

**Is God There?
Habakkuk 1:1-11**

Well, the last time I got to speak, we finished the book of Jude, and so I thought in my mind, what's one of the most obscure books of the bible I could go to next, one that people just love to even try to pronounce, and it's buried somewhere in the Old Testament, and I thought, ah, this is a good one here. Habakkuk; let's go with that. This is an amazing book, and some of you probably already know that. I hope that when we're finished with it you'll cherish it as much as I have and enjoy its message as well.

I don't know if you've heard how often this happens, but sometimes people use scripture, and they just throw it out there. Either they're Christians or not, well meaning or not. They use scripture and sometimes they really don't understand what they're saying or how they're using it. You know what I'm talking about? They misquote scripture. They use it but incorrectly, and they get the wrong meaning with it, and this happens with several verses in the bible that become popular in common with this, and I'd say one of them is Romans 8:28. It's a popular verse, a verse known by tons of Christians. Maybe it's one of the first ones they memorize in their faith, and they use it frequently, and that's a good thing. It's interesting though. I've just known in my experience and you probably experienced this as well, that people unfortunately can misuse it and use it incorrectly for what it's teaching. The verse says, just in case, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." God works all things for good. You probably heard that statement. It's coming right here from this verse. God works all things for good, and so this is something that Christians, we throw at each other and even unbelievers sometimes use this. And unfortunately, I think the word "good" is not defined every time. The word "good" is a little vague. It's a little nebulous, and so we use this and we think of a hopeful peachy situation. God works all things for good. My physical well-being, my financial situation, those are going to be good, that God is going to make those go into a good place, but unfortunately, I don't think that's exactly what Paul had in mind when he wrote those words.

In fact, if you go on to read the next verse in Romans 8 verse 29, he talks about the good being us becoming more like Jesus, us becoming more transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. That's the good that God is

working, and so really we're going to see that same principle played out here in our passage today. In Habakkuk, we're going to see this principle, this principle of God working all things for good, but we're going to ask that question, what's the good? What is the good that God is working? Is it financial prosperity? Is it physical wellbeing? Is it a raise at your job? Is it a wonderful family? What is the good that God is doing? And that's what we'll find in our text today, another place in scripture that undergirds this principle of God's sovereignty in His working through all things. So, really, I have like a twofold hope for all of us. I hope that we can all walk away with two things today. One, that we'd grow in our desire and our need for God's presence, that that would be enhanced in us, that we would want this more. We would want God's presence. We would desire to be with Him. We would desire His working in our lives. Secondly, I just pray that we would learn to trust God's perfect plan, which really ties in with Romans 8:28 and our passage here in Habakkuk.

So before we get into our text and start reading these verses, let me set the scene a little bit for you because this is the Old Testament, and if you're not familiar with it, there's a lot going on in the Old Testament. A lot of things change. There's times where nations are in one place geographically, and then they uproot and move to another place, and different international powers come on the scene. They come and go, and so what is going on in Habakkuk's day? Well, Habakkuk is specifically a prophet in the time of Judah. All right, not necessarily Israel, but Judah, and if you can remember the history of Israel, we can just run through it real quick. If you go back to maybe first Samuel and some of the messages we've been doing there and you remember King Saul, one of the first kings there of the nation, of the nation of Israel...it was the twelve tribes unified under one king, one nation. Well, if we were to fast forward and go down the road, we learn that after Saul comes more kings. Right after Saul you get David and after David you get Solomon. Then after Solomon, something big happens. There's a split in the kingdom. There's a divide, a divide in the kingdom. A northern kingdom forms and a southern kingdom forms. The northern kingdom has ten tribes of Israel. The southern kingdom has two, and they're called Judah. That's who we're talking about when we say Judah. We're talking about the southern kingdom. That is the kingdom. That is the nation that Habakkuk is a prophet to, so that's where we find ourselves in the time of Judah, and really if you look in the book of first Kings, and you track how all these kings do, that come after David and Solomon, you find it's just a roller

coaster, to say the least. Some of these kings are great. They love God. They serve God. They uphold the law. They promote justice and righteousness in the land. Other kings completely forget God. They abandon Yahweh completely, and they get enticed to go after gods of other nations, and they bring that into Israel, and they bring that into Judah, and they say, worship these gods too.

