

An Amazing End-Time Prophecy

David Wilkerson (1931-2011)

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In the Old Testament, Habakkuk gives us an amazing prophecy about the end times. This praying prophet's name means "embraced by God." Scripture indicates Habakkuk was a man who wrestled with the Lord faithfully in prayer. And his prophecy came during a time of gross immorality.

Judah and Jerusalem were backslidden, and God's people brazenly disobeyed his laws. The entire society was given over to self-love and materialism. It was a generation whose increasing sensuality caused it to resemble Sodom. Religion had become nothing more than ritual, merely a form to be followed, with no spiritual power. So, the Lord spoke to this praying prophet, revealing to him the awful judgment that would befall his backslidden people.

What was this judgment? God said he would raise up the enemy Chaldeans as his rod of correction and chastisement. "For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs" (Habakkuk 1:6).

A violent, wicked army was descending on the land, sent by God himself. When the Lord revealed this terrifying word to Habakkuk, the prophet exclaimed: "What I heard made me tremble. My lips quivered, and I felt terror in my bones. Now I had to wait patiently for the days of distress to come" (3:16, my paraphrase). It was a horror so unthinkable that Habakkuk's entire body quaked when he heard it.

How was Habakkuk's message received by the people of his day?

No one believed the prophecy that this praying man delivered. It was simply too horrible to consider. What was Habakkuk's response to this rejection? He was shaken to his soul. He complained to God, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and you will not hear? Even cry out to you, 'Violence!' and you will not save" (1:2).

Habakkuk was saying, in short: "How can this be, O God? I have interceded endlessly, beseeching you to bring revival to your people. I have prayed with such faith, such hope, but revival never came. Why have you ignored my prayers?"

Suddenly, Satan began to flood the prophet's mind with doubts and questions. Soon Habakkuk became tormented over God's apparent silence. The prophet cried out even more desperately, "Lord, how can you be silent to all my heart's cries?"

Here was a godly, praying man whose faith was under severe attack. His frustrations grew so deep he even began to make accusations toward God: "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness. Why do you look on those who deal treacherously, and hold your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?" (1:13). In other words: "You sit silently, God, while evildoers abuse and repress your people. Why don't you act?"

To Habakkuk, it appeared that God stood by passively, not acting at all. It seemed that as wicked men grew stronger, God's people grew weaker. And it continued with no judgment being visited on the wicked.

Today, God's people are voicing the very same complaints.

All across the land, you hear these cries from God's people: "Lord, why are you silent as your name is being cast out of our schools, our courts, our society? Why do you allow sinners to pervert your law and flaunt wicked behavior? How can you permit pornographers to flood mainstream media with such demonic filth? Why do you allow modern theologians and church leaders to mock your very divinity? Why do you seem to tolerate such suffering in the world?"

The truth is, hell has unleashed a violent army of demonic principalities and powers, all in an effort to destroy the

faith of God's elect. Indeed, what we are witnessing today is an all-out battle against a faith that claims Jesus is God in flesh.

What was Habakkuk's reaction to the approaching Chaldeans in his day? The prophet shut himself up in prayer, determined to hear a word from the Lord. He pledged not to leave his secret place until the Lord answered his cry.

Yet Habakkuk didn't try to change God's mind about the fearful chastisements being sent on society. Rather, this godly man only wanted answers to the doubts plaguing his spirit: "Why are you silent to my prayers, Lord? Why are you not answering my cries?" Habakkuk declared, "I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected" (2:1).

I hear many preachers today trying to explain the unanswered cries of those who face great sufferings. These ministers preach sermons that try to justify the many afflictions God's people endure. The truth is, no one can fully understand why godly people endure awful pain for months, even years, at a time. I know of righteous people who have multitudes praying for their healing, and yet all those dozens of prayers seem to go unanswered.

What is it you have been petitioning God about? Your marriage? A child gone wrong? Finances? Is there a promise you've been given from the Lord, yet you see no evidence it is coming to pass? Does God seem to be silent about your request? Perhaps you're receiving no answers to your cries. So you cry out along with Habakkuk, "How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and you won't hear? I cry to you, and you do not save" (1:2, my paraphrase).

Habakkuk finally had tasted enough of his doubts and fears.

