

Sermon #2 — Habakkuk Series

Title: **LIGHT FOR TIMES**
OF GREAT DARKNESS

Text: Habakkuk 1:1-2:1

Subject: *Understanding God's Judgments*

Date: Sunday Evening — July 27, 2005

Tape # *Habakkuk #2*

Readings: *Curtis Hall and Joe Blakely*

Introduction:

Who is in control of this world? Anyone? Does it make sense to talk about a wise, loving, and all-powerful God who governs all the affairs of men when we see calamities, heart-breaking pain and suffering, conflict and war, poverty and great need all around us every day? Where is justice in a world full of AIDS, orphans and crippled children? In 1973 the Justices of United States Supreme Court ripped up the Constitution of our nation in a mock trial, declaring that it is a woman's right under law to murder her unborn child. Since that travesty of justice, almost 50 million babies have been slaughtered! The relentless threat of terrorism holds the whole world in constant fear. Economic disaster appears to be looming. — How can we have faith, how can we believe in the God of the Bible when we are faced with such darkness, such tragedy, such devastation? I just wrote a hymn for next Sunday's bulletin.

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

The King of kings, who reigns above,
The self-existent “*God is love;*”
His essence, attributes, and name,
Boundless, unchanging love proclaim.

The depth unfathom’d, height unknown,
The breadth unmeasur’d, like His throne,
A length, no finite mind can reach,
A love that angels cannot teach.

The love of God our tongues employ. —
Here sinners find unending joy,
While through the Savior’s blood we prove
This sacred truth, that “*God is love!*”

Yet, everything around us seems to contradict every word of that hymn. It would be easy to multiply the illustrations of evil, and tell of child abuse and hunger and starvation. On radio and television, and in our public schools, from Kindergarten through College, the of blasphemy and the mocking of God is relentless.

- How can we live in such a dark, dark a world?
- How can we believe in justice, when there appears to be none?
- Who is in control?
- Is anyone in control?
- Where is God?

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

- Does He care?
- Is the Almighty simply overwhelmed by the forces of evil?

Not hardly. The Lord God declares, — “**I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things**” (Isaiah 45:7).

The title of my message is — **LIGHT FOR TTIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS**. My text is Habakkuk 1:1-11.

“The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. 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! 3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause [me] to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence [are] before me: and there are [that] raise up strife and contention. 4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”

“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]. 6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, [that] bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces [that are] not theirs. 7 They [are] terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. 8 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. 9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up [as] the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. 10 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. 11 Then shall [his] mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, [imputing] this his power unto his god.”

(Habakkuk 1:1-11)

Habakkuk’s world was, in many ways, very much like our own. Habakkuk and his people were faced with great evil, politically, morally, and spiritually, just as we are. And the Lord God revealed to his prophet that even greater evil was sure to follow. Habakkuk lived in a world that seemed out of control, a world in which there seemed to be no justice. Like us, Habakkuk had to struggle with the apparent inconsistency between what he knew to be the character of God and the things he saw and experienced in the world in

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

which he lived. But Habakkuk in the end rejoices in God, concluding with one of the greatest statements of faith in the entire Bible. Everything in the Prophecy of Habakkuk is relevant to us and the day in which we live. Indeed, the book of Habakkuk is God's word to you and me today.

BACKGROUND

Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah. He lived and prophesied during a time of tremendous upheaval. Assyria – the major world power that had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel about 100 years earlier – has recently fallen, and the Babylonians or Chaldeans are beginning to look very threatening. At the same time, Egypt has risen again as a major world power. The southern kingdom of Judah was filled with corruption. **Jeremiah assessed in the 5th chapter of his prophecy in the bleakest of terms** (Jeremiah 5:26-29).

“For among my people are found wicked [men]: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men. 27 As a cage is full of birds, so [are] their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. 28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

29 Shall I not visit for these [things]? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jeremiah 5:26-29)

Jeremiah declared the guilt of the people and also declared that God was determined to punish them for their wickedness.

It was shortly after Jeremiah wrote those words that Hilkiyah the High Priest found the Book of the Law in the temple. After he sent the Book of God King to King Josiah by order of the King the Book was read to all of Jerusalem. After that there was a time of political and religious reform in the land, and a revival of the worship of the Lord (2 Kings 22 and 23). This all lasted until the godly King Josiah died. But the wickedness and idolatry are deeply ingrained in the hearts of men. They can be restrained by law and by the powerful influences of strong, believing, godly leaders. But when that influence is gone, the deep-seated evil always resurfaces. As soon as Josiah was dead, Jehoiakim reigned in Jerusalem and led Judah into even great wickedness and idolatry.

That is the time in which the Lord God raised up his servant Habakkuk finds. Turbulence shook the nation and the world. The reforms enacted during Josiah's reign were

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

overthrown, the outward appearance of revival fizzled, and open idolatry reigned everywhere.

THE CRY OF ANGUISH

Habakkuk was, of course, aware of Jeremiah's prophecy. He knew that God was determined to punish the nation its wickedness and idolatry. Yet the punishment – and the hoped-for spiritual cleansing and renewal of the nation – had not come. So Habakkuk cries out to God (Habakkuk 1:1-4).

