

# Living in a Nation Under God's Judgement

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**Habakkuk 1-3**

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I'm Jon. I'm one of the pastors here, and if you're watching online or especially if you're in our gym, like I saw Roberta in there, hello everyone in our gym, our mask only gym, thanks for being here today. I'm Jon, like I said, I'm one of the pastors. It's so good to be back. We have an incredible preaching team at this church, don't we? It is, it is amazing the the men that God has brought here to teach us the word, and yet every weekend, when I see someone else up here, I'm like, "Ah, I wish I was there." And so it's so good to be back. If you're a guest, uh you may not know one of the reasons that I was away is because my wife gave birth to our fourth, uh just last weekend, just last Sunday. A healthy baby boy named Jace Daniel Benzinger, and uh the name Jace is a cognate of Joshua and Jesus.

So his name means the Lord is salvation, so we pray that he is a mighty warrior for Christ. And as many of you are asking, mama and baby are doing fine, and our other three are just obsessed with him. So, all right. So if you need a Bible or a program or you need a pen to take notes, these wonderful gentlemen are coming down the aisles. Just wave to them. They will give you what you need, and if you take one of the Bibles today, please don't give it back to us. You can have it. It's yours. It's our gift to you today. And also, if you want to know more about Redeemer from me, I would say, come back at one o'clock today for next steps, go have breakfast or a late breakfast or an early lunch, come back and I'll tell you about the church, and I will answer your questions. That's today at one o'clock in this room.

All right. So on the screen, you see that we are in Habakkuk today. We're starting a new series. Um, and so grab your Bibles and open to Habakkuk chapter 1, Habakkuk chapter 1. If you got a Bible from an usher, you have one of those. That's page 872 in those Bibles that we give away. 872, Habakkuk chapter 1. Now, when you get there, and if you are able, please stand for the reading of God's word.

Habakkuk chapter 1, drop down to verse 2. This is God's word. "Oh Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear? Or cry to you violence, and you will not save? 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. So the law is paralyzed. Justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous, so justice goes forth perverted." We'll stop there. You may be seated. And as you are, let's pray together one more time.

Father I'm reminded often of the words of Psalm 119:18, where it says, "Open our eyes." It's a prayer. "Open our eyes to behold wonderful things that are found in your word." Habakkuk, this little known book, this obscure book in the Old Testament, is full of wonderful things that we need to understand so that we can understand what's going on in our world and how to respond as Christians. We need this message desperately, so I pray that you would do that work today, that you would equip us, that you would take these truths, and open our eyes to them, every single one of us. And that you wouldn't just do that here. I also pray for Chandler Bible Church, I pray for Pastor Sean, who's probably preaching right now as well, I pray that you would bless his preaching as well. I pray that you would use him powerfully this morning with the people that

are there and the people that are watching online, that you would make your name, your fame, your word great amongst the people of Chandler Bible Church. Bless them, please. Father, bless us, please as we go into your word now for the glory of your name. Amen.

So I don't know about you, but I'm one of those people that loves simple and easy. I love the least amount of steps to get where I'm going or to get what I want, so one of the post-pandemic wonderful things is this, I can order my lunch or my groceries, and it'll just be delivered to my doorstep, or I can just pull up to my car and pull up to the curbside, and they'll just walk it out and drop it off, and I don't have to go to the store, I don't have to go into the restaurant. It's wonderful. I remember the day, some of you will, too, when you needed to go to the bank or the ATM before you went to buy something. Remember that? And to use these things called checks, right? Now, my little bank card does just about everything for me. Most of the time, I don't carry cash at all. Why? Because it's not easy. I can't imagine a world without the ease of cars or indoor plumbing or supermarkets or air conditioning, especially here, right?