So this is a roller coaster that's taking place, and we come late into the time of the period of Judah, late into the time of the kings, really coming up to the bitter end. And this is where we find Habakkuk, kind of at the end of Judah, prophesying and giving this message. So that's where we find ourselves. More than likely if you had to put a date on it, it'd be between maybe 609 to 605 BC, and if you know your history a little bit, if you go down the road maybe twenty more years or so, you find that that's when Judah will be exiled from the land. They'll be kicked out of the land in the most dramatic fashion by the Babylonians, so that's where we are. We're right before they're going to get exiled from the land, and the king that's in power is this evil king named Jehoiakim. So that brings us to our text and let's get into this. There's two basic portions in our text today, and we'll look at the first four verses to begin with. Habakkuk 1, starting in verse 1, "The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw. How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, 'Violence!' Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. Therefore, the law is ignored and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted." So the first thing we see in our text is the prophet's complaint.

Habakkuk is a unique prophetic book. In many senses most of the prophets get a message from God and then they relay that message to the people. Habakkuk in most of what we're going to see is him dialoguing with God. It's a back and forth of him talking with God in really a bold fashion as you can already tell from our first four verses. He starts off with a very bold question, "How long, O Lord, will I call for help..." All right, so the first thing we see in this complaint are the requests, the few questions piled on top of each other, "How long, O Lord, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, 'Violence!' Yet You do not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and cause me to look on wickedness?" So there's these questions that we see Habakkuk bringing before the Lord, these questions

that he raises up. I mean you could really paraphrase the question pretty simpler. Why don't you listen to me? Hey God, why aren't you listening? Hello, anybody there? It's simple. Why don't you save us? There's something bad taking place. Why don't you intervene? Why do You let sin abound and just multiply and increase it here in the land? It makes sense that Habakkuk is during the time of king Joachim because that's what king Joachim did; he just multiplied the sin in the land. It's described in the book of Chronicles as abominations that he multiples before the Lord.

So, here is Habakkuk asking these questions. Just notice, though, the maturity in these questions. He's crying out to God. No doubt we've all probably done this at some point or another. You can read the book of Psalms and you see this over and over again, the psalmist crying out to God, asking for God's attention, asking for God's intervention in some way, but notice the substance of it all. Why is he crying out to God? This isn't a petty request. This isn't trivial or superficial, and he's not saying, "God, please man, look at my specific situation. I'm having a hard time here. I need more money. You know, this prophet business, it's just not really cutting it financially. Come on God, You going to help? I see other people making money, but what about me?" He's not looking at himself, right? He's not looking at his individual situation. He's not looking at the physical circumstances that he's in. He's got a vision that's way broader than this. He's looking out over the spiritual need of the people, and he's including himself in this. It's not simply his needs, his selfish desires, it's looking at the nation, all of Judah, and what they're going through. He's concerned with the iniquity and the wickedness of Judah.

Habakkuk knows full well what God's intention for His people is. God did not have an intention for His people to worship Him and several other gods. God has the simple intention for His people to worship Him. He would be their God, and then justice and righteousness would reign, and that would then pervade into all the other nations. It's a simple plan. God set it up. Habakkuk knew this full well; however, there's a problem because Habakkuk looks around and he sees that's not the case. That's not what's happening. There is wickedness. There is iniquity. And yet, it seems like God isn't doing anything, it seems like God is sitting there idly not raising His hand, not choosing to get involved. This is the basis for his request. He's able to rise up above his own personal needs, and he looks at the whole needs of the nation. This is very similar to Daniel 9. If you look at Daniel 9,

you see some of his prayer, and his prayer is constantly including all of Israel, saying, we have sinned before You God. We have sinned. We have done a terrible thing. And so Habakkuk actually does well in bringing this up. There is wickedness, God. What is going on here? This is not right. This can't stay. We need to do something about this. Are you there? Something needs to take place. I mean, this really is the reality of the situation, as he goes on to say. He doesn't just ask these questions and let it stand. He gives evidence for it at the end of verse 3, "Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises." ...all things that should not be characteristic of God's people. God did not bring them out of Egypt, set them aside, give them His law, for them to live in this way, to live in violence, and the word violence here is actually not just a physical violence like people hurting each other. It's really just a moral kind of violence essentially against God, against your neighbor. It can be anything in that regard, and Habakkuk cries out, it's obvious. It's right here in front of me, violence, moral iniquity, wickedness, all things that you do not tolerate, God, things that you do not call us to.

So how are these things exactly at work in Habakkuk's day? Well, it's pretty simple if you look at the king before Jehoiakim who was the king right now. The king before Jehoiakim was this guy named Josiah, and you might have some bells ringing. You might have heard of Josiah before. Josiah was a good king. If you look throughout the history of the kings in Judah, Josiah was one of the good ones. In fact, there was a massive revival in Josiah's day. They found the book of the law in the temple. That's how bad things had gotten spiritually. They didn't even know where the law was. They didn't even have a copy of it. Then someone found it in the temple, and they brought it to Josiah, and they finally actually read it, and they finally started to do what it said, and Josiah looked around and said, well, we have idols; we have these other gods we're worshipping that aren't Yahweh. We need to get rid of those, and God commands us to worship Him in that way. Let's do it, and so there's this revival in the land, and it's a beautiful day in the time of Josiah.

