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## Two Ways To Trust God Habakkuk 1:1-4

Please take your Bible and open with me to the prophet Habakkuk - Habakkuk 1. If you haven't been to Habakkuk in a while, Habakkuk is toward the end of the Old Testament. Go to Psalms and head right and you'll eventually find the prophet Habakkuk.

Years ago when I got to the church I served in Kansas there was a Sunday night church family meeting. I was new to the church and I was sitting there just observing. Toward the end of the meeting a la by Christian secondlydy in the church raised her hand and asked one of the elders a question - Who visits people in the hospital? **Who in the church visits the sick?** The elder looked confused. He wasn't sure who helped with pastoral care. Then we made eye contact and he said, "I think that's one of Blake's roles here. I think Blake is in charge of pastoral care." **It wasn't one of my roles, but it quickly became one of my roles.**

In the middle of the next week I received a phone call about 3:15 in the morning. It was from someone at the local hospital who told me that someone from our churches dad died and they wanted a pastor to come and meet with them at the hospital right away. I got out of bed and went up to the hospital. I found the lady who asked for a pastor. **I had never seen her before and I never saw her again.** In the middle of the night I found myself in a room with a lady I had never met before and her dead father. There's no class for this kind of thing in seminary by the way. I stayed there for a few hours trying to comfort her before returning home.

To be honest with you, overseeing pastoral care wasn't easy. I was always on call and it's hard to see people you love suffer. But visiting the sick over time became one of the best blessings in my role there as a pastor. I learned a lot by watching saints suffer well. **I'll never forget going to**

**hospice to visit a lady named Resa Robertson.** Resa was a cancer doctor. She was in her late 50's, early 60's. She got cancer and it had spread to the point that she was dying. I went to see Resa in hospice the night before she died.

I walked in and sat down next to her bed in a room with just her and her husband Dave. We talked for a minute and then Resa looked up at me and said something I'll never forget. She said, "Blake this is not how I wanted my life to end, but this is God's plan for my life **and I'm okay with it.** She said it with a smile on her face." She didn't have tears in her eyes when she said it, but I did. Her confidence in Christ moved me to tears.

I think I learned more in that 7 minute conversation than 7 years of seminary training. Why? Resa totally trusted the Lord. She came to church regularly but she had more than just Bible knowledge - **She trusted the God she learned about from Scripture with her whole heart.** I want to be like Resa when I grow up. I want to grow in confidence in Christ over the course of my life - Not just knowing about Jesus but fully trusting in Jesus.

Something I would recommend you to do while we go through Habakkuk the next month or so would be to pick up a book by Jerry Bridges called *Trusting God*. Get *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges and read it along with a cup of coffee and our study of Habakkuk. One of the things Jerry Bridges writes in *Trusting God* is how it can actually be more challenging in the Christian life to trust God than to obey God. His quote on the difference between obeying God and trusting God is in your notes:

"The moral will of God given to us in the Bible is rational and reasonable. The circumstances in which we must trust God often appear irrational and inexplicable. The law of God is readily recognized to be good for us, even when we don't want to obey it. The circumstances of our lives frequently appear to be dreadful and grim or perhaps even calamitous and tragic. **Obeying God is worked out within well-defined boundaries of God's revealed will. Trusting God is worked out in an arena that has no boundaries.** We do not know the extent, the duration, or the frequency of

the painful, adverse circumstances in which we must frequently trust God. We are always coping with the unknown.

**Yet it is just as important to trust God as it is to obey Him.** When we disobey God we defy His authority and despise His holiness. But when we fail to trust God we doubt His sovereignty and question His goodness. In both cases we cast aspersions upon His majesty and His character. God views our distrust of Him as seriously as He views our disobedience. When the people of Israel were hungry, “they spoke against God, saying, ‘Can God spread a table in the desert? ... Can he supply meat for his people?’” The next two verses tell us, “When the Lord heard them, he was very angry ... for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance” (Psalm 78:19-22).

In order to trust God, we must always view our adverse circumstances through the eyes of faith, not of sense. And just as the faith of salvation comes through hearing the message of the gospel (see Romans 10:17), so the faith to trust God in adversity comes through the Word of God alone. It is only in the Scriptures that we find an adequate view of God’s relationship to and involvement in our painful circumstances. It is only from the Scriptures, applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we receive the grace to trust God in adversity. In the arena of adversity, the Scriptures teach us three essential truths about God—truths we must believe if we are to trust Him in adversity.

They are:

- God is completely sovereign
- God is infinite in wisdom
- God is perfect in love

Someone has expressed these three truths as they relate to us in this way: “God in His love always wills what is best for us. In His wisdom He always knows what is best, and in His sovereignty He has the power to bring it about.”