Everything is so much easier than it was for previous generations, but the problem is when we take that idea, that desire for ease and simplicity, and we expect that from God. Because there's nothing easy about God, right? Sound bites don't work to describe him, everything about him is far more complex than we could possibly imagine. I've often said that one of the proofs for Christianity is that, is how complicated God is. No one would ever make up a God as complicated as the one in Christianity. They would make one that's easy, that's manageable, that's simple. Trinitarian one and three, but three in a different way than one. Holy, high and exalted, and yet imminent, intimate, closer than your next thought. Sovereign, in control of every event, every person, every choice, every Adam in the universe. Complete, needing nothing, including worship, and yet choosing to love and show mercy and compassion to people that spend our lives rebelling against him. All powerful and yet patient. All knowing and yet forgiving. All loving and full of wrath against all evil. Glorious, majestic, awesome, and yet hidden at least for now.

See unfortunately in our desire for ease and our desire for quick answers, we we put that on God, and we expect that life is going to be easy to figure out too. If I do A, B, C, then God will predictably do X, Y, Z. God is good, and because he's good, evil will always be stopped, justice will always be done, what's right will always come to pass. Because I'm his child, I'll be healthy and wise and safe and and middle class, at least. The forces of darkness, they'll never get the upper hand. The people of God will always prevail, always come on top, regardless of whatever Goliath is standing in our way.

For many of us, this mistake is why it is so hard for us to understand what's going on in our country and in our world right now. The wrong seems oh so strong. Evil is not being stopped. Truth and justice is suppressed. Sin is winning. The the force of darkness are gaining the upper hand. There is a growing sense among God's people that we won't prevail and that this time Goliath might win. And immediately what we do, when we start to see those things, is we begin to question God. "God, why is this happening? God, do you see what's going on? God, God why aren't you doing anything about this? God, where are you?"

And if you asked those questions recently, or in frequently during the past decade, you're not alone. Did you hear the questions that Habakkuk asked, that we just read? He's wrestling with two things. He's wrestling with what he knows about God on the one hand and what he sees happening around him on the other hand. Look at it again. Verse 2. "Oh Lord. How long shall I

cry for help, and you not hear? Or cry to you violence." I'm seeing violence going on. I'm seeing blood. I'm seeing horrible things happening, and you don't save people from that. "Why do you make me see inequity? And why do you look idly at wrong?" Like there's wrong going on all around me, and you're idle, you're not even, you're doing anything about it. "Why do you make me see iniquity? Destruction and violence are before me. Strife and contention arises." It just seems like you're not even there. You're not doing anything about it. Do you even care? Sound familiar?

His wrestling boils down to this. Things were not easy. They weren't simple for him anymore. He thought, probably, that he had God and life wrapped up in a nice pretty box, but the events going on around him prove to him that box never really existed. The way he was viewing God, the way he was viewing life in God's world, all of it, which made life so easy, which made life so manageable is all turning out to be wrong, or at least only partially true at best. His foundations were being rocked to their very core. You see, Habakkuk was living in a nation under God's judgment, and I think that's where his situation connects with ours.

For some of us, it may be hard to realize that this country, that we love so much, that our America, is under God's judgment. And I'm not the only pastor to say this. Some have said it a lot longer than I have, but I've been saying it here for about five years. But it's much clearer now, isn't it? And just in case, you're wondering, I'm not saying this because of the recent election. I'm saying it because I believe this is what the Bible teaches, and I want you to see it. So keep your finger, your little ribbon here in Habakkuk, and I want you to turn to Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1. If you've got a Bible from an usher, that's on page 1040. 1040. Romans chapter 1.

As you're turning there, the context of Romans 1 is is, is the whole world of ungodly people, ungodly, unrighteous, people who do a number of things to express that ungodliness. They suppress the truth. They ignore the knowledge of God that that everybody has including them. They refuse to honor God, they don't recognize his goodness in their lives. Their minds, their hearts are growing darker and darker, and as a result of that, they worship created things rather than the Creator.

This is true and always has been true of the unbelieving world, but it's it's also true for America. The civic religion, that that tip of the cap to the man upstairs, the Judeo-Christian worldview, biblical morality has been being overturned for decades. Evil, as defined in the Bible, is good and good is evil. Truth is being hidden. Evil men and women are growing from bad to worse. Justice is perverted. Like the opening of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, there's this darkness that seems to be spreading. And I know that's what many of you feel because you tell me in emails and on social and at the back door. How am I supposed to understand and live in this world where it seems the foundations are, are crumbling?

