

Is There Any Hope for America?
Habakkuk 1:1-5, 12-13

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Introduction to Text: You will find Habakkuk in your Bible toward the end of the Old Testament. Habakkuk is what we call a prophet. In the Old Testament days, God raised up prophets to warn Israel of God's judgment and to call the nation to repentance. Habakkuk most likely prophesied just before the beginning of the exile when the sin of Judah is at the peak. I share Habakkuk's prophecy with us today because I think there are multiple parallels to Habakkuk's time and our time.

Text: Habakkuk 1:1-5 ¹ The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

² How long, LORD, must I call for help
and You do not listen,
or cry out to You about violence
and You do not save?

³ Why do You force me to look at injustice?
Why do You tolerate wrongdoing?
Oppression and violence are right in front of me.
Strife is ongoing, and conflict escalates.

⁴ This is why the law is ineffective
and justice never emerges.
For the wicked restrict the righteous;
therefore, justice comes out perverted.

⁵ Look at the nations and observe —
be utterly astounded!
For something is taking place in your days
that you will not believe
when you hear about it.

Habakkuk 1:12-13

¹² Are You not from eternity, Yahweh my God?
My Holy One, You will not die.
LORD, You appointed them to execute judgment;
[my] Rock, You destined them to punish [us].

¹³ [Your] eyes are too pure to look on evil,
and You cannot tolerate wrongdoing.
So why do You tolerate those who are treacherous?
Why are You silent
while one who is wicked swallows up
one who is more righteous than himself?

Introduction: In 1928 one of our American submarines, S4, sank off the eastern coast on a dive after routine maintenance work. Divers made contact through Morse code. After initial exchange of how many on board, what is your condition etc., the divers received the message from those on board, “Is there any hope?” In the midst of the circumstances, what a penetrating question! Many are still asking that question today about America. Is there any hope?

We are not the first people who have asked this question of their nation or their culture? We have a great example of a people burdened for their country. We are not the only culture who has faced a crisis of government or a crisis of morality.

Habakkuk asked this question of his nation. Habakkuk was burdened for his nation. He was burdened by the ungodliness of his nation. In fact, no other nation had it better than the ancient nation of Israel in terms of God’s blessing. However, by Habakkuk’s day, most of Israel had turned on God and had begun to serve self and all manner of other gods.

A quick outline of the entire book will help us to understand the flow of Habakkuk’s prophecy:

Habakkuk begins by asking God questions about the unchecked injustice in his community. The surprising answer is that God has raised up the Chaldeans or Babylonians to judge Israel. This brings about further questions. Chapter 2 contains God’s answers to the questions. Chapter 3 is a hymn of praise.

The Questions

How long?

Habakkuk’s first question is how long will God allow the nation to erode? How long will injustice prevail? How long until God does something? We have perhaps asked many of the same questions. Habakkuk’s plea is called an oracle. The word implies the burden of Habakkuk’s life—it’s his burden.

Why is God silent?

Habakkuk correctly realizes that there is no hope unless God intervenes and from what Habakkuk can tell, God is not intervening. Don’t you sometimes feel that way? God, why don’t you do something?

The Answers

So, God speaks. We have mentioned already that God answers that He is going to use a foreign invader, Babylon, to bring judgment. The problem with that for Habakkuk is that Babylon is also wicked—even more wicked than Israel. Let me simply summarize God’s response in these two ways.

God is doing more than you think.

God’s people have a long history of saying, “Don’t you see.” Moses, for example, was concerned that God did not see His people’s slavery. God answered, “I see. I know.” Maybe you think that God does not see or does not care. He sees and He cares. He is doing more than you think.

God is keeping an account.

Not only does God see, but you can be assured that He is keeping an account. His accounting is perfect and just. We don't have the time to go through all of this, but beginning at Habakkuk 2:9, God, through the prophet, begins to list the specific sins of the nation. You will see this with the continual use of the word, "woe."

These two answers serve for me as the encouraging words for our journey. It is as though God is saying, "Don't worry, Habakkuk, I've got this."

Our Response

The righteous live by faith. This is the most important phrase of this book. You will find it in Habakkuk 2:4. Notice how it is in contrast to those who are not living by faith. You are either going to live by faith in God or you are going to live by faith in yourself. God has another word for that—pride!

So, how do people of faith live?

- Wait in faith. (2:1 a) Waiting in faith is not inactivity or apathy. Waiting in faith is not about being defeated. Waiting in faith is expectant faith. Yes, I think waiting in faith is praying. Several years ago, I came across this quotation from Henry Blackaby. It is as convicting today as ever. Blackaby asked, "If revival in America depended upon your prayer life, would there be revival?"
- Watch in faith. (2:1b) Waiting in faith turns to watching in faith. This probably means we keep watching, because it is not always obvious what God is doing. His ways are higher than our ways. Watching requires faith. Notice the contrast in 1:5 and 1:3. Habakkuk says, How long are you going to make me look at this injustice? God says, "Look and observe."
- Worship in faith. (Chapter 3) Waiting and watching in faith turns into worship. Actually, the better way to say this is that we worship while we wait and watch. Here is a reason to worship. Habakkuk 2:20! "The Lord is in His holy Temple."

This is not a call to abandon the political arena of our culture. In fact, I do not ever remember missing a vote, and one of my constant prayers is for God to raise up Godly people to fill every office from the School Board to the Presidency. But this is a call to perspective.

- Our victory is not in Washington but in Heaven.
- Our victory is not in the Constitution but at Calvary.
- Our victory is not in more laws or less laws or better laws, but in a strict observance of the law of law—God's Holy Word.
- Our victory is not in the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, or the Tea party; our victory is in repentance, revival, and a spiritual awakening.
- Our enemy is not a party, a President, a particular nation or particular religion, God said that our real enemy is not even of this world, but that we will find our enemy in the spiritual forces of evil.

Until we as believers understand these things, I'm afraid "There is no hope for America!"

But, there is always hope.

I have heard before that our national anthem is among the most difficult songs to sing. Maybe that explains why we usually only sing one verse of *The Star Spangled Banner*. Did you know that it has a second verse? Have you ever noticed that the first verse actually ends with a question? What's the question? "Oh, say, does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?" We sing that line like it is a declaration, but it is a question. Noticing this line as a question, the second verse is the answer to the question.

Hear again the second verse:

Oh thus be it ever when free men shall stand
Between their loved homes and war's desolation
Blessed with victory and peace may the heaven-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us as a nation
Then conquer we must when our cause is just
And this be our motto, "In God Is Our Trust!"
When we do that then the Star Spangled Banner
In triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Did you see what Francis Scott Key was saying? The only hope for America is for us to honor and acknowledge the one God over our nation!

Close: Those aboard the Submarine S4 did not survive. Contact was maintained over a couple of days and even up to just a few hours before rescuers finally were able to attach an air line to their compartment. But it was too late. When the submarine was brought to the surface and entered, an amazing discovery was made. On a rack, apparently untouched, was a flask containing a considerable amount of oxygen.

This discovery, apparently unexplainable, gave rise to some very dreadful thoughts. Why did they not use that oxygen? Why did they announce that they were at the end of supplies? Was it because they knew the worst, and did not wish to prolong it? But, as the world knows, only a matter of hours after their last taps were heard an air line was successfully attached to their compartment.

I believe there is still hope for our nation. I believe there is still hope for our generation. I hope that history will not record that we did not reach for the oxygen of the life-giving power of Almighty God.