That's a long quote. Charles Spurgeon puts it a little more succinctly, "I have learned to kiss the waves that throw me up against the Rock of Ages"

All that to say, I don't want to grow up to be a grumpy Christian. Have you ever met a grumpy Christian? There are such folks. Grumpy Christians don't glorify God. Murmuring is a sin the Lord takes quite seriously. Complaining dishonors Christ. How do we age well as Christ followers?

This is where a short study through Habakkuk can help us. Habakkuk trusted God and he has some things to teach us about trusting God, especially when life hurts. As we start into this study I want you to see how the book begins and how it ends. I think how Habakkuk begins and how it ends is worth the price of admission. If this is all you get from this study you will have received your money's worth.

I want you to see this because this is one of the ways I think this book can help us. Notice where the book begins in Habakkuk 1:2-4 and notice where the book ends in Habakkuk 3:17-19.

Habakkuk 1:2-4

2 O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,  
and you will not hear?

Or cry to you "Violence!"  
and you will not save?

3 Why do you make me see iniquity,  
and why do you idly look at wrong?

Destruction and violence are before me;  
strife and contention arise.

4 So the law is paralyzed,  
and justice never goes forth.

For the wicked surround the righteous;  
so justice goes forth perverted.

Where does Habakkuk begin? Habakkuk begins questioning God. He has some why questions. He doesn't like what He sees happening around him. He knocks on heaven's door and it appears no one is home. But Habakkuk keeps knocking and eventually God answers his questions. We will get into God's answer next week but feel free to read ahead.

The way God answers Habakkuk beginning in Habakkuk 1:5 perplexes the prophet. It wasn't the answer he was looking for. God's plan to deal with the sin problem in Judah means that Habakkuk's life on earth will never be the same. His life will get much harder from a human perspective.

What do you do when you realize God's plan for your life on earth is different than what you want for your life or what you think is best? Habakkuk keeps going to God in prayer. He keeps working it through in prayer. He doesn't stop praying when he's perplexed - He keeps praying through his perplexing.

Guys, are things going to happen in our lives we don't expect and we don't think is best? Is that ever going to happen. Didn't James write count it all joy when you encounter various trials. Trials are not an if, they're a when. Count it all joy ***when*** you encounter various trials.

The perplexed prophet keeps working things through in prayer and something happens. His heart changes. Notice how Habakkuk ends in Habakkuk 3:17-19:

17 Though the fig tree should not blossom,  
nor fruit be on the vines,  
the produce of the olive fail  
and the fields yield no food,  
the flock be cut off from the fold  
and there be no herd in the stalls,  
18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord;  
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.  
19 God, the Lord, is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the deer's;  
he makes me tread on my high places.

Habakkuk begins with confusion and ends with confidence. He starts with problems and ends with praise. He starts with fear and ends with faith. Guys, this is the benefit of working through your trials biblically. **God changes our hearts as we work through our pain in prayer and praise.**

Verse 17 is what is going to happen to the people of God because of God's plan to deal with the sin problem in Judah. Their livelihood is going to be cut off. **A wicked nation is going to block Jerusalem from getting what it needs to survive.** Habakkuk knows what's about to happen to him and so what does he do? Notice in verse 18 there are two I will's. verse 18 - "I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation." Why? Verse 19 says "God, the Lord, is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places." Habakkuk's commitment to rejoice in the Lord flowed from His trust in the Lord.

By working through his problems vertically Habakkuk grew in faith and in his own personal commitment to trust the Lord no matter how hard life gets. **He became a sure footed saint because he sought God in the midst of a world that was spiraling out of control and he knew God's plan and he committed to praising God through His pain.**

I told you last week that living in Kansas turned me into a barbecuer. That is an actual word. Barbecuer. I typed it into my computer and apple gave me full credit. Barbecue us a big deal in Kansas. Hunting is also a big deal in Kansas. Especially bow hunting. You're a man if you kill a deer with a rifle but you're a real man if you kill a deer with a bow. Evidently there were deer where Habakkuk lived in and around Jerusalem. **Deer are sure footed creatures.** God designed their feet so they could climb different mountains securely.

Where do we go to get traction in the Christian life? How do we become sure footed saints? **We trust God's promises and God's plan and we commit to praise the Lord through the pain of life.** Habakkuk's sure footedness in life comes from relying on the Lord based on knowing who God is and His plan for His people.

Habakkuk encourages us because he shows us it is possible to live in a world that spirals out of control while maintaining a heart of worship.

