, take our full commitment in surrender - we pray, dear God, that the fire may fall. And we say Lord, 'Maranatha', come and deliver us from this place, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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Majoring On The Minors: Habakkuk - Chapter 6

"Revive Thy Work"

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Habakkuk 3:1-2

- 1. He Prays In Faith (verse 1)**
- 2. He Knew God's Fame (verse 2)**
- 3. He Had Great Fear (verse 2)**
- 4. He Pleaded For Fire (verse 2)**

As I said, after this evening we'll only have one more study in the book of Habakkuk. We're looking this evening at just two verses from chapter 3, verses 1 and 2, and then - God willing - next week we hope to look at verses 3 to 19, the remainder of the little book, and the remainder of chapter 3. Now let me say, before we read these verses, that this message has weighed very heavily upon my heart - especially today, as I meditated upon it. Let me say that I hope that when I come before you, that each message that I bring has been pulled - as it were - through my soul before I bring to your soul. I can testify this evening that this message was a hard one to pull through.

Verse 1 and 2: "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy".

If you were to turn with me to Isaiah chapter 65 and verse 8 this evening, there is a verse there that displays a spiritual principle that is applicable not only to the New Testament church of God, but to the Old Testament people of God, the children of Israel. In Isaiah 65 and verse 8, part of the verse, we read this: 'As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children' - as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. I want to say that this is the most fundamental work of God in our world today, where the people of God - the New Testament people of God - travail, and only when they travail, they go through pain and anguish and travail, will they bring forth their children.

Let me ask you a natural question this evening: can ordinary children be born without pain? Of course they can't! The natural world, the natural system is that childbirth brings pain. Can there be birth without travail? The natural world testifies of it that without prevailing, without travail, without persistence, without hard sweat, work and tears - whether it be in the natural world of childbirth, or even in the natural farming world of harvest - without travail there will be no harvest, there will be no fruit, there will be no blessing. Now, the natural world testifies of these things. Yet how is it, as the church of Jesus Christ, as the children of God, we ourselves cannot see that it is the same in the spiritual realm - that nothing is possible with God without travail.

Do we travail when we see a starving child upon the television? Do we travail when a loved one dies, and we watch them as they are lowered into the grave? Do we travail in physical, mental, emotional, pain in our lives and the lives of those we love? We shed tears, we have anguish, we have pain, we have the biblical word 'travail' - yet we can watch as the souls of the damned enter into eternity. While the world around us perish, we do not travail.

Was it not Jacob in the Old Testament that we remember that it says that he travailed until he prevailed with God? But let me ask us all, and let me ask the church of Jesus Christ at large today, is anyone doing that

now? Are there any Jacobs of God now? You remember that his name was changed, he was changed to 'Israel' because he was a prince, he prevailed with men and with God - but is there any man in our world today that prevails not just with men, but with God? We pray, we pray for a few moments daily, we're content to spend a few minutes a day on our knees - and we pride ourselves in the fact that we have given some time to God - and what happens is: we expect extraordinary things from God, without extraordinary efforts on our behalf!

What was it the great saint said? 'Expect great things from God, then attempt great things for God'. Now let me say this: I believe in the providence of God, I believe in the absolute sovereignty of God - and perhaps I would challenge that there's none believes it as strong as I - but let me say that there is a spiritual law, and it is this: that whatsoever a man soweth, he reaps. You can sow for good in your life, or you can sow for bad. You can sow with sin, or you can sow with prayers and tears. But there is a spiritual law - although God is sovereign, although His providence prevails and everything is according to His will in this world - there is a law that if we weep, if we pray, if we shed tears, if we fast, if we supplicate the throne of God in prayer - if we sow in this way, it is inevitable, and God is obliged, that we will reap a harvest. We will reap, the word of God says, in due season if we faint not.

We ended last Monday evening on the subject of revival. We're taking it up again at this passage, and our subject this evening is: 'Revive Thy Work, O God'. You remember last week we went through the minor prophets, some of them, and we looked at how they presented the children of God with their sins before they even brought the message of God, of how they could be redeemed and brought back from their sins. You remember what was called upon them, the Lord says: 'Rend your hearts, and not your garments'. He said: 'I don't want your money, I don't want your pride, I don't want your sacrifices or your incense, I want your broken hearts - I want them before me, for to obey is better than sacrifice'.

Turn with me to the book of Joel - you have Daniel, then you have Hosea, and then you have Joel - and again in this little prophecy you have the same pattern within the word of God. In chapter 1, verse 13 and 14, we have what God expects of his leaders in the Old Testament and, I believe, what He expects of His leaders now, here in this present age. Verse 13 and 14, God says: 'Gird yourselves, and lament', cry, 'ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord'. Chapter 2 and verse 15: 'Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly'.

We read of it in the book of Daniel, if you were to turn to Daniel and chapter 9, we read that God led Daniel to bow upon his face in chapter 9 and verses 3 and 4. We read this, that Daniel testified: 'And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments'. I read the story, today, of the life of a man called John Smith. His biographer wrote these words, and I want you to listen carefully about this man's life, he said: 'I have often seen him come downstairs in the morning, after spending several hours in prayer, with his eyes swollen from weeping. He would soon introduce the subject of his anxiety by saying: 'I am a broken-hearted man. Yes, indeed, I am an unhappy man - not for myself, but on account of others. God has given me such a sight of the value of precious souls that I cannot live if souls are not saved. Oh, give me souls, or else I die!'.

I believe that Habakkuk was a man with a spirit like that. We can tell it from these two verses that we've read together this evening, look at them again: 'A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet' - and his prayer is found in verse 2 - 'O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years,

in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy'. This is the first thing that I want us to see, this evening, from these two verses. One: he prayed in faith, he prayed in faith. 'A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth' - strange word, what does it mean? Well, it seems from Psalm 7 - which is another 'Shigionoth' Psalm - and remember that this passage we're reading this evening, the whole of chapter 3 is a Psalm in itself. You can see that, because three times within it - in verse 3, verse 9, and verse 13 - you have the word 'Selah' that you find right throughout the book of Psalms. All that means is: a little pause, a musical pause. But also this word 'Shigionoth', it seems to be a musical setting of the Psalm, and you can see that from verse 19 - the second half of it, at the very end where it says: 'To the chief singer on my stringed instruments'. In other words this was a setting, a musical setting, a way that this Psalm that Habakkuk had written, a way that it ought to be played and performed. The Amplified Translation of the Bible translates this word 'Shigionoth', it means: 'set to wild, enthusiastic, and triumphal music'.

