

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

Trusting God in Trying Times

Habakkuk

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It's a special day for our family. 20 years ago today the Lord gave us our first-born, Hannah Emily Green. She is here tonight. She wanted me to have you all know that she is grateful for you all coming out to celebrate her birthday with her.

I am very happy to be here. It's an honor for anyone to stand in this pulpit and it's an honor for me and I'm grateful for the opportunity.

But what I'm really grateful for beloved tonight is I'm very happy for the opportunity to bring you the word of God in a way that I trust is going to encourage you in your walk with Christ.

I need to introduce this briefly if you don't mind. Many years ago, I was deeply discouraged over some significant life events that had taken place in my life. At root, the question that was troubling my heart was this: How do I trust God when He has seemingly been indifferent to the righteous desires of my heart, when God has seemingly been indifferent to the righteous desires of my heart—how do I trust Him? And it was no small matter that was involved. I was a young Christian. I had been honestly praying for my father's salvation for a number of years. We hadn't been close when I was growing up. When I had come to Christ, our relationship was starting to jell and I was praying earnestly to God to see him get saved. I had a dream that I had walked in one day in to our living room and see him sitting on his recliner with a Bible open on his lap, reading the word of God and feeling the upsurge of joy in my heart that God had answered those prayers. But he died in a plane crash on Thanksgiving Day, 1988 along with my brother, Roger—died before he gave any evidence of having come to Christ in faith. While I was on my knees on his behalf, Gilbert Ray Green went in to a Christless eternity. Beloved I ask you, what kind of answer to prayer is that?

Now you could put your own face to the dilemma of trusting God in trying times, I know that. The circumstances are different, but your Christian life eventually comes with significant obstacles for you to overcome, obstacles that challenge your professed trust in the living God.

My discouragement lasted a very long time, a number of years, I don't mind telling you. Eventually I went to see a pastor. He is not on the staff of Grace Church, so I just wanted to put that out of your mind. I went to see this prominent pastor and I unburdened my heart to him. I told him how broken my heart was and the discouragement and confusion that I felt. And then

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when I was done, I leaned forward to hear what he had to say. I wanted to hear his counsel. I was eager for any word that would encourage me in my walk with Christ. He stiffened his back and said, “What you need to do is trust God, isn’t it.” I tell you, my shoulders dropped in disappointment. I didn’t say anything and so he raised his voice, “ISN’T IT?” I thought, “Why are you yelling at me?” I want to trust God, that’s why I’m here, but pastor, I’m not going to fake it. His advice to trust God was true enough, but an answer that simply restates the question as an imperative is no answer at all. You do need to trust God in your trials beloved, but you also need help to know how to do that—that’s what this night is about.

I’m a pastor and as I speak to you tonight, I want you to know that I am on your side. What has helped me is what I now give to you in the hour that lies ahead of us. I would fail my duty if I didn’t first ask you whether you are even a Christian to start with. Have you turned from sin and received Jesus Christ for forgiveness? Because you see beloved, trusting God in trying times starts with and presupposes that you have trusted Christ for your eternal salvation. If you haven’t done that, then what I have to say is really irrelevant because it starts at the cross and trusting Christ there for the forgiveness of your sins.

But if you are here tonight and you are a Christian, I want you to understand that trusting God starts with right thinking about God—that’s the first thing that I needed to hear, “Trusting God starts with right thinking about God.” You have to put your perplexing problems in to the context of God and His holy character if you are going to make any sense and find your way in the midst of your trials.

I like to use this illustration when I talk about this. Think about doing a jigsaw puzzle. I hate jigsaw puzzles, but they are useful illustration sometimes. Think about finding an individual puzzle piece on the carpet and you have no box or other pieces to go with, you just have an individual puzzle piece in front of you. By itself that piece makes no sense whatsoever. But if you can compare that piece to the box cover that shows the picture, if you can see the exterior frame of the puzzle and where some of the colors lie, then you can begin to see where that puzzle piece fits—it begins to make sense when you relate it to its context. Otherwise the piece is random and unintelligible, but when you put it in its context, it has a place where it fits and it makes sense.