This morning I want you to see two basic steps to grow in our trust in God - These are two very basic reminders. **In order to trust God:**

1. **Receive the whole counsel of God because God knows what's best - Habakkuk 1:1**

Look with me at Habakkuk 1:1  
The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw

If we are going to grow in our trust in God we have to be willing to study all of Scripture because according to Romans 12:2 God's will is what? It's good, pleasing and perfect. God is holy. God always knows what's best for our lives even if what's best is painful.

It's impossible to trust God without the truths of His Word. **Truth is the foundation on which trust is built.** In Hebrews 1:1 we are reminded that in the Old Testament God spoke at many times and in many ways. The Old Testament is God speaking. How God chose to speak is unique. Many ways includes visions, dreams and prophetic sayings.

In Habakkuk 1:1 God speaks through an oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. **An oracle is a burden or a pronouncement.** It's a word placed upon his heart by God that he must accurately convey to others. Saw means what he conveys is not merely his own impression of an event or series of events but the very words God wishes him to write. The first verse makes it clear that Habakkuk is writing God's Word.

Habakkuk is different from other men in the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament we find false teachers showing up regularly in the life of God's people. How can we identify them? One way we can detect false teachers is that they do not speak for God because they're unwilling to say hard things. **False teachers tell people what they want to hear and not what God says.** We see an example of this in Isaiah 30. If you want to, turn back to Isaiah 30:8. In Isaiah 30:8-11 the Lord describes the rebellion of His people:

Here is how God describes their rebellion in Isaiah 30:8-11

- 8 And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.
- 9 For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord;
- 10 **who say to the seers, “Do not see,” and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions,**
- 11 leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.”

Why were the people rebellious? Because they were unwilling to hear God's instructions. They demanded the prophets to tell them smooth things and to prophecy illusions. They were content to live delusional. If what God said made their life more difficult they had no ears to hear - They didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to hear about their sin and that there was consequences to their sin. **And plenty of false prophets were willing to tell the people what they wanted to hear.**

And you know what? There are still lots of people in churches telling people what they want to hear instead of what God says. This is what Paul told Timothy life would be like in the church before the return of Christ. 2 Timothy 4:3-4, "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths." That's the day in which we live.

Today we live in a world where there are many false prophets. They lie about one way of salvation through Jesus Christ. They lie about the nature of sin - what sin is and what sin looks like and what sin leads to. **They lie about the future and God's plan to send His Son again to judge the world in righteousness.** 2 Peter 3:3-4, "knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” People mock the second coming of Christ inside and outside the church.



Why do people mock the second coming of our Savior? Because if Christ is coming back that means He's not dead. That means He's alive. That means everything Jesus said about Himself is true. He is God. He is the Messiah. He has crushed sin, satan and death. He came the first time to save and He's coming back to judge the world in righteousness. **People deny the second coming because they don't want to stand before Christ and give an account for their sin.**

What am I trying to remind you this morning? We shouldn't be surprised that people in the church change their message to suit the sinful culture around us. Paul told Timothy that is exactly what would happen in our day. This should not surprise us, but it should sober us. **One of the biggest and most important decisions of our lives is who we will allow to teach us the Word of God.** Our souls are at stake in this.

Choose teachers who study God's Word to show themselves approved to God (2 Timothy 2:15) and speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and seek to authentically live it out (Ezra 7:10) with the help of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

To grow in trusting God we must have truth. How much? All of it. Why? God's will is good, pleasing and perfect. ***Just because God tells us things that are hard doesn't mean what He tells us isn't what's best for our lives.*** What is hard is still what's best. Habakkuk is telling God's people God's Word.

To grow in trusting God:

1. **Receive the whole counsel of God because God knows what's best - Habakkuk 1:1**
2. **Run to God with your problems because God cares for His people - Habakkuk 1:2-4**

**This is what we see Habakkuk doing in verses 2-4:**

**Remember the historical background** - Habakkuk's oracle is a divine message God gave His people between the fall of the Northern Kingdom to the Assyrians and the fall of the Southern Kingdom to the Babylonians

beginning in 605 BC. **Habakkuk received God's revelation during a time of moral and spiritual decay in the land.**

Habakkuk lived in Judah whose capital was Jerusalem through the rise and fall of two kings - a good one and a bad one. **The good king was Josiah and the bad king was Jehoikim.** Under Josiah, things got better among the covenant community for a season. But after he died a wicked king named Jehoikim took over and things got worse again quickly. After the death of Josiah (in battle against Pharaoh Neco of Egypt on the plain of Megiddo in 609 b.c.), disillusionment with the reform set in and Judah reverted to its former evil ways. 2 Kings 23:27 summarizes Jehoiakim's reign by stating, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done."