This - as we have found in the book of Habakkuk, chapter 1 was the burden of Habakkuk, chapter 2 was the vision of Habakkuk, and chapter 3 is the song of Habakkuk. What kind of a song is it? Just as the Amplified Bible translates it, it's a wild song, it's an enthusiastic song, it's a victorious, a triumphal song - and it may even mean, 'Shigionoth', that it is a song for the wanderers of God. Whatever this little word 'Shigionoth' means, I believe that it means this: confidence. Habakkuk had confidence. This Psalm that we read from verses 1 to 19, the whole of the Psalm, is a Psalm of praise, a Psalm of assurance toward his God, that he knew what his God was doing in the world - he was sure that God was in control!

Think about it for a moment: is that the Habakkuk that we have been familiar with over the past few weeks, is it? Full of questions, asking God: 'God, what are You doing in Your world? Why are You raising the Chaldeans? Why are You picking a more evil people than Your own people to judge them, and to chastise them? Lord, what are You doing?' - questioning His ways and His works. But in this beautiful chapter, we have this rhapsody of faith - for this man, Habakkuk, has seen what God is doing in His world, because God has revealed to him that the just shall live by faith. So Habakkuk turns and he sings a Psalm of faith - that he in the midst of all his sorrow, in the midst of the degradation and impending punishment, that he will trust his God.

What is this? We find it in Philippians chapter 4 - you've no need to turn to it, you know it well - Philippians 4 and verses 6 and 7 where we read: 'Be careful for nothing', don't be anxious about anything, 'but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God'. You know, that's the way God wants us to come to Him. He doesn't want us to come in doubting, He doesn't want us to come as double-minded men and women, blown about. He doesn't want us coming doubting His power, His ability, His sovereignty in the world - but God loves to inhabit the praises of His people. He loves to come into our lives, into our assemblies, into our worlds, into our circumstance, because we praise Him, because we know the potential of the God whom we serve.

No doubt Habakkuk had formulated this Psalm for the people who would go into captivity in Babylon. He had written this Psalm for one reason: to stimulate these people's faith, to bring them to prayer, that when these things that were prophesied in the vision in chapter 2 would come to pass - remember they hadn't come to pass yet - but once they had come upon Judah, that they would have some way to approach their God, that they could pray to their God. For, let's face it, the only answer in any situation in this life is to turn to God in prayer. Do you not notice that Habakkuk's a changed man? He's no longer questioning God, but he's trusting God. It's not simply because prayer changes things - and that's true, prayer does change things - but more importantly than all that: prayer changes people!

In the book of Genesis and chapter 20 and verse 7, we read of the man Abraham. Abraham travelled into a foreign land, and there was there a King Abimelech, and he lied to King Abimelech. He had a beautiful wife, and he says: 'Right, I'll say she's my sister, because if he finds out she's my wife, he'll kill me to marry

her'. What happened was that he told that lie, and God brought a curse on all Abimelech's house and the whole nation. Abimelech turned to God and asked God what He was doing, because he was in ignorance of the sin that he was committing going after Abraham's wife - and you remember that God turned in Genesis 20 and verse 7 and said to him of Abraham: 'He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee'. Prophets were praying men, prophets were men who worked on their knees. They were even found, at times, to pray for those that they prophesied against. They were men who were stimulated to pray because they knew, in some circumstances, what the future held - therefore they could pray intelligently before God. And primarily, the fact is this, because they were men of God they realised that the proper object of divine ministry is to abase the soul in the presence of God, and to be drawn out in worship, in adoration and in praise to Him!

God's word comes to Habakkuk, and I want you to see what he does. As God's word comes to this man's soul, after his waiting upon God, he prostrates himself before God in an attitude of praying. I want you to see that Habakkuk's prayer is a prayer of faith. Look at chapter 2 and verse 4, we read there the great promise, the great promise of all ages: 'Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith' - that was God's answer to prayer to Habakkuk. He was wanting to know how the children of Judah were going to get through this experience, and you remember that God told him in verses 1 to 4: 'This is the message, this is the vision. Write it down, tell it abroad, that the just shall live by faith' - that was God's promise to Habakkuk. What did he do? He lifted it up. He took it. He took God's word, and we see in chapter 2 and verse 1 that he sat upon the top of the watchtower, and I believe he had that promise, and he was pleading, he was asking in faith the promise that God has given him - and now, in chapter 3 and verse 2, I believe that he's found the answer to his problem.

Why? Look at verse 2, he says in the first part of it: 'O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid'. Now I say this gently to us all here: I think we underestimate the responsibility that we have as the children of God - why? Because God judges us upon what He tells us to do. In other words, when God reveals something to us, when God gives us a word - just as He gave to Habakkuk 'the just shall live by faith' - God would have judged Habakkuk if he had not lifted that promise up, if he had not claimed it, if he had not supplicated before his God until God brought the realisation of that promise, he would've been judged. And here we have another spiritual law that we find in Proverbs 28 and verse 9, and let this burn into our souls this evening: 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination'.

We think it's the homosexual is the abomination, don't we? Well, they are. We think it's the liar, we think it's the proud look, we think it's those seven sins that are an abomination to God - but God is saying to His people this evening, and throughout all eternity, that: 'If you hear My word and you disobey it, you are an abomination'. Your prayers, and your iniquities, and your sins have separated between you and your God. But Habakkuk listened to God's words, and he pleads in faith, knowing - as we found out last week in chapter 2 and verse 20 - that the God whom he pleads to is the Lord who is in His holy temple, that the whole earth keeps silence before Him. His travail produces a sublime rhapsody of faith, one: because he took his eyes off the surrounding circumstances in his life. Two: because he submitted his circumstances to God in prayer and in faith. Three: because he patiently waited for the word from God upon his request. Four: because when the word was revealed he accepted it, he claimed it - and his perplexity, his anxiety, disappeared. Why? Because he submitted to God. Believer, let me ask you a simple question: have you submitted to God?