Beloved, if you only think about your trials and difficulties in isolation, if you only see them from an earthly perspective and wonder how is this going to work out or why did this happen, I can promise you that you won’t be able to make sense of it. There is no sense to be made of somethings that happen in this world, but if you consciously (that’s the key beloved) if you consciously call to mind certain truths about God in the midst of your trial, then you will have a context that will strengthen your heart and give peace to your mind (mark this) even if nothing changes. The beauty of the trial that God entrusted to me was that it was impossible to change--once a man is dead, it’s over. And so I didn’t have the continuing hope of, maybe this will change, maybe he’ll turn and all or whatever—it was over, I couldn’t change it.

What we have to see tonight beloved are things that will strengthen your heart and build you up and give peace to your mind even if nothing changes—that is the glory of biblical truth as we walk in this world.

So tonight, a largely forgotten man has a lot to teach us. I invite you if you haven't already, to turn to the book of Habakkuk in the Old Testament. It wouldn't be too much of a stretch to say that Habakkuk is my favorite book in the Bible simply because it was the book of Habakkuk that the Lord gives to bring peace to my troubled heart. As you are turning there, let me give you an overview of the setting of this book, just very briefly. There is so much in this book that you could preach four, five six messages on it—we are going to try to do it in an overview here tonight.

The prophet Habakkuk was a prophet of God who ministered about 600 years before the time of Christ. It was a spiritually depressed time for the nation of Judah, they had abandoned God, they had defied His law and the spiritual and social fabric were falling apart all around the prophet. As you open the book of Habakkuk, he is deeply troubled. And what you see through these three chapters of Habakkuk is that it is written in the form of a dialog between the prophet Habakkuk and God. There is back and forth going on, Habakkuk will pray and God will answer him, Habakkuk will speak and God will answer him. And what happens is just in the biggest overview fashion, Habakkuk opens and he is praying and is very discouraged and upset. At the end of the book, he is in a place of exuberant joy. And the book of Habakkuk records how God brought Habakkuk and moved him and grew him spiritually from that place of discouragement to that place of transcendent joy.

As we enter in to the book tonight beloved, what I want you to realize from the start is that nothing changed about his outer circumstances. There was nothing different, in fact as we are going to see, the situation was worse than he thought, and yet with nothing changing, his heart went from one of turmoil to trust. And beloved, that is the birthright, that is the prerogative, that is what is available to everyone who knows the Lord Jesus Christ today. You have the prerogative and you have the opportunity, and may I say you have the responsibility to move in that direction from doubt to trust, from angry questions to settled peace. This is an overflow of what God has given us in our salvation beloved. And so opening with that note of hope, things don't have to change. I'm not going to change the circumstances in your life one bit as I stand here today. So beloved, you can move from discouragement to joy—I can promise you that on the authority of God's word. And so as we watch Habakkuk grow, it gives us an example to follow.

I'm going to structure tonight's message around two pretty simple points. I've taught on Habakkuk a lot over the years and I always refine the points a little bit from time to time. But two very simple principles, very easy to remember and then some sub points to go along with it because when a blizzard of trial hits, it is hard to remember complex outlines and all of that, so two simple points tonight to trust God, how do you trust God? (1) You remember God (2) You wait on God—that's the structure that we are going to build this message around tonight and we will have some sub points to fill out the content. How do you trust God in trying times?

1. You Remember God

This is so basic that is easy to overlook. But when trials overwhelm you beloved, you have to

stop, you have to pull yourself up, you have to set the trial aside for a time and just think and remember and say what is it that the Bible says about the nature and character and work of God—you start there. You have to feed your heart as it were, you have to give it something that it can feed on rather than your anxieties and discouragement. And so when trials overwhelm you, stop yourself, look beyond the immediate problem and remember God. Habakkuk teaches us to remember God in three ways, and now we are going to get in to the text. First aspect of remembering God in your trials:

A. Remember God’s hidden work

Remember God’s hidden work. As you open Habakkuk, you are joining his prayer life in progress. Look at chapter 1:2 with me as we come to the text now:

The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

And he is praying and I love the transparency and the urgency of his prayer.

How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and you will not hear? I cry out to you, “Violence!” Yet you do not save. Why do you make me see inequity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore justice comes out perverted.

This prophet of God who loved the righteousness of God was appalled as he looked out on the covenant nation and saw corruption all around him, wickedness prevailed, justice was perverted. And by saying at the opening he says, “How long, O Lord, will I call for help...” We know that he had been praying for some manner of time, we don’t know how long, but it really doesn’t matter. The point is that it was long enough for Habakkuk to have it in his line that “I’ve been praying long enough, I should have seen change by now.” Yet there was this baffling sense of divine silence that he had been met with. He prayed for change, probably prayed for revival among the people in some fashion, but the situation had actually gotten worse. What kind of answer to prayer is that? Why wasn’t God doing anything?