*Habakkuk saw what happens when you have poor leadership and people reject the Word of God.*

This is what forms the basis of Habakkuk's complaint in verses 2-4. Look at it again with me in Habakkuk 1:2-4:

Habakkuk 1:2-4

**2** O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,  
and you will not hear?

Or cry to you "Violence!"

and you will not save?

**3** Why do you make me see iniquity,  
and why do you idly look at wrong?

Destruction and violence are before me;  
strife and contention arise.

**4** So the law is paralyzed,  
and justice never goes forth.

For the wicked surround the righteous;  
so justice goes forth perverted.

James Montgomery Boice described these verses as "an anguished cry from a man who loved justice. He had seen justice perverted and had cried out to God against the evil. It is the kind of cry we might utter over the

deplorable state of the church in our days or the equally deplorable moral decline of America.”

Richard Patterson, “In Habakkuk’s eyes, then, Judahite society was spiritually bankrupt and morally corrupt. Because sin abounded, injustice was the norm. Habakkuk describes the judicial situation in two ways:

(1) Because of the basic spiritual condition, the operation of God’s law was sapped of the vital force necessary for it to guide man’s ethical and judicial decisions. Accordingly righteousness did not characterize Judahite society, and justice was never meted out.

(2) Because the society itself had become godless, wicked men could so hem in the attempts and actions of the righteous that whatever justice existed was so twisted that the resultant decision was one of utter perversity.”

Most men I know are problem solvers. Men hear about a problem and they take the initiative to solve it as quickly as possible. We don't like problems - we like solutions to problems. Habakkuk was a man who didn't like what he saw in the world around him, but there was nothing he could do about it. **He couldn't solve the sin problem in Judah under a wicked king.** He couldn't do much about it but He knew someone who could. Habakkuk took his concerns to the covenant making and covenant keeping God of Israel - The one True God. The creator and deliverer of His people.

Habakkuk couldn't change the moral decline in Judah but he knew who could. Habakkuk laments the situation to the Lord. He tells God what he sees. **Twice he mentions violence in the land.** The Hebrew term for 'violence' is often used of physical force, although it can also refer to verbal and emotional abuse - That's the way it's used in Genesis 16:5 to describe how Sara treated Hagar. He also sees iniquity. This term is frequently used of one who 'seeks to unsettle or even kill any faithful member of the covenant community'. The point is that the wicked in Judah are persecuting the faithful in Judah.

R. D. Culver describes some of the thinking and fears that must have accompanied Habakkuk's perplexities: "When magistrates permit murder, theft, fornication and the like to go unchecked and unpunished, God calls the whole nation to accounting. The unpunished crimes pollute the land,

becoming a growing mortgage against all, upon which God may finally foreclose, driving some inhabitants away, destroying others and permitting different peoples to dwell in the land.”

The basic cause of these problems was exploitation. Leaders wouldn't obey the Law. The rich exploited the poor and escaped punishment by bribing the officials. The law was either ignored or twisted and nobody seemed to care. The courts were crooked thus God's own covenant community was corrupt. They had Exodus 26:6-8 but they violated it, “You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.” **God's word was known and rejected and the longer that goes on the nation implodes.**

The worst part about what Habakkuk went through is not what he could see with his own eyes. The worst part about what Habakkuk went through is that he knew God could do something about it. Habakkuk knew the power of God. He knew God was the creator and the deliverer of His people. He knew God could change the sinful situation in Judah and yet the more Habakkuk knocked on heaven's door the more it appeared like no one was home. Habakkuk kept seeking the Lord. He kept crying out to God. He kept telling God what was happening around Him for a long time and nothing changed, nothing got better, things only got worse.

Aren't you glad you stuck around for this lesson? Some of you could be at lunch right now laughing and having a good time with your family and yet you stuck around to listen to someone who is getting more grey headed every day talk to you about seeking the Lord in a troubling time and getting no response.

Is there something encouraging we can take away from this? Friends, this is what we know. **Psalm 121:4, "Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."** God wasn't sleeping through this season in Judah's history. He wasn't hibernating. God neither slumbers nor sleeps. God has perfect knowledge of everything happening in His world. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He is always in control, even when it looks like He isn't. *We live in a Fathered world.*

**Remember what God told Isaiah in Isaiah 46:9-10:**

**9** remember the former things of old;  
for I am God, and there is no other;  
I am God, and there is none like me,  
**10** declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,  
and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

The Lord's power establishes what His wisdom decrees. From Habakkuk's perspective it looked like life in this world was spiraling out of control, but that's a human perspective. That's not a divine perspective. From a divine perspective things were right on schedule. God is not like American Airlines - You heard it here first folks. God never delays. God's timing is always perfect.

