

# **“A Portrayal of Perplexity—God & Evil”**

## **Dalraida Church of Christ, Lesson One Wednesday Night Class**

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Living life on earth is neither convenient nor comfortable. This world is a preparatory existence for life in the next world—this transitory qualifies us for the eternal.

Tragically “many” do not realize this and choose the “broad way that leads to destruction” (Matthew 7:13-14). God’s directions are clear to them but they do not follow God. God Himself says that disobedience is practiced by those who “despise” the Almighty (Numbers 15:31; 1 Samuel 2:30).

One of the saddest reviews in the Bible focuses upon those who claimed to follow God but their refusal to obey God cursed them. “(B)ut they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against His people, until there was no remedy” (2 Chronicles 36:16).

God desires mankind to use earthly existence as a preparatory existence that qualifies him for heaven. Earthly living is a “proving ground.” God has given us directives and when followed these will lead us to lifestyle choices that are proven acceptable in ALL facets of earthly living.

These inspired directives are truly “heaven/hell issues.” They are non-negotiable; cannot be ignored; cannot be amended to suit worldly perspectives. These inspired directives address the Christian’s role/responsibilities in ALL facets of earthly living. There are three categories by which earthly existence proves that one has successfully passed through the earthly proving grounds and is qualified for heavenly eternal bliss:

- ☞ Choices about his soul’s salvation (becoming a Christian, teaching, beliefs, work and worship as a Christian)
- ☞ Choices about his personal relationships (marriage, morality and fellowship)
- ☞ Choices about his citizenship duties—on a national basis and a spiritual basis (the Christian possesses “dual citizenship”)

Satan tempts man to corrupt these categories in earthly existence. Once man chooses to corrupt the inspired directives, he is ☞ overcome by despair and his ☞ faith in Jehovah is shaken and his ☞ trust in God’s care is shattered. When observing earthly existence corrupted by sin, one is nagged by the query, ☞ “Is God really in control?”

The Old Testament book Habakkuk is an amazing study on how mankind is beset with perplexing despair as satanic evils corrupt the last category above—citizenship and civility.

We believe ☞ God is in control of civil governing; that laws are to uphold God’s righteousness; that governing is to suppress and punish the wrong and protect the righteous and innocent. But this is ☞ not always the reality in life. In fact, a failure of this civil justice is often found in Scripture (Jeremiah 12:1-4; Psalm 73:1-14; Revelation 6:10).

- **Jeremiah 12:1-4** “Righteous are You, Lord...Nevertheless I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?...Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for a day of slaughter!...How long is the land to mourn...Due to the wickedness of those who live in it.”
- **Psalm 73:1-14** “(M)y feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death, and their belly is fat. They are not in trouble like other people, nor are they tormented together with the rest of mankind...arrogance is their necklace; the garment of violence covers

them...the imaginations of their heart overflow. They mock and wickedly speak of oppression; they speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth...abundant waters are drunk by them...the wicked are always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence...(BUT) I have been stricken all day long, and punished every morning."

- **Revelation 6:10** "(T)hey cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who live on the earth?'"

Do you share this despair as you survey modern society? Observe a few prominent issues...

- 🙏 Abortion is the "sacred cow" of the Democrats/Progressives/Liberals.

Federal funding has just been restored for abortions outside of the USA. Yet we hear Christians say that the cries against abortion are only from extremists who need to be silenced; that abortion is not the reason for casting one's vote.

In the United States, there are over an estimated 2,465 babies who die in [abortions](#) daily, according to estimates from the Alan Guttmacher Institute. Based on [Worldometer abortion statistics](#), there is an average of around 3.5 million abortions per month in the world—at a rate of 125,000 abortions on babies every day. These abortions do not destroy "pregnancies" or blobs of tissue or clumps of cells. They destroyed unique, living human beings – unborn babies with their own separate DNA and almost certainly a beating heart. This is basic biology, and [abortionists themselves admit that abortions kill human beings](#).

[Twice as many people condemn plastic straws than abortion](#). Exclusive: Chuck Norris reflects on the devaluing of life on 48th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, Published January 18, 2021 at 1:02pm. "It is staggering to think that, since 1973, [over 62 million Americans](#) have lost their lives in the womb due to being aborted or terminated by their parent."