Secondly, he knew God's fame. What do I mean by that? Well, if you look at the second verse it says: 'O Lord, I have heard thy speech' - and what that means is, that can be translated: 'I have heard thy fame'. If you look at the margin it may say: 'report'. It's the same meaning as Isaiah chapter 53, where we read there about the report about the Lord's servant, the Lord Jesus Christ - the testimony of Him, His fame, the story about Him. Here we have in verse 2: 'I have heard thy fame' - Habakkuk knew God's fame. He knew the record of God's eternal mighty deeds, and this record - this testimony of who his God is, what God is like, and what his

God has done in the past - it fills him with awe and wonder, it fills him with praise because he believes, in faith, that what God did in former days He is able to do today.

That's what Habakkuk believed then, do we believe that now? Do we? Remember in Habakkuk's day he had to get over what seemed to be happening, remember God had said to him in chapter 1 and verse 5: 'Look ye among the heathen, because I am working a work now, even though you can't see it, it's going on behind closed doors - in spiritual senses - I am working now' - and he was remembering that God, his God, the One with whom he would have to do, was the God of power. We'll see next week that he went into that further in the Psalm from verses 3 to 15, if you even look at verse 15 you see there that he says: 'Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters'. What's he talking about? He's talking about the great exodus from Egypt. He is rejoicing in the fact that, although God has said before the time that the Judeans would go into captivity in Babylon, that the God whom they had was the God who had delivered them in the past from Egypt.

If you turn with me to Psalm 44, you will see there another expression of the God whom they adored. Psalm 44, and in verse 2 we read this: '[Lord] how thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out', verse 10, 'Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves', verse 12, 'Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price', verse 24, 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?'. These people are looking to the past, saying: 'Look what You did in years gone by, Lord, how You delivered Your people. But we, Thy people, now in this day, in this present age, are afflicted by the enemy, and it seems, Lord, that You're [selling us]!'.

Look at verse 1 of Psalm 44: 'We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old', verse 9, 'But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies'. What are they saying? 'Oh God, our help in ages past - but what about our hope for years to come?'. What was their cry? Was it a cry of despair? Is it the cry that we find in Psalm 89 and verse 50, where we read: 'Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people'? 'The whole world, all the nations, are laughing at Thy children. Lord, where are Thy former loving-kindnesses, which Thou swearest unto David in Thy truth? Lord, what are You doing in Your world? Where is Your former glory? Where is respect and vindication for Thy name?'.

Is that not our cry tonight? Is it not? Sure, we know it all too well, what the Lord can do, what the Lord has done in our land in years gone by, in our nation - how God has moved. We read about 1860 and 59, we read about Coleraine in that town that we all know so well. Three young men decided to preach in the open air - and incidentally, young men, know that there is power in preaching in the open air - they walked into that square, that marketplace in the centre around the town hall, and they stood in amazement as 15,000 people just crowded into that gathering. There was absolute silence and you could hear a pin drop, and every word of the preacher was heard by all. Out of that silence there went a cry of a young man as he fell on his knees in conviction of sin. Then there was a cry from here, and a cry from there, and cries all around of penitent sinners under the Holy Ghost's conviction. The town hall was overwhelmed with souls seeking Christ, and the ministers couldn't deal with it all - there was such a move of God in our land! That's right!

We know about it in Wales, where the Spirit of God fell on a man called Evan Roberts, and he changed a nation for Christ. We know all about it in the Hebrides, where a man was lifted up, and men and women were lifted up, and it says that the souls were falling - even before they got to the churches - in conviction of sin. They were like the heather all around the mountains, falling before the face of God! Oh, we know all about it. We may not have seen it with our eyes, but we know what God can do - and we may cry today like this man Habakkuk, we may cry like the children of Israel, we may cry like the man Gideon: 'Oh, Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of?'. The cry of the world to us this evening may be: 'Where is thy God? Where is He?!'

But thirdly, Habakkuk had great fear. This is how he got his spiritual success. You see, Habakkuk had great fear, and we read that in verse 2: 'O Lord, I have heard thy fame', Thy speech, 'and was afraid: O Lord'. You see, what happened was that the word of God filled this man Habakkuk with fear as he realised something of the depravity of his own heart - and remember, he was a prophet of God! He wasn't one of the ordinary sinners, but his heart was so filled with his iniquity and transgression, and the state of the people at large, that like Isaiah he cried out: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips'. He realised - and the sooner the better we realise it - that on the grounds of merit we have nothing to plead, nothing.

Do you know what happened? He learned what the boldest of men of old learned - Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Elijah - that when God speaks, you quake. When God speaks, you listen. When you hear, you must fear, you must listen to what God is saying - and I wonder is there some Christian or unbeliever here, and God has been speaking to you for some time, and you've been hearing but you haven't been fearing! We must fear, and I believe that it's not the world that needs to repent, it's the church of Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ needs to come back to their God, judgement must begin in the house of God, they need to begin to hear the word of God, and fear the word of God, once more. It would do us good to take a lesson from the godless Babylonian Emperor, Belshazzar, who it says of him that when he heard the word of God his countenance changed, his thoughts troubled him so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote against one another.

Habakkuk's success was that he feared the word of God. But fourthly, and finally, not only did he pray in faith, and he knew God's fame, and he had great fear, but he pleaded for fire. If you get nothing else, get this, he said: 'Revive, revive thy work, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy' - what was he asking? 'Lord, revive' - what does that word mean? Well, it simply means to renew, to revive again, to renew, to regenerate, to put life into once more. It's a word that's used in Genesis chapter 7 verse 3 of the fowls of the air that went into the Ark, so that when they were deposited again upon the earth they would reproduce - they would produce life - that's one way the word is used. Then it's used again in Psalm 80 and verse 19, but this time talking about the renewing of life. Then it's used again in Genesis 12 and verse 12, concerning the preserving of life. This means: 'putting life back into dead bones'!

He said: 'Revive thy work'. What is His work? Well, I suspect that the work he was talking about was the work that God had promised him in chapter 1 and verse 5: 'Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you', verse 6, 'For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans' - that is the work that is talked about here. Habakkuk has now turned from despising what God was going to do, and because of the infusion of faith that was injected into his heart from the very Holy Ghost of God, he could now turn and bless the hand that had smitten him! He was now thanking God for a work that he had once despised.

