

When God Seems Silent: A Study of Habakkuk
Lesson Twelve: When Inequities are Balanced (3:1-16)
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Introduction:

- I. Habakkuk had  begun his prophecy with a protest that injustice was rampant. The prophet accused  God of inaction and apathy.  Habakkuk's short sightedness was revealed as he learned God was neither inactive nor apathetic.  Habakkuk learned that God is working on evil's injustice - it will not escape!

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During the debate over the Equality Act, a measure that would create a right to kill babies in abortions and force Americans to fund abortions, Republicans accused Democrats of ignoring Biblical values. And a surprising comment from pro-abortion Democrat Congressman Jerry Nadler confirmed that to be true.

Part of the debate over the pro-abortion measure revolved around sex and gender issues and Rep. Greg Steube (R-FL) upset Democrats when he confirmed God makes boys and girls unique.

“When men or women claim to be able to choose their own sexual identity, they are making a statement that God did not know what he was doing when he created them,” the congressman said.

“The gender confusion that exists in our culture today is a clear rejection of God’s good design. Whenever a nation’s laws no longer reflect the standards of God that nation is in rebellion against him and will inevitably bear the consequences,” the congressman said. “We are seeing the consequences of rejecting God here in our country today.”

That promoted a rather shocking comment from Nadler.

“What any religious tradition describes as God’s will is no concern of this Congress,” he admitted.

1. There is a Truth in life that is often overlooked - all inequities are eventually balanced! In the reign of Henry VII, Dr. Whittington, a bishop’s chancellor, condemned a pious woman to be burned at the stake for “blasphemy” when she would not recant her opposing religious views. The execution was to take place at Chipping, Sodbury. He went to witness the execution. The woman died courageously, setting her seal to the Truth of the gospel. On his return from the execution, a furious bull passed through the crowd, none of whom suffered from him, but the bull gored the chancellor and inflicted death in a most awful manner (#11,480, 673).
2.  Our present text reveals how the inequities of life will be balance by God. It gives reason for conclusive  convictions that God will not allow evil to go unpunished!

II. The third chapter presents a fitting conclusion to Habakkuk’s prophecy.

1. We see how Habakkuk’s faith triumphs over the perplexities which have troubled him.
2. The  focus is wholly upon the Almighty God who sits in sovereign glory in His Holy Temple.
3. It  begins and ends with a prayer and thus emphasizes the attitude believers should possess when beset with life’s perplexities.
4. Habakkuk  began his prophecy by looking only at man’s injustice and all but forgetting God. Now he has changed his focus and sees God as the Almighty Ruler whose ways are  never hindered by man’s acts.
5. The  passage is introduced as a prayer with great emotion. It  scans history and with rapid images portrays God in awe-inspired terms. The conclusion - in Jehovah God one may place a justified, unshakable trust!

6. The tone of 3:19 is the exact opposite of 1:2. Why? Because the  truths of 3:1-16 have become the governing standard in the prophet's mind!

III. Within this text we read Habakkuk's closing thoughts.

1. He has  had his questions answered by God.
2. He  knows that evil injustice will never escape God's judgments.
3. His understanding reveals that there are three responses to life's inequities. Notice how each response is portrayed as life's inequities are balanced!

Body:

I.  The prophet's response - COMPLETE CONFIDENCE!

As Habakkuk places life's inequities into proper perspective, he demonstrates complete confidence in God's sovereignty. Three acts reveal this.

A. A PRAYER of absolute trust (3:1).

1. This prayer would be used in worship to call people to remember how powerful God was (verse 19b).
2. It was an emotional, fervent outpouring of Habakkuk's faith ("shigionoth"). The prophet turns to face the perplexities of life with a renewed confidence that nothing will unseat the Almighty Sovereign!
3. Habakkuk's prayer revealed elements that should be emulated by all struggling to explain life's inequities.
 - a.  *Humility* - He was no longer questioning God. He recognized that Jehovah was perfectly right and absolutely just. We see an attitude of complete submission to God's will (Acts 21:14b). Habakkuk's concern no longer focused upon his personal state or upon his nation - all he cared about was God's glory. Let us learn to follow his humility. May our whole concern be with God's glory and the divine will. Let us humble ourselves and be concerned only for the progress of righteousness (1 Peter 5:6).
 - b.  *Adoration* - Habakkuk simply requests God revives His work - do not allow the divine plan to fail ("revive" - persevere) (verse 2). Habakkuk knew that if God's plan did not fail then all would eventually be right. What do we pray for as worries beset us? (Philippians 4:4-6). Do we focus more on events in the world or upon God's plan being fulfilled? The struggling saints in Revelation heard John pray that God's plan never fail (Revelation 22:20b).
4.  When you confront life's perplexities with a confident prayer-life, all problems begin to take proper perspective in relation to God's great power! You rest confidently in a wonderful trust that Jehovah God is able to deal with any crisis that comes!