[GOP unleashes flood of pro-life legislation and Biden promotes abortion](#); Division in Washington gets deeper and deeper! "The flood of pro-life legislation occurred the same week that President Joe Biden [enacted policy](#) allowing taxpayer dollars to fund abortions abroad. Days earlier, Biden [marked](#) the 48th anniversary of Roe v. Wade by promising to both appoint judges who respect the ruling as precedent Friday and to codify Roe v. Wade. He also directed the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) Thursday to review the Title X family planning regulations. The new president [is expected](#) to reverse former President Donald Trump's "Protect Life Rule," which [prohibited](#) Title X Family Planning Program funds from going to organizations that perform or promote abortions." NOTE: Civic involvement is a heaven/hell issue! Voting IS a heaven/hell issue. Your vote places you supporting the positions of those you vote to win.

- 🙏 Corrupt politicians pass laws that are intentionally designed to destroy our once great nation?
- 🙏 Ridicule, blasphemy, and course jesting that defies Jehovah's righteousness is pervasive.
- 🙏 A visible mockery of anything "holy"!

This is the society from which Habakkuk spoke...he 🙏 could not understand how a great, holy, sovereign God would allow evil to continue. He 🙏 did not question God, he had an absolute faith in God, BUT his 🙏 faith did not fit the visible facts of daily life. He was 🙏 full of perplexity and frustration.

Habakkuk was 🙏 grieved to see the violence, oppression, strife, and plunder around him. He looked at the powerlessness of the law, the crookedness of justice, the entrapping of the righteous by the

wicked. He could not understand why God did not "take vengeance on the evil and diadem the right" (Exell, v).

It is through this perplexity that the prophet 🙏 Habakkuk speaks today. Habakkuk's journey from perplexing doubt to confident understanding offers us a pattern to follow.

Although he had doubts about God's workings, he never doubted God's sovereignty! Habakkuk's message is relevant as life's perplexities overwhelm our faith's resolve.

Survey his prophecy and discover an encouraging lesson as you face the perplexities of living with daily frustrations because you have faith in a righteous God. This brief prophecy can be read at one sitting. It is written in a question-and-answer format that provides a simple outline of its message.

### 🙏 **QUESTION # 1—Is there civil justice**

**1:1-4.** Habakkuk struggled because it 🙏 seemed God was tolerating Judah's evil deeds. Habakkuk, in his faith, could not understand why so much evil and violence was tolerated in society when God had clearly commanded citizens to uphold righteousness. The prophet was perplexed because of sin's triumph in everyday living—🙏 why does God allow citizens to advocate, embrace and practice ungodliness in their nation?

God DOES expect His People to be involved in basic citizenship/government in order to maintain a righteous culture. This involves voting in elections—voting is a heaven/hell issue! The Christian cannot say that government issues are NOT his concern.

Some want to evade this duty by saying they are "citizens of heaven." But that is not acceptable in God's eyes. God has commanded His People (in both Testaments) to be involved as godly citizens, upholding righteousness and opposing ungodliness. A number of texts teach this.

#### ➤ **Leviticus 18:30—The divine command for national citizenship**

God's command focuses upon the individual citizen's choices and the impact of those choices upon the nation's security. The citizen has a choice as to whether his nation is "defiled" or not!

"Keep My charge that you do not practice any of the abominable customs"—the Hebrew terms focus on ethical obligations of the citizen (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol 2,701).

Jehovah expects the Christian citizen to choose a moral response. The citizen just does not restrict himself to thinking an issue is wrong. The citizen puts his thoughts into obvious obedience and demonstrated actions.

"The nation, if it does not thus purify itself by cutting off from itself the authors of these corruptions, is to perish like the Canaanites...The Hebrew verb is in the present tense" (Pulpit Commentary, Vol 2, 276).

There is an absoluteness about this command and the obligation upon the citizen to make sure his nation adheres to God's moral standards.

The Canaanites were responsible for their own behavior and their actions produced national disaster! God holds the nation AS WELL AS THE INDIVIDUAL citizen responsible for the moral culture of the nation. The moral conduct of the Canaanites produced a national sickness so there was no life, energy or future. The conduct of the citizenship was self-destructive.

God told the nation of Israel to "choose life" and this was directly associated with their civil responsibilities as citizens of their nation! Deuteronomy 30:19, *"I call heaven and earth to witness*

*against you today, that I have placed before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So, choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants."*

Nations today are urged by God to learn from the national mistakes of failed nations who became morally nauseous or repeat the sins and suffer as history records. "Do not practice any of the abominable customs."

➤ **Matthew 5:13, 14; 13:33—The divine expectation of national citizenship.**

God expects Christians to be loyal, law-abiding citizens who upholds righteousness in their nation—they are light & leaven, they pray for the Lord's providence in State affairs, they utilize laws to enforce moral principles, and they are not hesitant about confronting authorities in matters of immorality, ethics and righteousness (Acts 24:25).