What else can His work possibly be? John Calvin, the great reformer, said that it's probably the condition of His people. Isn't that right? That is God's work, His people - isn't it, really? That is where God works, among His people - and you remember that we have gone in week after week about the condition of the Judeans, how sinful they were! Habakkuk is asking God to revive His name, His reputation, among His people. He's asking Him to do a few things - first of all: he's asking Him to do something for His own cause. In Psalm 138 and verse 7 and 8 we read this: 'Revive, even though we walk in the midst of trouble'. Habakkuk is crying: 'Lord, even though Thy people are into the very depths of hell - metaphorically speaking - in their iniquity and their sin and in their blasphemy, even in the midst of their trouble: revive them! Do something for Thy name'.

Do you know something? God answered his prayer, and in the book of Ezra and chapter 9 and verse 8 we read this - Ezra chapter 9 and verse 8, we read that once the children (and remember that God did bring them into captivity, God didn't stop that because it was in His will), but what God did do was in verse 8 of chapter 9 of Ezra: 'And now for a little space grace hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage'. God revived a small remnant of them. God revived them - and you can even see it in the fiery furnaces of Babylon, the Hebrew children, remember they were in the furnace - in the midst of the trouble God didn't deliver them from Babylon itself, but in the midst of it He revived, He kept a people for himself, He kept His name clean amongst the remnant.

He said in verse 2: 'in the midst of the years' - what does that mean? 'In the midst of the years', well it could mean from the promise that God was going to deal with His people to the actual finishing of the implementation of that judgement - that's what it could mean. That in the middle of it, as we read in Ezra chapter 9, that there would be a small amount of people that would remain faithful to God. John Calvin thought that it meant between Abraham and Christ - because, if you think of it he's right, because if the Jewish nation had been wiped out here because of their sin, if God had judged them, we would not have seen Christ, and the seed would have been cut - Christ's line would have been dead and we would have no Saviour. That's why he pleaded: 'Revive thy work in the midst of the years' - from Abraham to Christ. But do you know what I believe it means more than anything? Habakkuk was saying this: 'God, grant us a gracious revival before ever Thy ultimate purpose for history is worked out in its final fulfilment. Lord, revive us before You come!'

Do you know what I believe? I believe that that's a warrant for me, and it's a warrant for you, to turn to our God - and we cannot halt, we cannot slow down the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in one sense. God's calendar is final, and as we look around at an evil world, and we look at the disasters and the sin and the iniquity that is ripening, and the cup of iniquity that is almost full for this world to drink - God is ready, He's ready to wrap it up like a tablecloth. But I believe here we have a warrant to ask Him: 'Lord, just before You do it, revive us. Revive us once more!'

'Make known' - that's the next thing he asks - 'Make Thyself known', that's what it means. 'In the midst of the years make known' - 'Whatever', this is what he's saying, 'Whatever happens to the nation of Israel and Judah, let not Israel's God be forgotten!'. Whatever happens to the church of Jesus Christ today, oh, please God, let Thy name be vindicated. Let the name of Jehovah, the holy, holy, holy One, never be trodden in the dust! And, as he asks at the end of this verse: 'In wrath remember mercy'. You see, all we can plead - not just as an unsaved sinner, but as a reconciled, regenerate child of God - all we can still plead in the midst of our sin is the mercy of God. As these children were taken into captivity, and the city of Jerusalem was sacked and wrecked, and the halls were demolished, and the temple was pulled down, and there was starvation, and there was hunger, and the bodies littered the streets - and it says that the mothers took their very child and boiled them in a pot to eat them, because of the situation. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, in the midst of it all was crying out to God, yet he could still say: 'It is because of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not'.

That's why we're not wiped out, because in wrath - and I believe that God is angry at His church - in wrath He remembers His mercy. Do you know what my prayer is? I hope your prayer is this, the Psalmist of Psalm 85 verses 4 and 6: 'Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?'. I finish by saying this: why is there no revival? Why? There is no revival because there is no prevailing prayer. Paul said: 'We wrestle not...' - and we wrestle not! There is no revival because there is no fear of God, but there is fear of men. You remember the apostle who stood and declared before his enemies that there is no other name under heaven given amongst men, there was no fear in that man. Elijah stood before the prophets of Baal and mocked them and laughed at them.

Gideon knocked down the high places, the idolatrous statues; he knocked them down for God! Men of courage, men of no fear! Why is there no revival? Because there are no Spirit filled lives!

'Be ye filled with the Holy Ghost' - are you? There's no revival because there's no holiness. Christians are laughed at now because they won't go to certain places, because they won't watch certain films, because they won't hear the name of the Lord Jesus Christ's blasphemed from their television set or wherever. They are seen as eccentric and strange or peculiar, because they seek to live holy lives. Why is there no revival? Because we have cheapened the Gospel to the nightclub! Why is there no revival? Because we take the glory - 'It's my church, my reputation, my books, my achievements, my learning' - it's 'me', 'mine', and not 'Thine'. As someone has said: 'Were we to walk, and were we to be half as hot as we think we are, and a tenth as powerful as we say we are, our Christians would be baptized in blood, not just water and fire'.

Why doesn't Christ vomit us up? Why doesn't He? Do you know something? I don't know why - but, oh that God would lift us out of our rut, and out of our rot, and that He would judge us again and bring a mighty revival! That great evangelist, Gypsy Smith, was asked on one occasion: 'How do you get a revival in your life, in your personal life?'. He stood there, and he said this: 'Stand where you are, man, and take a piece of chalk and draw a circle right around you', and he said, 'stay there on your knees until God revives your soul'. Are you ready for that? I believe that there is a call upon every man and woman in this age, and it's the call of the voice of none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know what He says? This is not for the unbeliever now, this was spoken to a church in the book of the Revelation. Believers: 'Behold', Christ says, 'I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, I will sup with him and he with me'. Do you know what that is? Personal revival in your life, and in mine.

Unite with me tonight, unite with Habakkuk, and say this: 'Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known. In wrath, O Lord, in our sin, remember Thy mercy'.

Let us pray: Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, hear our humble cry. While on others Thou art blessing, do not pass us by. Lord, come and revive the hearts of Thy people we pray. Revive us again, and let the glory as Thou didst promise in time of old, that the glory of the latter house may be greater than the former. Lord, come and do exceeding abundantly more than we could ever ask or even think. Lord, come, come to our hearts, come into our lives, put Thy holy finger on the things that we need to be done with. Revive us Lord, Amen.