Well, Josiah dies, and next you have Jehoiakim come on the scene. Well, he's quite the opposite as I've already mentioned. If you look in Chronicles, if you look in Kings, he does the opposite of his father; and he brings back the idolatry, and he neglects the law again and forgets about it. And so this revival that had just happened now basically gets spat upon, and they turn

their back on it, and Habakkuk probably lived through this, and Habakkuk is thinking, it wasn't that long ago. It was maybe a few years ago that Josiah was in control, and we had revival; we were worshipping God, there was not this wickedness and iniquity. And now, there had been a complete flip, a turn of the scene as Jehoiakim was reigning with his wickedness. This is how it was taking place. Habakkuk knew Exodus 19:6, when God commanded, "...you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." Habakkuk knew this. It really wasn't rocket science for the prophet or for the people. They were to be a holy nation committed to God alone.

This was the time that Habakkuk was living in, and thus the need for him to rise up and say something to engage God in this dialogue. This is the reality of the times. There was wickedness when not too long ago there was revival and obedience, so what was the result? The result of this time of violence and moral decay...we find it in verse 4, the beginning; "Therefore the law is ignored and justice is never upheld." Justice does not go forth. So the law, obviously a reference here to that book that Josiah found, that he enacted and put into place and said, we must follow God in this way, that law that was not too long ago being followed, being upheld, is now completely ignored. People don't care. People have taken their eyes off Yahweh, and they've looked after other gods. They've been enticed by these other gods. It's now ignored. It's ineffective. It's become numb. Maybe it's still around. Maybe it's still read, but it means nothing to the people. It just kind of bounces off them, and they don't listen to it anymore, and justice is never upheld, or literally, justice does not go forth in the land like God intended.

God intended this all the way back with their forefather Abraham, when God set apart Abraham and his family to be the nation of Israel, to be the nation that would bless all nations of the earth. The way that this would take place was through justice and righteousness. In Genesis 18:19, it says, "For I have chosen him so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." So this was the design. Habakkuk is calling this to mind. He knows the law. They were just reading it not too long ago in the nation of Judah, and he's making an obvious connection here, saying, this is what God calls of us to do. This is where we are now in iniquity and sin; therefore, either God is not listening...He's not here...He's doing something else...He's asleep. What's

going on? He's trying to get God's attention. He calls out to God because there is no justice. There is no righteousness like God intended for his people.

Finally, we see the reason at the end of verse 4; "For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted." Basically there's just been a complete change in popularity. It was popular in the time of Josiah. It was the cool thing to do. There was revival, and everybody jumped on board, and it was great to follow the law, and it was great to follow Yahweh, and then times of change. Something new came along probably combined with some pressure from other powers like Egypt and Assyria at work and so there became this lack of trust in Yahweh, and instead trusting in these other gods. So what happens? That becomes popular. That becomes the dominant view. That becomes the way of living, and so as more and more of those people rise up in wickedness, they essentially just choke out all the righteous in the land. That's what happened. These wicked people have risen up, starting from the leadership all the way down, and the righteous are few including Habakkuk himself. He's finding himself in the remnant here saying, is anybody caring about righteousness and justice? Does anybody want to follow the law? He's finding himself alone, and so he does the only thing he can do. He cries out to God. This is his complaint. This is his request unto God.

So something to think about, something to consider...what is the substance of your requests to God when you make requests to God? Which hopefully you do, because this is who we are; we're the people of God. We can communicate with God because we know we have the high priest in Jesus Christ. We have this beautiful privilege. What is the substance of your requests to God? Are they trivial, superficial? Are you longing for God to make your life better in your way, or are you desiring His glory? Are you desiring justice and righteousness as Habakkuk is here? Habakkuk has his heart set on this. He knows what God's plan for Israel is, and thus he calls out, and he requests, and he cries out to God. Why do we cry out to God? Are we just crying out when we have those physical moments where we just can't take it anymore, or are we crying out to God when we look around and we see even amongst our midst in our church that there is sin that still abounds? There's apathy towards the word of God. There's a lack of compassion towards the lost. When we look at these things, those are devastating because we know that we are God's church, and He's called us

to take His word, to apply it in our lives, to love one another, to reach out to the lost. And when those things aren't taking place, that's devastating, as it was in Habakkuk's day for the nation of Israel. So what are the substance of our requests church? May we consider that.