The general opinion stressed today is that one is never to discuss 🗨️ "religion or politics." But this is wrong! Silence hides your light under the bushel, causes your salt to lose its savor and makes your leaven to be dead. The Christian is expected by God to be an ACTIVE force in culture—refusing to speak out against obvious wrong in religion and politics is a sin. The Christian citizen must speak out and be involved in maintaining righteousness in his nation.

- 🗨️ *Speak out* about the reality of sin in society—do not allow culture, family or friends to redefine morality. Numbers 5:6, "Speak to the sons of Israel: 'When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind, acting unfaithfully against the Lord, and that person is guilty,
- *Speak out* because of your zeal for the Lord. Isaiah 62:1, "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning.
- *Speak out* because of the suffering sin brings. Jeremiah 4:19, "My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot keep silent."
- *Speak out* when you are intimidated by family, friends or culture. Acts 18:9, "And the Lord said to Paul by a vision at night, 'Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent'."

Thus, one cannot say, "I believe that is wrong" and then proceed nonchalantly as if he has nothing to do with civil/state/citizenship matters. It is OBLIGATORY for the Christian to be active in civil matters so godly morality exists in the culture and God's blessings are found.

The Christian's national citizenship cannot be excused—he must be involved in the governing of his country or else be held responsible for its demise. The Christian must be light to expose sin, salt to add blessings to life and leaven that influences and changes sinners! National citizenship IS a heaven/hell issue! "Choose life!"

🗨️ **ANSWER # 1—Citizens will be held accountable**

**1:5-11.** God's first answer is given to Habakkuk. God showed the prophet that He is 🗨️ not tolerating evil. The evil in Judah would be punished. He was strengthening Babylon to be the instrument of discipline for His unruly nation.

There is one absolute fact that should never be forgotten—🗨️ Jehovah God IS interested in the events of this world and specifically in your nation. Repeatedly the Scriptures assure us that God is watching, God sees, God is angry with the evil and those who support it! "God heard...God saw...God took notice...The Lord said I have surely seen...I am aware" (Exodus 2:24-25; 3:7).

Worldly cares tempt us to forget God's constant presence and involvement in this world. Often the Word is "choked by the worries of this life" (Luke 8:14).

All Habakkuk could see was the failure of Israel's citizenship to follow righteousness and the subsequent acceptance of evil in the culture. God's message was simple, ☞ "Look among the nations! Watch! Be horrified! Be frightened speechless! For I am accomplishing a work in your days—You would not believe it even if you were told!" (Habakkuk 1:5).

Remember this absolute, immutable fact—God IS aware; God IS watching; God IS working. The righteous IS cherished while the unrighteous is abandoned.

### ☞ **QUESTION #2—How can this be right?**

**1:12-2:1.** As I read this section I am reminded of the expression, "Be careful what you ask of God, God might answer!" Habakkuk struggled because God would use wicked people like Babylon to punish His chosen people. ☞ Habakkuk asked God for justice and now God delivers! Habakkuk was shocked at the excessive evil of Babylonia. "How could God use one more wicked to destroy the righteous?" he asked.

The answer that God gave to Habakkuk's perplexity was not consoling. The prophet was shocked. How could God allow such evil to afflict His People? ☞ "The cure was worse than the curse!"

The explanation of the prophet's objection is understandable—Habakkuk knew the nation had miserably failed to follow God. The governing officials and the citizens support and behavior of the evil culture was to be punished. However, he thought that there was another way that God would correct the sinful nation. Habakkuk failed to remember that when the citizens fail to uphold righteousness then punishment comes. *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34).

☞ The fact that Babylon was "more wicked" than Judah was relative. Each had defiled God's Law. Each was filled with evil. And, as the prophet will soon learn, each is being used by God to fulfill the Sovereign will.

### ☞ **ANSWER #2—The LORD is in His holy Temple**

**2:2-20.** God's second answer to Habakkuk revealed that He was not blind to sin in Babylonia. God unequivocally stated that all sin will be punished.

NO ONE will evade the discerning eye of Jehovah God.

☞ Divine justice will be measured to both the proud and the righteous (2:4). The proud will suffer five "woes" as penalties for their evil, but the righteous "shall live by his faith."

☞ "Faith" is critical to our endurance. "Faith" strengthens our resolve to remain true to God. "Faith" looks at the inequities of life and knows that God is doing "something that you would not believe even if you were told!"