Transcribed by Andrew Watkins, Preach The Word - February 2001

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Majoring On The Minors: Habakkuk - Chapter 7

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Habakkuk 3:3-19

1. **THEIR GOD – The Past God Of Israel (verses 3-7)**
2. **OUR GOD – The Present God Of Judah (verses 8-15)**
3. **MY GOD – The Personal God Of Habakkuk (verses 16-19)**

Turn with me to chapter 3 of Habakkuk, chapter 3, and we thought in the last study in Habakkuk of verses 1 and 2 - the first two verses of chapter 3. This is our seventh study, our seventh week, in the book of Habakkuk, and we're finishing it off - and we're going to look, hopefully, if we get through it all, from verses 3 to 19. This is not the last Bible study before Christmas - you don't get off that easily! - but there's another series that we're going to commence next Monday evening in the book of Haggai. So please come back again, we're still on the same subject: 'Majoring on the Minors' - and we're looking at this little minor prophet, the book of Haggai.

You'll all know by now, I hope, that the book of Habakkuk was before the children of Judah went into captivity in Babylon. The book of Haggai is just after they come out of Babylon. So, we're seeing both sides of their tribulation, of their trial, and their captivities - so come along next week again, as we start on chapter 1 of the book of Haggai. It would be great if everyone read - it's only two chapters - everyone read the book of Haggai before next week.

Let's look at chapter 3, this evening, and verse 3 - we'll read from verse 1 just to get the whole flow of the thing: "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters. When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. 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 flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall

be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments". Amen.

There is a world of difference between knowing the word of God and knowing the God of the word. From Genesis to the book of Revelation we have what is commonly termed 'the revelation' - the word of God is the revelation, but the revelation of what? The revelation of God Himself. A. W. Tozer said on one occasion: 'So often we get taken up with the gems of the word of God, and we forget that it is the method whereby we get through its pages, its words, its metaphors, its types, and its descriptions, to get to the gems, the beauties, the jewels, of the God of the word'.

Of course, the only way to know God is by faith. How many times have we been in the prayer meeting, and we hear brethren getting to their feet and they pray: 'Lord, we ask You that You will do such-and-such, and Lord, we know that Thou canst do it'? Is that faith? What type of faith is that? I would venture to say this evening that real faith is faith in the knowledge of God's word, faith in the knowledge of what God wants to do. We have thought about this in weeks past, and services past, where we have seen that faith is taking the promises of God - things that we know God says He will do if we claim them - and not saying: 'Lord, we know Thou canst do it', but, 'Lord, we know Thou wilt do it!' That's the difference.

Faith is always in relation to what God knows our need is. 'My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus'. In other words, God knows what we need - not what we want, but what we need - and when we come to God with God's word, God's promises that He will provide our need, we have no need to say: 'Lord, we know that Thou canst' - but 'Lord, we know that Thou will'. We must realise that the word of God teaches: 'All things', listen child of God, 'all things are yours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God!' What does the word of God say? 'All things' - all things! - 'are possible to him who believes'. What does the book of Hebrews say? 'Without faith it is impossible to please God'.

I would say, arguably, that the hour in which we live is an hour in which we have a wealth of knowledge about our Lord Jesus Christ, about the word of God - now I'm not talking about spirituality here, but a wealth of knowledge about the things of God, theologically speaking, and even archaeologically speaking. We have made discoveries in our century and in our time that are second to none - yet with all this knowledge that we can heap upon ourselves, we are probably one of the most poor, sickly church of believers ever! Now, how can that be? If we know so much about Christ, if we know in our heads so much about God, how can Christ say to us that we are poor, we are blind, we are wretched, we are naked? Do you know why? God honours not wisdom, God honours not personality, but God honours faith. God honours it! And God is honoured by it!

What's so special about faith? Well, some people say: 'Faith, hope, and charity, and the greatest of these is charity' - therefore they concentrate on charity but they ignore, they depreciate, the other two. But the word of God is categoric, that we need as believers to have faith - like the Hebrews, if we're going to get through to the promised land of deliverance and a victorious Christian life in the Lord Jesus Christ, the land of Canaan, we must have faith! Now, I don't want to be irreverent this evening, but I want to say this: I believe God is sovereign, but God goes wherever faith puts Him, because God has bound Himself to a covenant, that when we have faith in what He has said, He is obliged, He is covenanted, to go. Faith localises deity! Wherever faith is, God is. It links our impotence to His omnipotence.

You know, the Bible doesn't say: 'If thou canst explain the Scriptures all things are possible to him that explaineth', but the Bible does say: 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth' - not what you know, but Who you know! I hope I don't just preach the word, I hope I don't just preach the word - because the word of God itself says that the letter killeth - and I ask the question: shall we add death to

death? If you stand and preach the word of God, and I stand, and any pulpit is there where the word of God is preached, and it's only the word of God - there's no power in it, there's no Holy Ghost in it - it will bring death! But Romans 14 and verse 23 says that that which is not of faith is sin. But Daniel says that the people that do know their God, shall be strong and do exploits. If you know your God this evening, the devil will have to beware! If you know your God tonight, the devil will be shaking in his boots, and hell will know that you're alive and well, and that you're on your knees and you're opening your mouth, and that you're going all and all for God!

Habakkuk learned, just as we have learnt in all our knowledge to get through the sound barrier, Habakkuk learned get through the doubt barrier. Right from the very start he was asking questions of God: 'God, why are You not listening to me? Why is there only a silence from heaven? God, now that You've answered me and You've told me that the Chaldeans - the Babylonians - are going to come and destroy Your own people, Lord, how can You do this?' - another question. 'Lord, how can You use a more wicked people to punish, yes, Your wicked people - but we're not as bad as they are - how can You do this? You're a righteous God!'. Habakkuk posed question after question, you remember he got on his watchtower and he cried upon God, and he waited for God to answer him. Oh, it's a glorious passage that we're looking at this evening, because there's three things I want to share with you that Habakkuk learnt. He broke through the doubt barrier.