And I think the reason that's happening is because God has been removing his hand and blessing from our country. And as he lifts his hand and blessing from our country, it's like uh, it's like you do that with, and you put your hand in water, and you lift it up from a seat, and all the water rushes in. So the same is true. All the evil and the darkness is rushing in as God's hand is being removed. This removal of blessing happens in three stages that I think you'll find quite alarming in the text. I want you to look at it in verse 24. Based on their utter rejection of God in verse 18 to 23, notice what it says in verse 24. "Therefore," based on all of that verse, 18 to 23, "God gave them up in the lust of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves."

That those words, "gave them up", is step one of God's removal of his hand and blessing. The word means to hand over like criminals being handed over to the police, so God is handing the nation's over to notice, impurity, dishonoring their bodies. God was protecting them. He was guarding them, but then he gave them over to sexual revolution, impurity, dishonoring their bodies. Why? Verse 25, "Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie". They no longer wanted the truth. They embraced lies, and as a result of that, "worshiped and served the creature themselves rather than the Creator who's blessed forever, Amen."

Notice verse 26, after the sexual revolution comes step number two of God's judgment on on on a people; here, the world, in our context, on our nation, step number two is a homosexual revolution. Verse 26. "For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions." What does that mean? Here he explains, "For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature"; anti-nature. "and the men, likewise, gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error." Notice those words, dishonorable unnatural, contrary to nature, anti-natural, shameless. That is how homosexuality is described in this text. Now has our country been following step one and step two of this trajectory. Do I, do I even need to ask that question?

So what's, what's step three? Verse 28, "Since they didn't see fit to acknowledge God", they didn't think that was a good thing to do, they really didn't want to do that. Verse 28, "God gave them up." And this time he gives them up "to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done". By ignoring God, by rebelling against them, the result in their minds, their minds no longer drive on the tracks of truth, rationality, and morality. Those three things are completely put aside. Their minds, when tested by God's word, fail in every possible way. They're worthless for any good and a godly thing at all. That's what that word, debased, means. And it's seen in the sinful lives that they then now live. Notice, "to a debased mind, to do", to live, to practice "what they ought not to do."

Well, What is that? Verse 29. "They're filled with all manner of unrighteousness." They don't do what's right. "Evil, covetousness, malice, they're full." So it's not just sprinklings. Now they're full. "They're filled with envy"; wanting what other people have, "murder strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless." And then it goes beyond that. Notice. "Though they know God's righteous decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them," but notice this, "but give approval to those who practice."

So how do you know when your nation's under God's judgment? When this kind of activity that we just read is not only tolerated, but it's celebrated, and it's elevated for all to see and do, this is how you should live, and if you don't live this way, if you don't think this is good, the problem is with you. This is, how do you know that you're under God's judgment? When you see your desires, your decisions, your behavior in black and white, in the words of Romans chapter 1. And this is what we're seeing on our nightly news. If you still watch that, right?

And this is a lot of what Habakkuk saw when he wrote this book that bears his name. Habakkuk doesn't have easy answers, simple answers to give us. He was faced with a situation where his understanding of God was at odds with the experience of God acting in the world. He knew that God was acting in the world, but the things that he was seeing going on, he's going, "How can I connect what's going on in the world with what I know about God?" Now my goal with you

today is to answer three questions about Habakkuk as a way to introduce you to the big picture of this book. I want to give you the forest today before we look at the individual trees in the coming weeks. So with that in mind, let's start with the **first question**. *Who was Habakkuk? Who was Habakkuk?* If I asked, "Is there a book called Habakkuk?" Most people in churches this weekend would be uh, wouldn't wouldn't be sure. It'd be like asking them, "Is there a book called Hezekiah in the Bible?" There isn't one, by the way.