Look at verses 5-6 as God responds to His prophet. In verse 5 He says:

“Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days—You would not believe if you were told. “For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs.

God is talking now and in response to Habakkuk’s accusation that He had been silent and indifferent to his honest, heart-felt prayers, God says, I’m doing something, Habakkuk. The truth of the matter is, Habakkuk, if you knew what I was doing, you wouldn’t believe it because it is too wonderful, it is too astonishing for you to comprehend, you couldn’t get your mind around what I’m doing. The point is that God had that wicked situation and the covenant nation

under control. He had allowed the sin for a time, but now He was raising up the Chaldeans. Off in the distance, group of people this nation from the area of Babylon, the Chaldeans were developing greater military strength. If you look at a Bible Atlas map, you can see how they were expanding their military influence in the years about the time and preceding the time of Habakkuk's prophecy. They were growing in strength, they hadn't come to Judah yet, but they were on their way. Look at verse 11 of chapter 1, God speaking about the Chaldeans and talking about the nation of Judah says:

"...they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their God."

What is He saying there? What He is saying is that this nation that was ascending in power was an instrument in His hand, that God was so working behind the scenes in His hidden ways, He was strengthening this nation and giving them military success as they moved about. And God says, Habakkuk, look out on the world's scene, look out on the horizon and see this nation that is rising up. Habakkuk, you want me to let you in on a secret? You want me to pull back the veil so you can know what is happening here? That nation is an instrument in my hand. You know what I'm going to do with them, Habakkuk? Eventually I'm going to bring them down, to send and have them invade the nation of Judah and carry them off in to exile. Habakkuk, You've accused me of not doing anything. The truth of the matter beloved is that God was rearranging world history to deal with the very problem that Habakkuk had identified. The Chaldeans were going to be a divine paddle in the hands of God with which He would discipline His own people. They would learn not to sin when they were carried off in to exile.

And beloved here's the point for tonight. Based on what Habakkuk saw, He thought God was inactive, he was completely mistaken, he was absolutely wrong in his assessment of what God was doing. Based on his limited, sinful, finite perspective, he dared to criticize the All Mighty and said, why aren't you doing anything? In the context of what was true, in the context of what God was actually doing, that looked like a pretty foolish statement. God gently revealed that to him, pulled back the veil and showed Habakkuk that He was rearranging world history to address Habakkuk's concern. Point, God was working in hidden ways. And beloved, let's pull that up 2600 years to the present. When you find yourself in trying times that you don't understand, when you find yourself in the midst of difficulties that seem out of control, the first step toward trusting God is to remember that God's hidden hand is always at work even when things seem to be out of control—always beloved, that is an unbreakable rule of the way that universe works.

Ephesians 1:11 says:

God works all things after the counsel of His will...

The Bible extends that to the fall of a sparrow in the gospel of Matthew. The Bible extends that to the number of hairs on your head from the lips of Jesus. The Bible extends that to the rise and fall of the nations throughout all of the scriptures. So from the tiniest details to the most micro event that you can imagine, God is working, God is orchestrating everything and directing it to accomplish the purposes which He established before the foundation of the world so that all of

His creation will accomplish exactly what He wanted from the beginning. Beloved, put your problems in that context. He works all things after the counsel of His will. Romans 8:28 says:

God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God...

All things beloved, all things, and under that umbrella falls the heart breaking trials that you brought in to this room tonight. God is working even in those heart breaking issues to accomplish His will. The fact that you don't see it, the fact that you don't understand it, the fact that it hurts doesn't change the truth of the matter. All of those things don't cancel out the reality because of work in everything. And so when you struggle with your trials as you try to come to a place of trust, this is where you start. You remember God's hidden work. What was true of Habakkuk that there was much going on behind the scenes that Habakkuk didn't understand, didn't see and couldn't see, beloved it's the same thing for you. A good and wise and sovereign God is at work in absolutely everything that happens—that's where you start. You say to yourself, you rebuke your heart as it were and say, "There is more going on here than I know and I trust the God who is doing it." He is always working all things according to His wisdom in order to accomplish good things in the lives of His children—that's an unbreakable truth of scripture. And Habakkuk was starting to learn that lesson here—it's beautiful, isn't it?