“The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. 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! 3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause [me] to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence [are] before me: and there are [that] raise up strife and contention. 4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.” (Habakkuk 1:1-4)

Habakkuk's prophecy is different from any other prophecy found in Holy Scripture, in that this prophecy is altogether a conversation between God and his prophet. What we have

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

just read is a cry of deeply felt anguish from the heart of a man who loved God and his law.

Habakkuk's prayer was the repeated cry of an importunate heart. — Habakkuk did not just pray once. “How long will I call for help and you will not hear?” He cried and cried and cried.

Yet, his cries before the throne of grace went unanswered. — Despite his repeated cries, there was no indication that God was listening. Violence continued. There was no Divine intervention. There was no deliverance. There was no salvation. — The heavens were brass. God was silent.

The prayer we have just read was the prayer of a man with pain in his heart, the prayer of a broken-hearted prophet who longed to see God perform his wonders of grace for and in his people. — Habakkuk was in sorrow. His heart was heavy. His soul was pained by the evil, the violence, and the idolatry around him. He was like Lot in Sodom, vexed day by day. He is no disinterested observer!
He asks in verse 3...

- Why do you show me iniquity?
- Why do you make me behold grievance, — shameless cruelty, oppression, and abuse?
- Spoiling and violence are before me!

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

- Strife and contention are everywhere!

He saw Judah backslidden. The nation had turned from and for God. The elect people had given themselves over to false idolatry and the ungodly pursuits that are always spawned by idolatry. The prophet wanted to know how God could tolerate this and still be God. Was God dead? Why was He silent? Perhaps God doesn't answer prayer. — Habakkuk was being honest with God. “Why do you make me look at all this! All this destruction and violence!”

LAW SLACKED

In the 4th verse the prophet declares to God, as one pleading his case before the court of heaven, as one ordering his cause before the throne of grace, ——— “Therefore,” because of this evil and idolatry, “the law is slacked.” Habakkuk, I do not doubt, is referring specifically to the Book of the Law, the Book of God found by Hilkiyah in the temple, the Word read, and expounded by Shaphan the scribe expounded 15 years earlier, by which God wrought wonders in Israel.

The word “**slacked**” is a very strong word. It means, paralyzed, frozen, without influence. Habakkuk is pleading with God to intervene. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit stir our hearts so to plead with our God! — O Lord God, your

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

Gospel is frozen, paralyzed, without influence! Only you can give it power! (Daniel 9:16-24; Isaiah 64:1-2)

(Daniel 9:16-24) “O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people [are become] a reproach to all [that are] about us. 17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake. 18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.”

“20 ¶ And whiles I [was] speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21 Yea, whiles I [was] speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22 And he informed [me], and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew [thee]; for thou [art] greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

(Daniel 9:16-24)

(Isaiah 64:1-2) “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, 2 As [when] the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, [that] the nations may tremble at thy presence!” (Isaiah 64:1-2)

Habakkuk knew where to take his complaints and his doubts. He took them to God. He did not go to other prophets. He go to a religious counselor or shrink, or even his friends. He took his heart’s needs to his great God. The

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

Psalmist David, did the very same thing (Psalm 140:1-2; Hebrews 4:16).

“Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; 2 Which imagine mischiefs in [their] heart; continually are they gathered together [for] war.” (Psalms 140:1-2)

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

SALVATION PROMISED

In verse 5, the Lord God gives a word of promise to his prophet, assuring him of the salvation of his people by Christ, the Messiah, our blessed Redeemer.

“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.” (Habakkuk 1:5)

Habakkuk was praying for the salvation of his own nation and people, but the Lord God spoke of a people far more numerous than Israel and Judah. He promises to save all his elect, the Israel of God by Christ Jesus. There is no

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

question at all that this passage is talking about the salvation of God's holy nation, the church, the Israel of God, because that is the very interpretation God the Holy Spirit gives of Habakkuk in Acts 13:41.

(Acts 13:26-41) “Men [and] brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. 27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled [them] in condemning [him]. 28 And though they found no cause of death [in him], yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took [him] down from the tree, and laid [him] in a sepulchre. 30 But God raised him from the dead: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, [now] no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

sure mercies of David. 35 Wherefore he saith also in another [psalm], Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. 38 Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 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.” (Acts 13:26-41)

This is talking about the salvation of God’s elect scattered among the nations, which is the sure result of Christ’s substitutionary, sin-atonement sacrifice at Calvary (Isaiah 52:13-54:5). This salvation is God’s marvelous work his wonderful work, the work for which he made the world.

(Isaiah 52:13) “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. 14 As many were astonished at thee; his

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: 15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for [that] which had not been told them shall they see; and [that] which they had not heard shall they consider.”

“53:1 ¶ Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, [there is] no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were [our] faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

“4 ¶ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither [was any] deceit in his mouth.”