The first thing you realize when you try to find out about Habakkuk is we don't know much about him at all. There's very little said about him in this book. He's not concerned with telling people about himself, and he's he's not mentioned anywhere else in the Old Testament. And so what, what scholars do is they just start to uh make up stuff. They start to read into various things. We're going to try to avoid that today and just say his name might mean, one who embraces or one who has embraced, but scholars aren't even sure about that. Which is interesting, embracing. It's an interesting idea when we come to the theme of the book in a little bit. But from the book itself, we can say one thing for sure, and a second thing is a guess. The thing we can say for sure, if you look, if you turn back to Habakkuk, the thing we can say for sure is what we, what it says in verse 1.

It says there, "The oracle that Habakkuk, the prophet, saw." So we can say that Habakkuk was a prophet. Prophets are servants of God. They exist to say and do what God says. So prophets communicated messages from God, they spoke God's word to God's people, God's speaking his message through their mouths so that what he said was true and must be obeyed as if God said it himself. Habakkuk was a prophet. But the interesting thing about Habakkuk is the way he conveys his message was different than the others. He he acts more like a priest, like a go between, between God and the people. Because what what most of the prophets do, if you're familiar with the prophets, is they speak on behalf of God to the people. They, they, they're confronting God's people with God's truth. Habakkuk seems to be confronting God with God's truth; truth about who he is in light of the growing darkness that was engulfing him and those around him. And he's saying, "God, I'm coming to you almost on behalf of the people. I'm asking the questions that all of us are asking. What in the world are you doing?"

Now, the guess is that he may have been a priest connected to temple worship. Look at the end, the last verse in the back of chapter 3. He writes his, he writes this chapter 3, and then there's these words at the very end that we're used to seeing in the book of Psalms. At the very end, it says "To the choir master with stringed instruments." We're used to seeing that in the Psalms, but it's here and notice it's at the end, it's not the beginning, so when you read it in the Psalms and it's the beginning of your Psalm, maybe that was actually meant to be at the end of the previous one, but whatever.

In other words, chapter 3 was written to instruct God's people in the time of crisis and corruption and that instruction was to come to God's people by singing chapter 3, presumably in the temple. So maybe he was a priest, maybe he was a musician. We don't know, but he was definitely a prophet. Aside from all this, what can we say about Habakkuk? Well, he is, he's a man of prayer, much of this, much of this book is him praying to God. He's a man of courage in the questions that he asks God. He's a man that, though, doubting will ultimately trust God regardless of his circumstances.

Now the **second question** I want to answer for you is; *When did Habakkuk live? When did Habakkuk live?* There's nothing autobiographical, and because he didn't tell us what kings his

ministry took place under, like some of the other prophets, Bible scholars have to look in the details and they guess. And each scholar has their own unique reconstruction of the background based on clues they think they see in the text. And having said all that, well, let me put it this way, um, this doesn't mean that Habakkuk could have been written time between Joshua and Malachi. There is a clue in the text in verse 6 that tells us around the time he was writing. Notice it says verse 6, God speaking, "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans". Chaldeans is another name for Babylonians. In the context, God is saying he's going to judge his rebellious people using the Babylonians, and did that happen in history? If you know your Bible history, the answer is yes, it did. There were three conflicts with the southern kingdom of Judah and the Babylonians. The first in 605 BC, the last in 586, when Nebuchadnezzar shows up to the city of Jerusalem and completely destroys it. So this book was written, I'd say, between 608 and 598 BC, somewhere in there, but if you were to read on this, you could see it expanded even beyond that. This is before the Babylonians rise to world power before they attack and destroy Jerusalem.

Now here's the thing. We should have no problem with with the precise, with not knowing the precise date. And here's why. If God wanted us to know the date, we would know it. Like other books, like Ezekiel, I don't know if you've recognized this, but you read Ezekiel, we get the exact day, the exact day that those prophecies were given. We don't have that here at all, and that's okay. With a historical context that is clear, the Babylonian destruction, even though we don't have an exact date, that lends itself I think to the timelessness of this message. Though what we read here was for a specific group of people who lived in a specific place and at a specific time, the message, the truths about God, the truth about life is the people of God are unchanging, and they apply even to people like us, a different group of people at a different time and a different place.