And I love the way that God met Habakkuk in his hour of need. I love the fact that He addressed his mind, He addressed him and didn't say, "Habakkuk, don't talk to me that way" because God has the wisdom to see beyond the words, to see that Habakkuk had a heart that desired righteousness.

Now, as you remember God, as you remember His hidden word, there is a second thing as well:

B. Remember God's character

Remember God's character. If you just came in off the street and didn't know anything about the Bible whatsoever to simply hear that God is always at work in hidden ways, it may or may not be a comforting thing if you don't know the God of the Bible. If you had a sense that He was arbitrary and capricious and loved to inflict pain, then the fact that He was at work wouldn't necessarily be a comfort to your heart. But as we remember God's character as it is revealed in the Scripture, you find soil in which the roots of trust can grow.

Now, in the context of Habakkuk, God's message about the Chaldeans, the fact that He was raising up this nation to deal with His people that they were going to sweep through, you know what that meant for Habakkuk? That meant that the problem was going to get worse. Not only that Habakkuk not see revival among the people, a foreign nation was going to invade them. Again I ask you, what kind of answer to prayer is that? I mean, God's way sometimes are very strange and Isaiah tells us that in verse 55: His ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts. And so it shouldn't surprise you beloved when surprising seemingly inexplicable things happen in your life. God works in ways that we don't expect and don't anticipate. But when that happens, the anchor to your soul is to come back to His character and remember who He is—that is the compass that directs you, that is the anchor that settles your soul, that is the foundation upon which peace rests.

As we move on through the book, notice how Habakkuk calls to mind the character of God in the midst of his problem. Look at verse 12 of chapter 1, he has just heard that God was raising up a nation to invade His people and Habakkuk's response goes straight to the character of God, he says:

Are you not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my holy one? We will not die. You, O Lord have appointed them to judge; and you, O Rock, have established them to correct. Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and you cannot look on wickedness with favor.

Habakkuk didn't understand how holy God could use a wicked nation to accomplish His purposes. But he knew this, he knew that God was eternal. He knew that God was working out eternal plans that He had established before the foundation of the world. He knew that God had made promises to King David that he would always have a son to set on the throne. He knew that God would never violate those promises and he knew that God was holy, it was impossible for God to do anything that was impure or anything that was wicked, out of His own character. He says, Lord, you can't look at wickedness with favor, you are my holy one. And notice how in verse 12 he draws a conclusion from that, he says, "You are from everlasting, you are my Lord, my God, my holy one" and he draws a conclusion from that and says, "We will not die."

Based on the character of God, he is able to conclude that whatever God was doing would not be the end of the chosen nation because God's holiness and His faithfulness to His promises meant that He would never utterly destroy His people even after invaders brought severe discipline for a time.

Beloved, in your trials, you can bring much stability to your heart by simply reflecting and meditating on the attributes of God. He is an absolutely holy God who cannot be tempted to evil and does not tempt you to evil. He cannot do wrong—He can't. He cannot lie, He cannot do anything that is wrong. And if you are in His family by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that means that He is going to exercise His power, exercise His wisdom, exercise His sovereignty over all things to accomplish good in your life. And no matter how severe the trial is, that principle of His faithful goodness can never be broken—never, never. So put out of your mind the question that perhaps God is being unfair or unfaithful to me here—that's impossible, that's absolutely not going to happen. God is always faithful to His people, He always acts in consistency with His holiness, and nothing about your trial beloved (listen to me) nothing about your trial contradicts that.

It brought me short, it humbled me when I realized that about that plane crash. It was not a contradiction of God's faithfulness or holiness in my life in the slightest—it couldn't have been. You see, you start your reasoning and you start your thinking from that perspective, the starting point of your thinking is the character of God and then everything flows from that. If you make the tragic, deadly mistake of looking at your circumstances as they exist right now and try to reason from them to the character of God, you are always going to go astray. If you say, "I have this serious heart breaking trial, what does that tell me about God?" You are going to draw all kinds of wrong conclusions and go seriously astray. But if you start from the perspective that

God is holy, God is good, God is sovereign, and my circumstances are an expression of that reality, they are an outworking of His eternal character and eternal purposes, then you are in a much different position—that’s what Habakkuk was doing here. He went to the character of God, he reminded himself, recited to God His holiness and His eternity and drew correct conclusions, Lord, this invading nation will not be the end of your people. Lord, you must have established them to correct not to completely throw us off because your eyes are too pure to look on evil and you cannot look on wickedness with favor. Just knowing truth about God’s character will do that for you beloved, it will let you draw conclusions that are right even if you don’t fully understand.