B.  A FEAR regarding God's awesome wrath (3:16a).

1.  Habakkuk realized that Judah's punishment was inevitable, it could not be avoided. Habakkuk recognized that God had the right to do whatever He chose with Judah.
2.  Others shared this fear of God's wrath (Daniel 10:8; Job 40:5). Such comments on how it feels to be close to such a consuming wrath (Hebrews 10:31). "Trembled" - the whole system undergoes a terrific shock.
3.  Habakkuk was completely confident that God would judge evil and punish injustice (Romans 11:22).

C.  A RESIGNATION to wait for God to act (3:16b).

1.  Habakkuk confessed his willingness to wait and submit to God's time-table. He was willing to cease expecting God to react immediately to his demands!
2. Such  submission brings rewards (Psalm 27:14).

3. This was  not a concession to evil or defeat. It was an expression of faith that trusts and waits in an uncomplaining manner.

II. The LORD's response - COMPLETE COMMAND!

A.  The REVIVAL OF His work demonstrates His absolute command (3:2).

1. God's purpose would not be hindered. As the hymn sings - "His truth marches on!" Nothing will impede God's purposes (Isaiah 28:21b).
2. God's purpose has historically "marched on." When Israel needed deliverance, God's purpose always progressed. Such historical trustworthiness was in Habakkuk's thoughts here.

The prophet prays that the old work of deliverance, repeated at each great critical epoch in the history of Israel, may be distinctly present, as a living reality, to the minds of the people. See Psalm 90:16, 17 (Cook, p. 670).

3. Since God has complete command, this is a certain fact!

B.  The SURVEY of the world demonstrated God's absolute command (3:3-6).

1. Habakkuk sees God coming with an august Presence.

- a. He is an  awesome Warrior. "The warrior described in this text certainly is no ordinary soldier. His weapons and the scope of His battle are cosmic. No mortal or earthly power will be able to withstand His assaults" (Kaiser, p. 183).
- b. He is likened to  a stupendous storm with earth-shattering disturbances.
- c. He is likened to the destructive  forces of plagues and pestilences.
- d. He  possesses authority to divide the earth (3:6; See Psalm 74:17).
- e. Everything Habakkuk saw  emphasized the power and authority of God (3:4).

2. Habakkuk's words invoke memories of Israel's past when God's power extended mercy and direction. The miracles and deliverance from Egypt, the Red Sea, Mt. Sinai, crossing the Jordan, and the Conquest all are used to support God's power.

 "The God in whom we believe can act, and does act, how and when it pleases Him. Habakkuk is meditating upon the greatness and the power of God and the miraculous elements in God's dealing with His people" (Lloyd - Jones, p. 74).

3.  God's command will render vindication to the saved and misery to those who reject justice. None will stand who are unrighteous (Revelation 6:17). Confronted with such a righteous justice, the prophet pleads, "in wrath remember mercy" (verse 21b).

III. The sinner's response - COMPLETE COLLAPSE!

A. When God's judgment comes all  sinners will be struck with a dreaded fear - they will utterly collapse.

1. Sinners might dominate now with power but when God's judgment  comes, all flee! (Revelation 20:11).
2. Egypt's power and greatness did not protect it (Exodus 15:14) and earthly pomp and power will be useless as well (Titus 2:13; Psalm 9:15).
3. Note how Habakkuk depicts the sinner's plight:  startled (3:6);  collapse (3:6);  distress (3:7);  abysmal ruin (3:12-15). Ultimately the stubborn heart will have to admit God's sovereignty - they will  admit that God is the Ruler of all (verse 16b; Romans 14:11, 12).

B. May such a description  strike terror in the hearts of all who are opposed to God today! (Acts 2:36-37).

1. Let all sinners know that God's overruling objective is "for the salvation" (verse 13). All of earth's trials will ultimately  lead to this grand goal!

2. Thus, all should work with God to see this goal fulfilled! It may appear that God's goal is not being realized, but never allow that to keep you from cooperating with God. ☞ His mercy is still available for all who are willing to submit, but it will not be available forever!

Conclusion:

I. ☞ Remember - "His ways are everlasting!" (3:6b).

1. ☞ God's behavior is predictable.
2. ☞ This brings comfort to all struggling with injustice in life. "Just as God had acted at the Red Sea, the Jordan River, on Joshua's long day, and when Othniel and Gideon were besieged, so He would act in His great day of salvation" (Kaiser, p. 185).
3. Believers must maintain a proper perspective in the present by using the past. There is ☞ no reason for us to be despondent if we recall God's works in the past (Psalm 74:12-23).

II. When confronted with injustice, ☞ will we remember that the inequities of life will be balanced? Will we survive? Yes! But only if we focus on three things highlighted in this life:

1. ☞ Remember the glorious past! There are facts that sustain confidence in faith.
2. ☞ Trust in God's great power! What He did in the past is assurance that He will do it in the future.
3. ☞ Believe in God's Word! God always keeps His promises.

Our ☞ Next Lesson: The Struggle Is Over!