Habakkuk, in other words, is for us just as much as it was for the people he wrote because God is timeless, the truths about him are timeless, people living as the people of God is the same. Like them, we live between promises made and promises kept. So Habakkuk is for us, too. Well what is it, what is Habakkuk meant to do for us? Why is it written? Why is it preserved for us to read? The **third final question** I want to answer for you is; ***What is Habakkuk about? What is Habakkuk about?*** When you read this book, which I would recommend you do a bunch of times between now and the end of the series, probably take you about 10 minutes for most people. When you read this book, he gives us a very clear structure to follow, which for me is really helpful. There, there are two main parts, and both parts are clearly marked. I want you to notice chapter 1 verse 1 where it says, "The oracle that Habakkuk, the prophet, saw." Then turn to chapter 3 verse 1. Chapter 3 verse 1 reads, "A prayer of Habakkuk, the prophet."

So chapters 1 and 2 are an oracle. Chapter 3 are a prayer. Now what is an oracle? An oracle is a message from God often used to introduce a message of judgment for sin, which is what we have here in chapters 1 and 2. Chapters 1 and 2 lay out a cycle of dialogue, a conversation where Habakkuk asks questions and God's answers. And then Habakkuk asks three more questions, and God answers again. Then, Habakkuk uh, and so what what happens here is this back and forth in chapters 1 and 2. Now, then the oracle we just saw in chapter 3 becomes a prayer.

So what the idea is that based on everything that Habakkuk learned from God in chapters 1 and 2, he now prays about it. And beyond praying about it, he writes a song of worship. It's a prayer in the form of a poem. Notice the end of verse 19. That was meant to be sung, that was meant to be played with instruments. So if you want an easy to remember outline for Habakkuk, it could

be Habakkuk's frustration, chapters 1 and 2, then Habakkuk's faith, Chapter 3 could be Habakkuk's dialogue with God. Chapters 1 and 2 Habakkuk's delight in God, chapter three. I can do this all day. It's kind of like Preacher 101, make these little funny things. I bet most of your Bibles say something like Habakkuk's perplexities, chapters 1 and 2, and Habakkuk's prayer, chapter 3, right? I know which Bible most of you have here.

Now that big picture outline in mind, what's this book all about? What's going on? Why study this book now, rather than jumping into the book of John? Which we will do, which I've been saying for two years here, that we're going to do. That's all the people that have been here a while saying this, laughing. Why study it now? Because our country, and increasingly our world, is experiencing the effects of God giving us up to our sin. We feel it, right? We sense the darkness spreading just like Habakkuk did, and we're asking the same questions he did. Why isn't God doing something? Why is evil advancing instead of being exposed? Why is evil now good and good suddenly evil? Why is truth so hard to find? Why are trusted institutions, why are trusted people no longer trustworthy anymore? That's why many of you are here today. Why isn't God helping? And what am I supposed to do now that things are the way they are? And they're getting worse at an alarming, even devilish rate. Habakkuk answered these questions by refusing to blindly adopt the faith of his ancestors without reflecting on it and comparing it to the world around him.

God has stopped being predictable and the answers stopped being easy. He wrestled, he doubted, he asked God hard questions, and God wasn't offended. God, God answered those questions. And every Christian does the same thing at times like this, don't we? When the world changes, when things get worse compared to what the Bible says, our view of God, our view of history, our view of eschatology gets tested, and we try to fit things in and make sense of them. For instance, God's people suffering unjustly is hard to reconcile with the character of a God who is good and just, who does what is right, who loves his kids, and and on top of that, who requires goodness and justice and righteousness from individuals as well as from governments. And add to that, the fact that he has all the power he could ever need to enforce goodness and justice and righteousness. So we know all of that about him, but then we look at the world and we go, "Wait, he's not doing that. What's going on?"