But our beloved brother Habakkuk still had a dilemma, he had a different dilemma now, he had a theological dilemma that he expresses. Basically the question is this: How could a holy God use a wicked nation to judge His own people? Look at verse 18, he says, Lord, I understand these things, I believe these things about your holiness, but Lord, verse 13:

Why do you look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are you silent when the wicked swallow up those who are more righteous than they?

Look at verse 17 at the end of chapter 1, he says, “Will they…” will this wicked nation:

Will they therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing?

God, if you are going to use this nation, are there any limits? And how is it Father, that you would give preference to a wicked nation over people who were comparatively more righteous than they are? I don’t get it.

See beloved, trusting God doesn’t mean that you don’t have questions and it doesn’t mean that you don’t articulate those questions, it simply means that you work them out in accordance with revealed truth—that’s what Habakkuk was doing. And God met Habakkuk and He answered that dilemma by saying this: I’m just going to summarize chapter 2 in a few short words here. Basically as God answers this dilemma in chapter 2, He tells Habakkuk that after He had finished with the Chaldeans, after they had fulfilled His purpose for a time, after that He is going to judge them for their sin. He says Habakkuk, in effect, you are right, I know they are sinful, trust me I’m going to judge them eventually. I’m going to use them now because it pleases me to do so. When my purpose is fulfilled, then I will judge them for their sin. Look at verse 8 of chapter 2. He is speaking to the Chaldeans, God is, and He is prophesying their ultimate collapse to them at that point, He says:

Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will loot you, because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the town and all its inhabitants.

In chapter 2, five times He pronounces woe on these Chaldeans who were intrinsically wicked, they were not conscious that they were serving the living God, they were pursuing their own wicked purposes. And yet God in His matchless sovereignty was able to direct the wickedness

of sinners to accomplish His purposes without being tainted by their own sin—that's what He was doing here.

Look at verse 16. That doesn't excuse them from accountability for their sin though because they are sinning out of their own desires, their ignorance of the purposes of God, pursuing wickedness and therefore it is right for God to judge them and that's what He does. Look at the middle of verse 16 of chapter 2 where again He is continuing to speak to the Chaldeans, God says:

The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and other disgrace will come upon your glory.

Basically what Habakkuk is seeing here is that God unfold His purposes and the outworking of His sovereignty in world affairs in stages. And so at times wicked prosper on earth, world's stage on an individual stage. But the message of Habakkuk says their prosperity is always temporary because God will always vindicate His justice and God would punish them when He was ready. God is always acting according to His character even if outwardly it doesn't seem like it at the time. God's holiness was going to be vindicated in the way that He dealt with this nation. He granted prosperity for a short time, but then judgment would come, His law would be vindicated, His principles would be upheld and they would feel His wrath as well. God's character guarantees the ultimate outcome beloved.

And so if you are suffering tonight, remember His character, He is holy, He is righteous, He is good, He is faithful, He is wise and everything that He does is consistent with those perfect attributes of His—always beloved, no exceptions, zero, none, no exceptions. The death and sickness and finances and family problems and all of that, all of them fit under the umbrella of God, working out all things according to the counsel of His good will, in perfect consistency with His wisdom, faithfulness and goodness to His people—always, always beloved, always. Lay hold of that and don't let go because He is our heavenly Father, the loving Father, always to His children.

And so while sometimes He brings trials in to your life, beloved, He will bring His good intentions to pass in time, eventually either now or in heaven you will see the goodness of God to you vindicated without question and without exception—always, always, always.

And so you trust God with this attitude in light of His character, you say in effect to yourself and as prayer to God, "I may not understand right now, but God is certainly at work. He always acts according to His faithfulness and His holiness and His goodness and His wisdom, and so I can conclude something even now before anything changes, I can conclude something really important. I can conclude that this comes out well in the end even if it is difficult right now." And beloved, if the ultimate outcome is good, what do we get so worked up about? We have to live by faith and the unseen things that we know to be true and not let what we see cloud our vision of what the Bible says will most certainly come to pass—that's how you trust God. You remember what God has revealed about His hidden work, about His character in the Bible, and then you evaluate your situation accordingly.