It is at this point that we get to change speakers and hear from the Lord, so we get to hear the response of the Lord, and we see the Lord's Chaldeans. We see this come up in two senses here. We'll see in the first verse and a half is the raising of the Chaldeans. So this is God's response to Habakkuk. Habakkuk asks, are You there? What's happening? God responds in verse 5; "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days--You would not believe if you were told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans...behold I am raising up the Chaldeans." God says, oh, I'm way ahead of you Habakkuk. You think I don't understand. You don't think I see the wickedness, the iniquity that's taking place. Oh, I've known it, and thus I'm doing something. I'm moving the pieces around in world history, and you need to look and see. Watch what I'm about to do. You won't even believe me if I were to tell you right now, but I'll tell you anyways because that's the God that I am. I declared the end from the beginning. God says, oh, I'm at work. I am listening. I am alive. I know what is taking place. I know the shame that is being brought to My name in the nation of Judah. And God says, and I'm doing something about it. And this probably is not the answer that Habakkuk wants, but God says I'm raising up a people, the Chaldeans...the Chaldeans.

So this might be a little confusing, but we're going to attempt to try and visualize this if we can. You have the Middle East over there, and we're looking at Mesopotamia. You see where Judah is there at the Dead Sea and close to the Mediterranean? You see Egypt down there, and then Assyria is up top? Assyria was really the nation that was in power, in control, for a long time. In fact, it was Assyria that came and destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and took them into exile, 720 BC. So that had happened maybe a hundred and fifty years ago. That had taken place, so Assyria was the dominant power. That's so you have arrows going down in both directions. They were in control really of the world at this time. The known world power was Assyria, so this is the way people had been thinking. Well, Assyria was essentially on the decline. Assyria started to become on the decline, and so there is this region down here. Some of your Bibles say Babylon, the Babylonians, and that's really the same thing. Think of it as

synonymous, the Babylonians...the Chaldeans; we're talking the same thing. So there's the Babylonians down there at the bottom of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, and so they start to gain power, and they start to move up and advance on Assyria, and so this is what starts to take place; however, nonetheless, Assyria is still in complete control. They are still really the main power to be contended with at this time, and so this is why it's a shock and a surprise because they're still thinking...Habakkuk is still thinking...Judah is still thinking...Assyria is the top dog; Assyria is the main nation. And so God speaks and says, "the Chaldeans." He's raising up the Chaldeans. Are you sure because you realize God, Assyria's pretty strong, but God says, just you watch. Just you watch what I do with this nation, the Chaldeans. And sure enough, this is what would happen. You have a complete change, a complete switch.

No longer would Assyria be the main nation that is in control...the known world. You would have the Chaldeans make their way up, conquer Nineveh the capital of Assyria at the top of the Tigris and the Euphrates, and then they would make their way down conquering all of the Israel territory even down into Egypt, so God declares this beforehand, and says you won't even believe me. Why wouldn't they believe Him? Because they're thinking Assyria's in control. They're thinking Assyria's strong, and God says, just watch. You don't even realize what's about to come. I'm bringing up someone even more strong, more powerful, the Babylonians, the Chaldeans, and notice that God says, "I'm doing this." He's not just looking out and saying, ah, it looks like in the future, these guys are going to become very strong. He says, "I am raising them up. I see the wickedness in the land of Judah, and here is how I'm going to act. I'm going to raise up a nation to actually punish you for it. I'm going to deal with it." God is himself sovereignly raising up these people and to bring justice, to bring judgment, upon His people. In fact, the whole idea where God says, "you wouldn't even believe if it were told to you;" it's pretty much true if you jump ahead to verse 13 of chapter 1 in Habakkuk. Habakkuk asks some questions where he's thinking, why do you look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are you silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they? He does have a hard time believing this. He has a very hard time with this. That's why he's not silent after God makes His answer. Habakkuk will respond again. So God makes it very clear initially. I am at work. I am listening. I am here and I'm raising up these Chaldeans.