The first thing is this: Habakkuk was confronted by their God, someone else's God, that was the past God of Israel - verses 3 to 7. Memory is a wonderful thing, isn't it? But memory can do one of two things: memory can either be a burden or a blessing. You can remember bad things in the past, they can trouble your conscience, can't they? But you can remember good things in the past, and that can trouble your conscience also, because you remember the way that you used to be and you see the way you ought to be now! Of course, memory can be a blessing, because you can look at blessings where God has moved in your life, where God has touched you in a time of need, and you can rejoice over past blessings. But not only can it be a blessing in that sense, but you can look back at past blessings and you can learn from them today, and more importantly you can get lit by them!

If you look at verse 3 you see this - remember last week we were studying in the book that Habakkuk was in intense prayer for a revival amongst God's people, and in verse 3 we read these glorious words: 'God came! Hallelujah! The word that's used for 'God' there is the word 'Eloah' (sp?), and it means 'God The Holy One'. What is being stressed here is that God is absolutely holy. This is in the spirit of the book - if you turn back to chapter 1 and verses 12 and 13, you remember that Habakkuk, in a fit of perplexity and frustration, reminded God: 'Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?'. Later on he says, in verse 13: 'Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...therefore, God, how can You use the Chaldeans an even more evil people?'

It says: 'God, the Holy One, came from Teman'. Teman's mentioned, and then later on in the verse a place called Paran is mentioned. Teman, geographically speaking, is in Edom - the land of Edom. It's east of the Arabat, it's between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Elat. Paran is a mountainous desert area west of Edom in the Sinai Peninsula, and if you were to look at a map this evening you would see that this was the geography whereby God delivered the Israelites out of the land of Egypt. What is God revealing to Habakkuk here? Well, first of all, He's showing him a map - and He shows, stepping onto the map, Himself, God Almighty, the Holy One. Habakkuk, at this moment, is seeing, he is picturing God in all His glory, in all His power, being manifested to the nation of Israel who were delivered from Egypt, and who received the law at Mount Sinai.

It's interesting at the end of this verse, even before the end of the verse, right in the middle, there is this word 'Selah'. God has just said: 'God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran'. In other words: 'Remember, Habakkuk, that your God was their God! That your God was the God who came from Teman

and Paran, who took you out of Egypt, out of slavery, out of bondage. He was the God, remember, that delivered you...Selah'. We learnt a few weeks ago that 'Selah' was a pause - we're not quite sure what it means, it may have been a musical pause, but whatever it was, it was simply for this purpose: that the people who were listening or singing this Psalm would stop for a moment and would consider what was said. Now, I have a conviction that when the word of God is preached that is what we ought to. We ought not to think of all our other business that we can be occupied in, we ought not to quickly form chat about this that and the other, but just for a few moments after the word of God is preached we ought to sit where we are before God, if He is speaking to us, and listen - and if He's not speaking to us, be aware that He's speaking to others. Do we meditate on what God has done? Do we think about His blessings?

The extent of worship about the deliverance, we see it in verse 3, verse 9, and verse 13 - three times throughout this Psalm of faith they stop to consider what God has done. They were reflecting on two things, we're going to look at them. The first thing was God's glory. The second thing was God's power. Look at the first: God's glory. It says in verse 3, the second half: 'His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise'. God is reminding Habakkuk - now remember, he's now looking at the land of Sinai, he's looking at how the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, and now they are receiving the law of God from the hands of Moses - he is remembering that at that moment in time, when they received the law, glory covered the heavens. There was a song, there was a canopy of praise that came from all the Israelites at Sinai for what God had done. Then in verse 4 it says: 'And his brightness was as the light' - the brightness of God, the holiness of God, was so great, His power was so inexplicable, you remember that Moses had to cover his face because of the glory that shone like a mirror, because he had seen God!

How can we think of God? We can't think of God. It's like comparing a candle with the sun. We can't think of Him, and what we're told in the word of God - although we take it literally - it can never, even within His word, really give us a true picture of what God is like. It says in verse 4 that: 'He had horns coming out of his hand' - horns coming out of His hand. That's what's called, theologically speaking and throughout the word of God, an anthropomorphism, an anthro...pro...fa...morphism I can nearly say it! I'm going to break it up! 'Anthro' is the Latin name for man - anthropology. A 'morphism' is a form - and this word means 'a form of man speaking of God'. So whenever you're in the Scriptures and you see God described as having hands, having feet, having eyes, having a mouth - He doesn't have a mouth, He doesn't have hands, he doesn't have feet or eyes or ears, He is a spirit. But this is a description in which we can understand what He is doing, where He is going, how He is judging. This particular description means simply this: that God's power is emitted in all directions. God is powerful everywhere! His power is universal, His power is all-embracing, encompassing, God is in power, in control of everything - and in fact, at the end of verse 4, you can see: 'and there was the hiding of his power'. He was so powerful that when He was showing and revealing His glory to Moses on Mount Sinai, He had to hide the majority of it because Moses couldn't take it!

Did you know that no man can see God and live? God is all-powerful, all-consuming, and even when God passed by Moses and He showed him His back in Exodus 33, he had to be hid in the cleft of the rock! Isn't that beautiful? My friend, you and I, if we're saved this evening, you and I - if we ever saw God we would be destroyed outright, extinguished by the light of His countenance and His holiness. We would be destroyed, if I can even say it, even if He didn't want to happen, it would happen because it's His nature! But praise God, we're in the cleft of the rock - and that is how we come to God, and if you're not saved realise it this evening: that you can only come to God in Christ! You've got to be in the cleft of the rock, you've got to be sheltered in Christ. As those Israelites were at the bottom of Mount Sinai, God revealed to them something of Himself and it's described in the Pentateuch as a devouring fire on the top of the Mount in the eyes of the children of Israel - they had seen it, they had been given a glimpse of the glory, the majesty of God.

Remember He presented it to them in the Holy of holies in the tabernacle? They weren't allowed in, but only the High Priest - the Shekinah brightness, the glory, the light of God that was so all-encompassing and awful.

You remember how we read that it was this glory that filled Solomon's Temple - it filled the whole temple where they fell and worshipped. It was this glory that was revealed to the three disciples as they were on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the glory in Christ came out, the glory of God. It was revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos, when he saw the glorified Lord and he fell on his face as dead.