And as you remember those two things, remember this final sub point as we remember God, this final sub point as well:

C. Remember God's plan

Remember God's future plan, let me put it that way. Remember God's future plan. There is more to life beloved than what you see right now. There is more about the glory of salvation than our experience of it in this life. Truth of the matter is, this is just a tiny little narthex in to the glories of eternity. And so the things that happen in this life, as important as they are, and all things have some manner of eternal consequence, when it comes to assessing your trials in life, you always remember God's future plan, His eternal plan and the glories that are going to be revealed to us. Put the proper perspective on the trials of this life can make them seem rather inconsequential by comparison. God brings those things to Habakkuk's mind as well. Look at Habakkuk 2:14. Again we can only touch on these things. In Habakkuk 2:14, God is speaking and He says:

The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

He says Habakkuk, there is a time coming when all the world is going to see and bow down before my glory. He is speaking about time that is still future to us when Christ returns and establishes His kingdom on earth and all nations bow and they stream to Jerusalem and worship Him--that's still coming, that's a promise from God, that is certain to occur. All nations, this wicked nation that is going to trouble Jews for a time, they were going to have their final say, Christ was, God was going to have His final say. When that day comes, the earth is going to be so full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord that is going to be like the waters covering the sea. There is not going to be anything else to see because the glory of God reigning on earth and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to make all things dim by comparison—that's what's in the future beloved. Our Christ is going to reign and you are going to be there to participate in His kingdom and the glory and the majesty of that and having righteousness vindicated is where all this is going—I can't wait. This is going to be magnificent and we are on the right side in Christ, we are going to reign with Him.

And I love 1 John 3:2 (Habakkuk is one of my favorite books in the Bible, 1 John 3:2 has to be my favorite verse in the Bible) the hope and the glory and the anticipation of this verse just causes my heart to burn every time I think of it because in 1 John 3:2, the apostle says:

... We know that when He (Christ) appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Future tense, but certain to happen. Christ will appear and if you are a Christian, you will see His face, you will see the face of the incarnate God. And it will be so magnificently glorious that it will transform you so that you will somehow be like Him and participate in His characteristics—not becoming God, because the creature can never be like the creator. But somehow the vision of seeing Christ will transform us and make us like Him. We will see Him

just as He is, that's God's future plan beloved. The glory of this is so magnificent that whenever I speak of it, I don't want to leave the mental realm of that glory, I would be happy if it just happened now. I mean, bring it, that's what I want, that's what I'm living for.

And beloved, for you as a Christian, not only do you love that anticipation, you love that hope, but beloved it gives you context for anything that happens in life. All of your trials melt away ultimately in to vision of the glory of Jesus Christ, and you, belonging there and seeing Him and loving Him and adoring Him and worshiping Him in perfect bliss for all of eternity. And I ask you, what was that trial you were so worked up about? Do you see the way this works beloved? Do you see the way this transforms your heart? Do you see the way this anchors your heart in living trust? I'm not standing up here wagging my fingers saying, "Trust God." We're simply reviewing in a very quick fashion the glories of God as revealed in His word, remembering the glories that He has brought us in to His family and in to His kingdom, reminding you of the possessions that are yours in Christ. When those things start to fill your mind, your heart can rest and say, "God has been good to me and God isn't done being good to me, the best is yet to come, I can tolerate these trials in light of that."

So in the midst of your trials beloved, call to mind, remind yourself, as Martyn Lloyd-Jones often says in his writings, you have to preach to yourself, this doesn't just happen. You have to preach to yourself, you have to consciously think these things and remind yourself of them, look at yourself in the mirror as it were and say, "You remember what we believe about God, right? You remember about His hidden work, right? You are stirring yourself in the eye in your mirror, you remember that, don't you? You remember His character, you remember His future plan? You call your heart to respond to those things. That's how you trust God, you remember Him. Seems so basic when it's laid out so clearly in God's word, but like you, I forget and that's why we come to His word again and again. Beloved, there is so much more to the universe than even your most serious trials, there is a good God over all of it and you need to remember that.