The ☞ absolute assurance is stated in 2:20, "**But the LORD** is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."

- This is not a calm, reflective hymn phrase. It is a challenge uttered by the righteous Throne in heaven. Man is in no position to question God's justice. Man is in no position to seek God's mercy where God has specifically commanded otherwise.
- The LORD God is in His holy Temple—listen to what He commands, read His Word, obey His directions. We are to follow the directions of God. But man, often turns this "upside down" and

expects God to follow our directions! So, man does not read God's Word to hear what God is saying. Instead man prays to God telling God what man wants! This is an incredible exposure of man's selfishness. What do you think God's opinion is when the Almighty has given man the complete revealed Word of God, BUT man does not read it! Amazing!

- God is Jehovah, the fountain of life, power, and salvation to his people. Who can question Him? Who can comprehend His way? The only acceptable response is to "keep silence"—Fear, submit, and depend on him; let his enemies be silent, reverence, hope, pray and wait for him who will make it well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, who will resolve the doubts, and unfold the riddles of his providence.

### 🔑 **CONSOLING THE DESPONDENT PERPLEXITY—**

**3:1-16.** Habakkuk arrived at an understanding of his dilemma. He came to understand that there will be a universal Judgment on evil (3:1-15). Once he understood the Almighty's justice, Habakkuk confessed his fright, realizing the penalty awaiting those who doubt the Sovereign's justice.

All who encouraged rebellion to God's will; all who practiced disobedience to God's commands; and, all who permitted disobedience to God's Word, will face the wrath of the Almighty's righteousness. The citizen that claims he has no responsibility to stand against a community's ungodly culture is just as damned as the ones who are voted into positions that allow ungodliness to gain lawful sanction.

Unfortunately, those who are righteous will suffer because of the world's unrighteous governing.

Habakkuk realized the sovereignty of God. This told the prophet that evils in society and the corruption in the governing will NOT be ignored. "I heard, and my inner parts trembled; at the sound, my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble; because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will attack us" (3:16).

**3:17-19.** 🔑 The triumphant resolution of the prophet is proclaimed. Habakkuk's struggles were resolved once he came to a knowledge of Jehovah God's justice. The prophet resolved to rest upon the sovereign will and authority of God, regardless of how perplexing life may appear.

### 🔑 **LESSONS TO TAKE HOME TONIGHT**

*First, Jehovah God expects His People to be vigilant citizens upholding righteousness.* The fate of one's nation rests in the citizens' hands. They can choose life or death for their nation.

*Second, perplexity is fueled by this world but calmed by God's Word (Eph 4:14).* Those who surrender to the world's evil will surrender their freedom. They will lack stability and assurance. They will fall into despondent hopelessness because they are not stalwart defenders of God's Truth.

*Third, God does not ignore evil – judgment is certainly coming! (3:3-15).* God blows many trumpets of warning prior to sending His wrath. Sadly, historical facts document that many choose to ignore warnings and eventually find they have ignored the facts of reality.

*Fourth, tranquility can exist in the midst of distress.* The secret lies in a conviction and trust in God's sovereignty. Those who trust Him know that God has dealt wondrously in the past and He will still do so now! (Job 13:15; Ps 73:26-28).

🔑 Trust in God yields tranquility because God's trustworthiness is a historical fact. The same God who proved trustworthy to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, is still in charge! He is still working out His own purposes on earth.

☞ Even in the midst of destruction and ruin, Habakkuk learned that one can trust God implicitly! He learned that God was not idle; that He was doing a wonderful work.

☞ "Behold, the Lord God helps Me; Who is he who condemns Me? Behold, they will all wear out like a garment; A moth will eat them. Who is among you who fears the Lord, who obeys the voice of His servant, who walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God" (Isaiah 50:9,10).

Do you need the trusting faith of Habakkuk? Have you allowed the tumults of life to persuade you to leave the faith response of 3:17-19? ☞ How confident is your trust in Jehovah God? Can you confidently proclaim this sentiment expressed by an author:

Though my job goes and my health fails, and the forces of evil seem to have things their own way; and even though the economy doesn't work the way I want it to, and the election doesn't work out the way I hope, and I'm not appreciated among my friends, and everything goes wrong, I won't pull the plug on You, Lord. I won't resent You Lord. I will have my doubts and questions about how You are working. I won't stop questioning—but there is one other thing that I won't stop doing either. I won't stop rejoicing in You. For You are my Rock and You are my strength" (Briscoe,128).