The praying prophet eventually cried out in desperation, "I need a word from the Lord!" That was when he shut himself away in prayer, determined to hear from God. Habakkuk said, in effect, "I have set myself to watch and wait until the Lord speaks to me. Let him reprove me, correct me. All I know is I need an answer to all my doubts. I have to have a word to give to the church, as well as for the peace of my own heart."

God never did explain to this prophet why the wicked gain power and force their will upon the righteous. He never answered Habakkuk as to why he seemed silent to his cries. This had to baffle the faithful prophet. Habakkuk certainly expected God to provide him with explanations. He surely must have thought the Lord, in his mercy, would reveal why he seemed silent and why his promises seemed to fail. Maybe God would explain to him the calendar of future events concerning Judah and Jerusalem. But no such explanations were forthcoming.

Beloved, at times it's going to seem as though God is ignoring your pleas. No matter how often you fast or pray, your unsaved loved one continues to live in sin. Or, your marriage seems to get worse, your misery dragging on day after day. Or, perhaps you suffer endless physical pain. Instead of getting sweet relief from prayer your problems only seem to pile up higher and higher. So, you ask, "Why, God? Please, just explain why my prayers aren't being answered."

We all need a sure word from the Lord. And Satan has won if he can convince us that our Lord doesn't hear or answer us. Indeed, this is the reason why so many once-zealous believers no longer pray in earnest. Secretly they think, "Prayer doesn't work for me. God just doesn't hear what I say."

As for Habakkuk, he was determined to wait in the Lord's presence, seeking God in prayer. It was there the Lord spoke to him, saying in essence: "Habakkuk, I am going to give you a word that answers all your questions. This word will put an end to all your doubts. And it's not only for you but for my people – indeed, for all, unto the very end. I want you to write down what I tell you now, so that all who hear it may *run*."

Beloved, are you *running* the race? God has a word for you that will enable you to do it. This word is found in Habakkuk 2:4: "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; *but the just shall live by his faith*" (my italics).

Do you understand what God is saying here? He was telling the prophet and the whole nation of Judah, as well as his people today: "Get your eyes off those proud, arrogant Chaldeans. Don't worry about the hard times to come. I'm going to bring all my enemies down, in my time. I tell you, my glory is going to cover the whole earth. Meanwhile, *the just shall live by faith*."

The Lord was saying, in other words: "Habakkuk, here is the only word you will ever need, to see you through any

and all hard times. Trust in the Lord. Live by faith.”

When Satan infuses wicked, unbelieving thoughts into your mind, you are not to fear them. The enemy wants you to believe you are as wicked as every thought he plants in your mind. But your response to every such accusation must be, “These are not my thoughts. They are planted by the wicked one.”

At such moments, you are to tell the powers of hell in no uncertain terms: “I trust my God to deliver me, devil. And I reject all of these thoughts from you. You can’t take control of my mind. The Holy Spirit lives in me. Jesus is with me, and he has made me pure in his sight.”

At times Satan will try to torment you with condemnation. He’ll bring up every sin and failure from your past. But that is precisely the time you are to trust in the Lord. Trust his word to be true, and hold onto your faith. Faith alone is the ark that will see you through your flood.

We each have heard this word throughout our Christian lives: “Believe! Trust God in all things.” We read it from Genesis to Revelation. It is preached by Moses, Daniel, Job, David, the prophets, Paul, Peter, John, and of course most notably Jesus. Indeed, the word that God gave to Habakkuk has been taught for centuries by pastors, teachers and evangelists: “The just shall live by faith.”

I have preached this word dozens of times myself, but I can assure you it is easier preached than practiced.

With the word of the Lord established in his heart, Habakkuk delivered a message of warning – and of faith – to God’s people:

“Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; he will make my feet like deer’s feet, and he will make me walk on my high hills” (3:17-19).

The setting that Habakkuk describes here is the collapse of an economy. The prophet is predicting famines, food shortages, loss of income, lack in all things. But in spite of these dire things to come, the prophet trusts. He is convinced God is still God through every famine and hard time. The Lord is the same God who opened the Red Sea, who provided for his people in the wilderness for forty years, who has never failed his people in any age.

I know I have faith when I can truly say, “My God is the God of the impossible. And, live or die, I am his. I cast myself into his arms. He will see me through, even unto death and all eternity.”

Dear saint, learn to praise God in the good times and in present times of testing. When things look hopeless, faith rises up in the praises of God’s people. Amen!

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