Now that you called those things to your mind, it's time for some application. You remembered these things, you say, "Yes, I believe these things. Now, what do I do with that?" Listen beloved, I'm not here to talk about your behavior or your conduct tonight. Those things are important, but we're talking about heart attitude, we're talking about heart issues—what goes on in my heart as a result of these things. The behavior, the conduct, those things will flow out of a righteous believing heart. But when you remember God and all of these things that we discussed here, the second thing that you do is:

2. You Wait on God

When I say, wait on God you might think of something passive that you just sit back and wait for whatever is going to happen as if you are waiting at a traffic light or something—that's not the biblical idea of waiting at all. Look at Habakkuk 2:4. We are going to have to go through these final issues fairly quickly. But God is speaking to Habakkuk and He says:

Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith.

The apostle Paul picks up this verse in the book of Romans and expounds on the doctrine of justification by faith. Other times in the New Testament it is quoted in speaking about sanctification. We don't have time to go in to all of that tonight. Our point for tonight in the context of this book is for you to see that your responsibility is to live by faith in trying times. There is an active dimension to living out faith in light of your remembrance of God. And the question is, what does that faith look like? How do you live that faith out? How do you trust God in trying times.

Habakkuk teaches us so much and we are going to go through these quickly, four aspects to waiting on God that we see in the book of Habakkuk.

A. You wait expectantly.

First of all, you wait expectantly. Here is what I mean by that beloved. When I say that you wait expectantly, this means that you must endure your hardship patiently (get this) with confident hope, confident assurance, that God will eventually deliver you from your trials. You are so convinced of the character of God, so convinced of His sovereignty, so convinced of His future plan that you, in the midst of your trial are confidently expecting Him to deliver you eventually, whenever that deliverance may come, it's only a matter of time. Look at chapter 2:1 of Habakkuk. After stating his questions, his concerns about how God's holiness interacted with the prosperity of the Chaldeans, he says:

I will stand on my guard post and station myself on the rampart; and I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved.

Habakkuk, in a spiritual sense, took the position of the watchman, looking out to the horizon, looking to God to see what would come next. He knew that he had stated his questions, he expected God to answer, and so he was looking to God for what would come next. And you see this exhortation to wait on the Lord in many places in the Psalms, Psalm 27 for example:

Wait on the Lord, be strong and let your heart take courage, yes, wait on the Lord.

Beloved, what I want you to see and what the glory of this is, remember, we are assuming trials that you cannot change. We are assuming that you had no power to bring change to your own circumstances. What I want you to see beloved is that in those times, biblical waiting is not passive resignation to the inevitable. You are not collapsing under the weight of your trial and saying, "I can't do anything about it anyway, so I'm just going to sit here." No, no. When we say, wait expectantly, we are saying that when you trust God, you are looking to Him with an expectancy that he will be true to His word. In your discouragement, you expect, you are confident, you declare in advance that though you don't know how this will all work out, in the end you say, "God will bring resolution to this and He will prove His faithfulness to me in the end." Beloved, that is trust that honors God and honors His word. when you can't see the solution, when you don't know how it is going to work out, you have no phone calls to make, no buttons to push, no money that can solve this issue, when you are in that helpless circumstance and you rise up to the occasion and say, "I know that my God is going to deliver me and prove

His faithfulness to me in the end, you are glorifying your God, the God of your salvation. That's what trust looks like beloved, it declares as a present indicative of that which is to occur. "God will be faithful to me, I know it and I'm going to live in light of it now, even though I don't know how it all works out." You don't despair, you reject despair, you don't accept despair simply because you don't understand at the moment. These divine certainties drive your attitude toward all of your life as you expect Him to be faithful.

Now, there is a second aspect of waiting on God that we see in Habakkuk. Taken from what God said at the end of His own discourse in Habakkuk, chapter 2, look at that verse, we will look at it so briefly. After declaring His sovereignty over the nations and His intentions to deal with the Chaldeans, further down the line, God says:

"But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."

B. You wait reverently.

Second aspect of waiting on God is that you wait reverently. Wait reverently, you wait in worship. Beloved, see God on His throne as it were, remember His matchless sovereignty, remember the magnificent nature of His Shekinah glory that no man can see and live. Remember the grandeur of creation, the fury of His wrath, the majesty of the cross, remember all of those things beloved and fall silent before Him. You worship Him now for who He is, you worship Him now for his own intrinsic worth before you know how it is going to work out, without conditional of whether He works it out according to your desires or not. You see Him in His exalted glory and you give Him the homage and the worship and the praise that He deserves. And part of that means is that in your trials (and I had to deal with this and some of you need to deal with it tonight) there comes a time where you have to put the questions aside. There comes a time where you have to say, "I have to stop complaining about this because God reigns and God is majestic and it is time for me to stop the questions and simply fall silent before Him in worship." Sometimes your best friend in your trials will be the hand that you put over your mouth to keep it from speaking foolishly against God under the provocation of adverse circumstances. You worship Him reverently and fall before Him in silence and adore Him for His intrinsic worth.