Listen. God never stops being those things. However, the outworking of his character in our world is what Habakkuk is wrestling with. I mean, suffering is meant for the wicked, not for God's people, not for Habakkuk, not for his family, not for his his nation. And I just want you to remember that in Habakkuk, he's, he's not alone. Didn't Job complain about suffering? Didn't Moses complain to God about the people's sin, that got to lead these people that are so rebellious? Didn't Jeremiah complain to God about the rejection and the ridicule and the plots to kill him? Isn't there a massive collection in the Psalms of laments sung because God's people are seeing the problems that they're facing and the prosperity of the wicked? Didn't Jesus wrestle with God's will for his life in the garden of Gethsemane?

And it's how Jesus responded in the garden that gives us a clue that helps us understand Habakkuk. You see, like Habakkuk, the assumptions, the assurances that long life, peace, upward mobility, safety, and security in a world where we can live as Christians, without repercussions, where everything works out in the end, all of that seems to be collapsing rather quickly. And I say seems to, because I'm no prophet, I don't know the future. But in this moment, the temptation is to do three things. The temptation is to get pragmatic, right? Try to curry favor with the, with the world through compromise. "Hey yeah, we don't really believe that stuff.

Yeah. Those funny weirdos, they believe that, but we're more enlightened than they are." That's one route that Christians are going. Another temptation is to build a bunker in the mountains, hide and make your own government. You laugh because you're, you've been looking for property haven't you? I know. I know you have.

The other temptation is to become angry, hostile, belligerent, and go to war before it's time. I had a guy ask me last night, "So let me be clear that doesn't mean we don't fight for our country." I said, "Of course. We live in a Republic when our views can be heard and argued for and defended rigorously in the hopes that they'll win in the end. And usually they do." But what do we do when we're ignored, silenced, or canceled? When we're mocked, discriminated against, doxed, and persecuted as Christians?

Habakkuk is about what we do then. And that's the growing sense that that's where we're headed. Our ideas are no longer rejected, our ideas now are considered evil. A shift is taking place, and now we're trying to figure out what do we do? And that's the crazy thing about it. Even saying these things seemed so far fetched just a little while ago. Now it doesn't seem so far fetched anymore. Habakkuk is a book, at least the first part, about a righteous man talking to a righteous God about why he's not doing anything about all the unrighteousness around him. And when God says to him, "Oh, I'm going to do something about it." Habakkuk talks to God about why God's answer isn't a good one.

And again, that's not so disconnected from us, is it? Haven't we been lamenting for years about the growing depravity in America? Haven't we been uneasy about the immorality being enshrined in our laws and the corruption in our most sacred institutions? Haven't we wondered why it really seemed like God wasn't doing anything uh about it because it kept getting worse? Don't we quote Billy Graham who said, "You know if God, if God doesn't judge America, then what? He's got to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah." Well, it seems that God's doing something about it now. Aren't we all saying, "Wait a minute. I'm not sure I'm comfortable, God, with what you're doing now. Hey, hey, back off a little bit." And how does God respond to that?

Look at chapter 2 verse 4. Really the key verse in this whole book. Let's go back to verse 2 and start there. Habakkuk just got done telling God, "I don't like your answer to the corruption that I'm seeing in my nation." Verse 2, "The Lord answered me, 'Write the vision, make it plan on tablets so that he may run who reads it.'" This message is not just for you, Habakkuk. Write it down so others can read it as well, and so they can run away. "For still the vision awaits its appointed time. It hastens to the end. It will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it. It will surely come. It will not delay. Behold." Now he is talking about the the wicked. "Behold, his soul is puffed up." The idea there is, he doesn't think he's going to stand. He's not going to give an account for his actions. "His soul is puffed up. It's not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith."

It's that simple. Sometimes the answers may be simple, but they're anything but simplistic. The righteous, the right thing to do, God's people, we do what's right. In the midst of international conflict, internal corruption, or personal trials, we react, we do what's right when we what? When we trust him, when we, in the words of Habakkuk's name, when we embrace him no matter what. Though he's abandoning our nation, we must trust that God has not abandoned us personally. When God's answer to what's going on isn't peace, isn't protection, isn't, don't worry, be happy I'm in control, isn't all will work out for you in the end, I'll just send you an ark, or I'll

rapture you so you can escape. What if the rapture doesn't happen for 500 years? Then what? Then we need Habakkuk.