“10 ¶ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong [his] days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him [a portion] with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

“54:1 ¶ Sing, O barren, thou [that] didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou [that] didst not travail with child: for more [are] the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife,

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

saith the LORD. 2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; 3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. 4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5 For thy Maker [is] thine husband; the LORD of hosts [is] his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.” (Isaiah 52:13-54:5)

In Zechariah 3: 8, the Lord tells us that God’s elect, sinners saved by his grace are “men wondered at.” Our Savior’s name is “Wonderful.” And all who are made one with him are people “wondered at.”

(Zechariah 3:8) “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they *are* men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.”

We read the same thing in **Isaiah 8:18.**

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

(Isaiah 8:18) “Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.”

- **God’s saints are “men wondered at” by the angels of God.** The angels are astonished at the love of the holy Son of God toward unholy sinners.
- **We are a people “wondered at” by the world around us.** — “*Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*”
- **And we are the greatest wonder to ourselves!** Oh, what a wonder that God the Father should have loved us, and chosen us in Christ Jesus before the world began! — That God the Son should have loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor! — That God the Holy Spirit should have loved us, called us with an holy calling, regenerated, illuminated, convinced us of our sin, and of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and brought us to the love we once abhorred!

We are a world of wonders in to ourselves! Yet, while filled with wonder, we are so cold, unthankful, and indifferent! Our God, by his distinguishing grace, has called us out of darkness, into his marvellous light, while thousands all around are left to the blindness and ignorance

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

of their hearts. I am astonished that these things, things I know well, have so little influence over my hard heart!

But, reading this in its context, the cause of great wonder is this. — We are people wondered at because God has saved us by his matchless, free grace in Christ.
By his grace, God has made you one “*wondered at*” by the accomplishments of Christ, his Servant, the Branch.

HOW ACCOMPLISHED

How will the Lord God do this marvelous thing? How will he perform this great salvation? How will he gather his elect out of all the nations of the world? In Habakkuk 1:6-11, the Lord God tells his prophet that he will save his elect, he will save his church, he will save those who truly are the Israel of God by raising up and destroying all the nations of the earth, including Israel and Judah!

(Habakkuk 1:6-11) “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. 7 They [are] terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle [that] hasteth to eat. 9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up [as] the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. 10 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. 11 Then shall [his] mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, [imputing] this his power unto his god.” (Habakkuk 1:6-11)

The Lord God told Habakkuk to look at the nations surrounding Judah and he will be amazed, shocked and shudder, for the work God was about to do was incredible. This work will be so horrifying that the nation of Judah simply won't believe it. God would raise up the Babylonians, overthrow Jerusalem, capture Judah and take the Israelites into captivity, being driven off the land which God gave to them. But this was only a picture of what God is doing universally, with all the nations of the earth, in every age of time (Romans 11:25-27; Isaiah 43:1-7; Romans 11:33-36).

(Romans 11:25-27) “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this [is] my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” (Romans 11:25-27)

(Isaiah 43:1-7) “But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called [thee] by thy name; thou [art] mine. 2 When thou passest through the waters, I [will be] with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. 3 For I [am] the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt [for] thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. 5 Fear not: for I [am] with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7 [Even] every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.” (Isaiah 43:1-7)

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

(Romans 11:33-36) “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! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, [are] all things: to whom [be] glory for ever. Amen.”

APPLICATION

What are we to learn from this passage?

1. Sinner, understand this, God will destroy all who oppose him
2. Yet, the Lord will save all who bow to him, all who trust his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Children of God, always remember that our God is always in control.
4. Our great God and heavenly Father often answers prayer in a way we do not expect.

In fact, he sometimes answers our prayers in such a way that things get worse before they get better. He sometimes does just the opposite of what we anticipate. **John Newton**, the author of the hymn “*Amazing Grace*,” wanted something better in his spiritual life than he was presently

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

experiencing. He cried out for a deeper knowledge of God. In anticipation, he expected God to do something supernatural and great. But instead, he went into deep depression. He, for months and months, was cast by God into such utter despair and blackness that he thought for a time that he was under the control of Satan. He was tempted and tried beyond comprehension. However, this depressing experience was what God used to bring Newton into a deeper spiritual understanding of his God. God answered Newton's prayers, but not the way he thought God would answer them. When the trial was over, Newton wrote this great hymn...

I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

['Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he, I trust, has answered prayer;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.]

I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once he'd answer my request;
And, by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

Instead of this, he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea, more, with his own hand he seemed
Intent to aggravate my woe;
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds, and laid me low.

“Lord, why is this?” I trembled cried;
“Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?”
“‘Tis in this way,” the Lord replied,
“I answer prayer for grace and faith.”

“These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayst seek thy all in me.”

When things happen to us that we don't understand, here are four anchors which should give us contentment in every circumstance...

1. I am here by God's appointment.
2. I am here in God's keeping, so I am surrounded by his mercy, love, and grace.

LIGHT FOR TIMES OF GREAT DARKNESS

3. I'm here God's training to teach me the lessons I am here to learn.
4. I am here for God's time. He will bring me out again – how and when He alone knows.