C. You wait submissively.

Now there is a third aspect of waiting on God—you wait expectantly, you wait reverently, thirdly, you wait submissively. Look at Habakkuk chapter 3. In verse 2, Habakkuk is praying, he is praying in response to all of this revelation that God has given him. God has unfolded world history before his eyes before it happens and now Habakkuk is praying in response. And notice the difference beloved in the response. Remember how he was praying at the start and saying, Lord, how long am I going to cry out and you don't do anything. Now listen to him pray beloved, with nothing changing, nothing has changed, in fact it is worse. Look at how he prays here in verse 2:

Lord, I have heard the report about you and I fear. O Lord, revive your work in the midst

of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

Habakkuk is praying differently here than he did at the start of the book. He is not asking God to change anything, he is not asking God why any more. He has simply submitted to, he has submitted his attitude and his heart to what God has revealed here. And so he says, “in wrath remember mercy.” What he is saying is, God, as you bring your wrath as expressed through this conquering nation, I’m not objecting to that, Lord, my only request is that you remember that you are a merciful God as you do that. Show us drops of mercy in the midst of the judgment, Lord, if you will do that, I will be content.

And so you pray today beloved, “God, I believe you have orchestrated my circumstances out of your wisdom and love, I don’t understand, but I will trust you, I accept this trial my God, I only ask that you be faithful to me in the midst of it. If you are faithful to me, all will be well.”-- That’s the way you are submissive to Him.

Beloved, that kind of expected, reverent, submissive trust enables you to do this final thing.

D. You wait joyfully.

That enables you to wait joyfully. I’ll never forget the day when I understood this, sitting at my desk. I understood this and involuntarily stood up and said, “This is it, this was the answer to all of it.” Habakkuk says in verse 16:

I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.

He knows that judgment is coming and he has to wait while it does. He has now returned his focus to the present. And then he looks at the consequence and he contemplates the consequences and says:

Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls...

Habakkuk is facing the reality of total collapse, he is not sugar-coating anything. This could be bad and it could be very bad for a long time to come, and yet look what he says in verse 18:

Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hind’s feet, and makes me walk on my high places.

The theme here, the mood here, is one of exuberant joy and singing a joyful shouting. He is rejoicing (get this) because he is satisfied with God, he wants no more.

Beloved, what that tells you, there is an enormous beacon of soul liberty here. You can rejoice right now even if your circumstances do not change, even if they get worse. You can rejoice now and going forward because the character of God, God Himself is enough to satisfy your heart.

My dad who died in that plane crash, who died without Christ, I usually have people come and say, “You know, your dad, maybe he got saved right there before the crash right before he died.” That’s true, but that’s irrelevant. The truth is that there is no evidence of that it happened. And trusting God does not mean that you hope the things that probably are not true—you rest your trust in Him. So what about that? I wouldn’t have chosen that plane crash, but now I wouldn’t trade it for anything because God was blessing me, it was His mean to draw me closer to Christ. And beloved, anything that draws you closer to Christ is your friend.

What about your trials beloved? Would you trust Him? The truth is you have an even better reason to trust God than Habakkuk did. You have more riches to draw upon than that prophet 600 years before the time of Christ did because you live on the other side of the cross. You know how God has expressed His love. You know that He sent His Son to be our savior from sin. You know that God in human flesh laid down His life on your behalf so that you could go to heaven and not to hell. You know that because He lives, you will live. Beloved, you can trust love like that, can’t you? Beloved, God is faithful and He will bring it to pass, just you wait and see.

Let’s pray. Our Father, we glory in you and we love you and we remember you tonight. We trust you, we trust that you are always at work to accomplish good things on behalf of your children. And beloved Father, as we pray to you, we trust you and we will wait on you until we come in to the full possession of these things which we see now by faith as revealed in your word. We do trust you Lord unconditionally. We worship you unconditionally for your intrinsic word and your intrinsic glory. And now Father, as we go on our way, bless us as we seek to live these things out in the midst of the very hostile world. We look forward to that day when we see Christ face to face. In His name we pray. Amen.