I think we are seeing similar things in our society that caused Habakkuk to cry out to God. Things are happening right now in our country that have never happened before. Two examples will be plenty of proof. Back on March 16 a man dressed up in a woman's swimsuit became a national champion in the 500 yard women's freestyle swim competition. Lia Thomas, who is a transgender woman, touched the wall in 4 minutes, 33.24 seconds in the 500-yard freestyle to become the first known transgender athlete to win a Division I national championship in any sport. Some in our world applaud this, others reject it.

This past week during the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson, a senator from Tennessee asked her, "Can you provide a definition for the word 'woman?'" "No," Jackson responded. "I can't." "You can't?" The senator asked. "Not in this context, I'm not a biologist," the judge replied. These are unique times we are currently living through when someone being nominated to serve in the highest court in the land refuses to offer a definition for what a woman is.

You'd almost think people are living in rebellion to God as Scripture says. You'd almost think that people outside of Christ really are alienated from

God, hostile in mind, doing evil deeds as Paul reminded the Colossians of their own pre-conversion experience. Satan is very much defeated but Satan is very much alive. He's not in the lake of fire yet. His goal is to deceive people so he can destroy people.

As you know the answer to these challenges is not found in the right president or vice president. It's not found in regaining a moral majority or making sure there are enough supreme court justices to oppose the moral or the immoral revolution. There is one answer to what we see happening in our world - The gospel of Jesus Christ. **The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only solution to the sin problem.** There is no one else who can forgive our sins and transform our hearts. Only Jesus can do that. These people that are trying to destroy the morality in our country aren't the enemy - They're the mission field.

Here's the challenge - *To keep fulfilling the mission of Christ without losing our minds.* How do we live in a sordid culture and stay sane? We have to go back to the sovereignty of God. There are no maverick molecules. From a divine perspective everything is right on schedule.

Another way we stay sane spiritually is by knowing we're not the first people to want to glorify God in a wicked world. We're not the first ones to have concerns over the moral decline in our society. Habakkuk gets it. He lived through it and the way he lived through it led him to greater worship.

One of the main reasons I wanted to go through this book with you is because I think we all feel the same kinds of frustrations Habakkuk felt. Habakkuk's society is not much different than ours today. We look around at our society and  $5+5=15$ . Laws are being passed and decisions are being made by leaders that make zero sense from anyone who is thinking rationally. Things don't make sense. And when things don't make sense, what is our temptation? **Our temptation is to murmur and complain rather than to cry out to God.**

Habakkuk knew the Lord so he cried out to the Lord. The prophets's initial words are a prayer of lament concerning injustice in Judah and in its capital

Jerusalem. What can we learn from this? How can these verses help us grow in trusting God? Let's finish with this. Notice verse 2 says O LORD and the word LORD is in all capital letters. This is YHWH. This is the One who revealed Himself to Moses at the burnish bush. This is I am who I am. Eternal existence eternal presence. This is the God who made everything and controls all that He has made.

One thing we will learn from Habakkuk and one thing Jerry Bridges makes clear in the book *Trusting God* is God's total control over all creation - His sovereignty. Bridges writes, "Confidence in the sovereignty of God in all that affects us is crucial to our trusting Him. If there is a single event in all of the universe that can occur outside of God's sovereign control then we cannot trust Him. His love may be infinite, but if His power is limited and His purpose can be thwarted, we cannot trust Him."

When we see the world spiraling out of control we need to remember that God is sovereign. Ephesians 1:11 says he works all things according to the good pleasure of His will. So, what do we do with a world that is getting worse around us every day? *We keep living for Christ and we keep taking all of our concerns to Christ.* He is our sympathetic high priest. He has been where we are yet he never sinned and He can give us grace in time of need.

Hebrews 4:14-16

- 14** Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.
- 15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
- 16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus lived in a wicked world without ever giving into temptation. He already died to pay the penalty for all of our sin and He is there to sympathize with us in the midst of temptation. Jesus sympathizes with us from a position of power. We go to Him in the midst of this wicked world

and we find someone who has been where we are and yet never sinned. He is there to give us the mercy and grace we need to help us in our time of need.

*When we work through our problems with Christ in prayer and praise we find the grace to help us in our time of need.*

To grow in trusting God:

1. **Receive the whole counsel of God because God knows what's best - Habakkuk 1:1**
2. **Run to God with your problems because God cares for His people - Habakkuk 1:2-4**

I hope you come back next week as we see God's response to Habakkuk's complaint in Habakkuk 1:5-11. Let's pray.