Habakkuk could face hardship, destruction, loss, war, and even being killed in the conflict, but none of that would keep him from trusting God and going beyond that to something else. Look at chapter 3 verse 17. This is the very end where he realized, okay, this is the correct way to think about being a follower of God in the midst of conflict and destruction. "Though the fig tree should not blossom," 3:17, "Nor fruit beyond the vine." Translation. Though, there's no food in the grocery store, "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." Verse 18. "Yet I will be afraid." What, your Bible doesn't say that? "Yet I will". There's a determination there. "I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy", and no matter what's going on, I'm going to grab joy. I'm going to take it, "take joy in the God of my salvation." Notice, trust in God led to the worship of God regardless of what Habakkuk knew was coming because of the judgment God had determined for the nation that he lived in. And what we will see, I think, we see it in verse 18, is that a shift takes place from worshiping God for his benefits to what? Worshiping God simply for who He is. Something we only know because of his benefit of grace, which he lavished on us, where? In Christ. Because of Christ we can look through the pain, through the destruction, through the change, through the immorality, and we can see, "Wait a minute, God has prepared for me a better home. My, my my salvation is based on better promises than those that come out of Washington, DC or Phoenix." And my hope is there. It's not here.

Ultimately, all of this can happen in the worst of times in our lives because of Christ. Now, who does this book of Habakkuk present God to be? What is this God like? If you were to do a brief reading and just ask yourself, "what does this book tell us about God?" He's the Creator. He's Eternal. He's wholly distinct from his creation. He is Sovereign over the events of history which he planned and is executing on earth. He's a God of wrath who is intolerant of all evil and sin, who is bringing curses and destruction on the wicked. He only speaks the truth. He's the punisher of the wicked. He's too pure to even look at evil, and yet chapter 3 verse 2, He's merciful. He's powerful and so awesome that all people will be silent before his greatness. Chapter 2 verse 20. His glory, outshines the sun, and one day his glory will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea. There will be no possible way that we will ever think God is not great. Because no matter where we are, no matter where we look, it will just be screaming, "God is Glorious." He is a "Rock". Chapter 1 verse 12, Immovable, unshakable, and as such. Chapter 3 verse 19, He is our strength and the focus of our worship no matter what happens. In the end, I think the theme of Habakkuk takes chapter 2 verse 4, connects it to chapter 3 verse 18, in saying that God's people who trust him will be moved to worship no matter what's going on around them. We worship God because we can trust him, and we can trust him because of who he is. And we trust him because he gave us the greatest revelation of himself in Christ.

Habakkuk may not be a book about Jesus directly, like Jesus' name in it, but it is a book about what happens in a Christian's life and trials when Jesus is our Savior and our Lord. And this, by the way, is what God's people have always done. Whether it was the apostles who were imprisoned and beaten, stoned, and martyred, whether it was the early church thrown to lions, used as human candles, whether it's small, almost unknown groups who were completely wiped out by the Catholic church in the Middle Ages, whether it was scholars, pastors, small business owners, merchants, farmers, bakers, even children who were burned at the stake for having a Bible or preaching the gospel in Bloody Mary's England, whether it's persecution that happened

under Russian Communism or today, under Chinese Communism, whether it's today, in Cuba or Afghanistan, Sudan, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, India, Libya, Pakistan, or Iran, just to name the worst. All places where Christians are hated extremely. All places where it's getting worse and worse to be a Christian and all places where Christians worship anyway.

Are we going to fold if that ever comes for us? Will we compromise? Will we run away and hide? Will we start a war? Will we, "I'm not a Christian," just to be safe? Or will we trust God and worship him no matter what? Again, all questions that seemed hypothetical for most of my life until recently. Huh. I overheard a Christian leader recently answering a question about our country. And he said, he said this, and it was fascinating to me. I was overhearing it. He just said, "I always wondered how the end time scenarios could take shape." And he said, "And for the first time in my 60 years, I could actually see how it could actually begin to take place." All reasons why we need Habakkuk and why we need to be here every week. Let's pray.