Is your prayer like Moses? 'Lord, show me Thy glory'. You know, I used to travail in prayer that God would show me His glory. Do you know what the Lord said to me? He said to me these words: 'The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, is in Christ'. Isn't that marvellous? Do you want to see God in your life? Do you want to see God in your marriage, in your home? Do you want to see God in your personality, in your walk, in your job, in your business? See God in Christ! For Christ is God! Christ is God in flesh - He is the express image, literally meaning he is the very stamp of God - that we may see God's glory in Him. If you want to get to know God study the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will know God.

If you turn with me, you can see in chapter 2 and verse 14, again he thinks of this - and I'm sure that his mind went back to this when he was confronted with the glory of God - that one day, one day the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. It's interesting that they were horns that came out of God's hand. We look at the book of Exodus, we see that the Ark of the Covenant had horns on it - do you know what they were for? Holding on to - do you hold onto the glory of God? When you're going through troubles, like the Judeans facing the Babylonians, when there's trials entering your life, when your life is shaken by Satan, or your selfish flesh, or circumstances, or illness - when there's a storm that comes in do you hold onto the glory of God? Because that's what it's for.

Secondly: they saw God's power - and we've got to go quickly because I've a lot to get through. In verse 5 they saw God's power: 'Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals' - and that really should be 'the burning diseases', that's what it means literally: 'the burning diseases and pestilence went forth at his feet'. What is he thinking about? He's thinking about Egypt and the plagues. He's thinking about the children of Israel in the wilderness, in the desert, and they murmured against Moses, and they murmured against God - and what happened? They were struck with a plague! What this means is this: that the pestilence and the plagues and the diseases are God's attendants. God is in control of even those things, and that same glory, and that same power - God is saying through Habakkuk to the people of Judah - you're going to see it again, that glory that was in the past to the children of Israel in the wilderness, to them at Egypt, to them going into the conquest of the promised land in Canaan. What God is doing for Habakkuk is painting this picture: that God one day will destroy their enemies!

He will deliver them, and he pictures God in verse 6, that He stood and measured the earth. It pictures Him stepping, like a great giant off the earth, off the country that He is about to judge, and measuring the length of it, the breadth of it, the height of it, all its iniquity and all of its sin, all of its affliction to the people of God - so that one day when He judges them, He will judge righteous judgement. And at a gaze He beheld, verse 6, at one gaze He beheld - God looked - and as He looked at the nations He drove them away, He destroyed them with one look. It says, verse 6, the mountains and the hills they trembled, they were scattered, they did bow before God. Mountains and hills, they're described here as perpetual - that means they go from year to year, from time to time, and they are symbols of everlastingness, they are symbols of stability and permanence. But God is saying here that even the symbols of men, and even of nature that are permanent, God will move, God will crumble - and nothing can stand before God, whether they be nations or nature!

Verse 6 ends: 'His ways are everlasting'. What that was simply saying to Habakkuk was, what their God has done in the past, the God of Israel, He will do in the future! It's significant that Habakkuk, right throughout this whole passage, puts his verbs in the future tense. Yes, it's something that happened in the past, but verse 3 really could read: 'God will, He shall, come' - boy, God's coming! Verse 7 shows us this: 'I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble'. If the hills and the mountains are

symbols of permanence, the tents and the curtains speak of frailty and non-permanence before God - that all things, whether in heaven, earth, or hell, are subdued by God.

Let's look secondly at how Habakkuk was presented with our God - the present God for Judah. Verse 8 to 15, look at verse 8: 'Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?'. Now, I want you to notice - you can't see it, but in verse 8 there is a change in the passage. Habakkuk no longer talks in the past about what God did to the children of Israel, but he now addresses God in prayer about what He did. So by doing that, addressing God, he's acknowledging that that God of the past is the God of now, is the God of the present. Do you know that? The God of the past, the God of the Reformation, the God of 1859 revival, the God of W.P. Nicholson, the God of every mission in this church where men and women were born-again - that God is alive and well today! He is our God, and therefore that is why he could say, in chapter 3 and verse 2: 'Revive thy work in the midst of the years, for I have known thy reputation. God, I know who You are; and God, I know that You've still the power; and God, I know that You can do it; and that You're the God of today'.

Habakkuk asked Him in verse 8: 'Lord, are You angry against the nature, the rivers? What are You angry at rivers for?' - what's he talking about? Well he's talking, I believe, about the Red Sea - because he's been talking about Egypt, and about the conquest into Canaan. Both at Egypt, exiting Egypt, and going into Canaan, waters were split, rivers were split, and the children of God walked forth. God is pictured as a mighty warrior - do you know that? God is a Man of war. God is pictured in verse 8 as riding upon the horses, in verse 9 it says: 'Thy bow...to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word'. God is on His horse as a Man of war, God is pulling the bow, ready to shoot the arrow of judgement against the Babylonians. What does it mean when it talks about 'the oath of the tribes, even thy word' - well, it means this: that God will defend His people, God will come to their aid and to their rescue, not because of their goodness, not because of their worthiness, but because of God's oath with them. Oh, isn't that great? Who can rest on anything like that but the child of God?

'Mine by covenant, mine forever,
 Mine by oath, and mine by blood.
 Mine, nor time the bond shall sever,
 Mine as an unchanging God!'

He has said it, and therefore I believe it! Hallelujah! We can rest on the word of God. Then 'Selah' again - we could spend the rest of our time thinking about that, couldn't we? At least I hope we could - Selah - think about it. It says in verse 9 that God cleaved the rivers - what was he talking about? 'Cleaving the earth with rivers', was he talking about creation? Is he talking about after the flood? I don't believe that, I think it's probably talking again about the Red Sea and Jordan, how God made out of the very earth a way for the children of God. Then verse 10, you see it here: 'The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high'. Just as those walls of waves came up like a corridor around people of God, they were lifting their hands in praise to the Almighty that made them. Isn't that powerful? What a God we have.

In verse 10, the actual earth and nature is personified to show God's great power and judgement. Then in verse 11 it says: 'The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear'. We don't have enough time to go into all this, but this again is speaking of the conquest of the promised land in Canaan. It's talking about the Old Testament account of Joshua's long day, when Joshua cried unto God - he prayed for more light, that he would be enabled to defeat the Amorites at Gibeon in Joshua 10. He was crying to God, and it says that the sun and the moon stood still, that God's man would have the victory. But then when it says in that little verse that there was light, and that lightning

shot forth from heaven, if you read that account in Joshua 10 you read that that actually happened - that that spear that's talked about in verse 10, that lightning spear, glittering spear, was lightning that came from heaven. It's speaking of the storm that came and gave God's people victory over the Amorites!

What does that tell me? God delivers His people, and if it seems impossible - whether by nature, or whether by intellect - God delivers them by miracles. Do you believe in miracles? I do, because I believe in God! Look at verse 12: 'Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger'. The conquest of Israel - God's battles with Egypt, or whether it was God's battles with Canaan, going into the promised land - whatever it is, God was acting with the sovereign over-awing purpose of one simple word: salvation! He will deliver His people, He will save His own! He tells us how in verse 13: 'Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck'.

How does He save? He saves by His anointed. Now, this is beautiful. The Hebrew word for 'anointed' is the word 'Messiah'. The Greek word for 'Messiah' is the word 'Christ'. The word for 'salvation' that's mentioned three times in this verse, do you know what it is? It's the Hebrew word 'Yeshuah' - which is 'Jesus'! He delivers His people with the anointed Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Literally and historically speaking, it was Cyrus the King of Persia, because Cyrus was the king that would come and deliver the children of Judah out of the captivity of Babylon - he would take them out, he may reign over them after that, but he was God's anointed. God can even anoint the evil for His own purposes, and His own will!

Listen: one day, as we find in Daniel chapter 2 and verses 44 to 45, one day the Lord's ultimate anointed, the pre-eminent one, will come! He will destroy the kingdoms of the world, He will have the victory over the armies of the nations of the Gentiles that will surround God's people Israel at that time, and He - as it literally says in verse 13 - He will crush, that word 'wounded' means He will crush the head out of the house of the wicked one. He will destroy - and just as in the Garden of Eden it was promised there, in chapter 3 and verse 15, that he would crush Satan's head, there's a day coming when He's going to do it finally. Hallelujah! He will have the victory, He will come, His glory will reign the earth.

Even in Ezekiel 38 and 21 we read that when that nation of Gog from the North comes to inhabit and to surround the children of Israel, that even then He will send confusion among them. Verse 14 describes it: 'Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me' - but God will scatter them. God says when that day comes, if it's Russia, and they come down and they surround the nation of Israel, that God will turn every man's sword against his brother and they will kill themselves! Just as Ammon, just as Moab did, just as Edom did, just as the Midianites did - God will have victory, and not only will He have victory but He'll have victory by their own hand. That's the way God delivers His people, for nothing stands in His way.

Thirdly, and finally in our study in Habakkuk: my God - he saw that this God was Habakkuk's personal God for him at this time. We know that he saw it in the past with Israel, he saw it as he addressed God in the present in prayer, that that God of the past was his God at that moment - but we see in verse 16 that he realised that that God was his God! When he realised that his belly trembled, his lips quivered at the voice, his self-righteousness was realised to him when rotteness entered into his bones, and he trembled within himself. His inner-self was wrecked, yet at the same time - like us, as we realise who God is, and we may realise how sinful and how far short we fall as believers and even unbelievers - yet he could say in verse 16: 'Even though I know all this, I might rest in the day of trouble'.

There may be a day of trouble in your life. I don't know what it is. It will shake you, and if you haven't experienced it, there is a day of trouble, obviously, in life that will come to you. Your belly may shake, rotteness might enter into your bones, and your lip may quiver, and your very inner man may shake - but if

you're in Christ, and founded and anchored in Him, you can rest in the very midst of the storm. Verse 18 can literally be translated, it says: 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation' - do you know how it can be translated? 'I will jump for joy in the Lord. I will spin round for delight in God!'. That's the hilarity of faith. The hymnwriter put it like this:

Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to God alone -
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries: 'It shall be done!'

That's faith: joy at its best, with circumstances at their worst. In verse 19 we read this, Habakkuk said after all this: 'The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places'. Did you know that a deer - that's a hind - a deer doesn't defend itself, a deer can't protect itself - but the only thing a deer can do in its swift nature is run from all harm and all trouble. What Habakkuk is saying here is that God is able to give those that wait on Him wings like eagles to soar! Did you know that often when the eagles soar, that the crows can come and give them trouble and pluck at them? Do you know how they get rid of those crows? They fly higher.

That's what God does for us: He makes our feet like hinds' feet, He takes us on to higher ground. Look at this! This is the book of Habakkuk that we have been studying - and Habakkuk had not the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, Habakkuk had not revealed to him in his twilight dispensation what the God of the ages was going to do through Christ, through the resurrection, through the second coming - but we, as Ephesians 1 says: '[God] having made known unto us the mystery of his will, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him'. Habakkuk didn't know that, yet he could sing in faith to God - but we know it! We have a Great High Priest, we have Christ! He was their God, He was the Judean's God, but He's your God.

Habakkuk's journey of faith and blessing is one that we will all go through. There's three things I want to say. He was honest with God about his doubt. He cried to God with his petition. He broke through in joy from God, because of blessing. It's interesting, isn't it? In chapter 1 Habakkuk is saying: 'Yes Lord, answer, but not that one!' - but at the end of the book he's saying: 'Lord, do that work, I surrender to Your will, and Your sovereignty, and Your providence. Lord, do it, and do it quickly'.

Can I leave this with you - look what happened: God came. If we admit our guilt, and we admit our doubt, and we admit our failures, and if we come before God and get on the watchtower and get on our face before God, and we cry upon Him, and we argue and we debate with God from a standpoint of faith and trust in God Almighty - God will come!

'Oh, Living Stream,
Oh, Gracious Rain,
None wait for Thee
And wait in vain'. Amen.

Our Father, we thank Thee for the truths that we have learnt from Thy servant Habakkuk. Lord, let them not be wasted on us. Lord we believe but, oh, help our unbelief - and help us to come to Thee by faith, for there is no other way but to trust and obey. Lord, we know that faith is a gift - oh, God give it to us we pray. Lord, fill us with the faith of Christ who loved us and give Himself for us. We pray that Thou wilt bless us now as we go to our homes, and that we would not lose this bread from heaven. For Christ's sake, Amen.

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