Then the rest of our verses give attention to the report of the Chaldeans. We get a description of this people. The report of the Chaldeans. So what is the first description, the first characteristic? We will see the Chaldeans are renowned. They are a renowned people. We see this in the end of verse 6 and into to verse 7. Once again in verse 6, God says, “For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs. They are dreaded and feared. Their justice and authority originate with themselves.” They were not quite there yet, but the Chaldeans were on the way to making a name for themselves. That’s why God is saying, “they will march throughout the entire earth,” and that’s why He describes them as being “dreaded and feared” among the nations. Essentially, this would come about in this battle at Carchemish which is up near the top of the map that I showed you in 605 BC. Babylon would do a final blow to Assyria and even defeat Egypt in that battle. They’re coming. They’re marching throughout the earth. They will not stop at certain points thinking they’ve had enough and they’re content; they will continue. They are impetuous. Notice how they’re described here. Their justice and authority originate with themselves. Essentially, you could summarize it this way; they do what they want. They have no law. If you were to say they have a law... what their law is...it’s themselves. It’s whatever they feel like doing. There’s no kind of moral compass that’s guarding them or holding them back in some way. They’re just doing whatever they want. They go and they seize one village. They seize one city, and they go to the next, and they don’t even care. They don’t care what kind of violence they’re bringing; they just continue on. They do whatever they want.

What else do we see? Not only are they renowned, they’re “dreaded and feared” throughout the earth, and they do what they want, we go on and see that they are rapid. We see this in verse 8; “Their horses are swifter than leopards and keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.” Their horses are swifter than leopards. That’s quite a picture. Basically, at this time up in the hill country of Judah, horses weren’t too common because it wasn’t very helpful to have horses up in the hills. So to hear of a nation coming with an army of horses prepared for battle, it would be scary. It’d be a scary thing for this audience of Habakkuk, the people of Judah. Their horses are more eager than the “wolves in the evening,” a wolf that will go out in the evening ready to hunt, eager to hunt,

and get its prey. So even the horses themselves are eager for battle. They're eager for taking over these nations that the Babylonians come against. "They fly like an eagle" ... "to devour." It's interesting because in the book of Daniel, Daniel chapter 7, he gets a prophecy of these different animals that are coming, that represent large nations, that will take over the world. And the description of the animal for the Babylonians is a lion with wings, with eagle wings. This lion that is obviously serious in coming but also swift with the wings upon it. And how it comes...it is not a slow process...overtaking of the earth. It is a swift, rapid succession of taking fortress, after fortress, after stronghold, and nation. So they are rapid in their coming. They're renowned. They are rapid.

What else? We see that they're resolved. Verse 9 goes on to say, "All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand." Their purpose is very clear. They're not there to make some diplomatic solution or treaty. They're not negotiating. That's not what they're there to do. It didn't matter if a nation might come out with some money or something to appease. They weren't there for that. Their purpose is clear. They came...all of them came...for violence. That's what they're there for. Their horde of faces...they all move forward. They're not looking to retreat. They're not looking to stop. They continue. They continue to press on. "Their hordes advance like a desert wind," says the NIV, which is another way to interpret the Hebrew in this text. But there's this eastern desert wind that would come and scorch the land of Judah, and so, in the same way, God compares the Babylonians who come from the east to come and scorch the land. That's what they're going to do, and they will not stop. They collect captives like sand. There's a couple different ways that this could go. How is it that they're collecting people and captives like sand? Well, some people say as easy it is to scoop up some sand, that's how easy they're just collecting these captives. Others have speculated that all the grains of sand represent the incredible number of captives that they get, and so in the same way as they go, they're collecting up numbers and hordes of captives in their way. Probably both because there's no way that this was a difficult task for them as they went, as God used them, and brought them, and paved the way for them, in this process. So they're resolved, resolved to bring violence, not wanting to make any negotiations or treaties with anybody, and taking people as they go, making slaves out of the nations they conquer.

What else? They are ruthless. They are ruthless in their pursuit. ...verse 10...we see this description continue on. "They mock at kings, and rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress, and heap up rubble to capture it. Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on." They mock the kings...these people that are the leaders of their nations. Normally, there was some general respect for the leaders of the nations as they came to one another, and they maybe negotiated or talked in some way, in some diplomatic fashion. But here come the Babylonians, and they don't care; they don't care who the leader is. They just laugh, and mock, and scoff, at all these leaders, these kings, of these nations that they come to. They look at the fortress that these nations are in, these massive fortresses with walls around them up on a hill protecting a city perfectly, and they just laugh. They just laugh at it. It's nothing to them because they know they're just going to take it, no problem. Nothing would stand in their way. How, you might say. I mean that's a daunting task. A fortress walled on a hill; how are they going to take that? They just heap up piles of earth upon each other and they build their own siege ramp to the city. They heap up rubble or earth to capture these fortress. One commentator described it in this way, "One method of defeating a walled city or fortress involved making a ramp of dirt. The attackers would climb and then overtake the city. The Romans took Masada with this strategy. The Babylonians followed the practices developed by the Assyrians in besieging a city. After building a ramp or causeway, the attackers constructed war machines mounted on four or six wooden wheels. From these, warriors could shoot directly at the defenders on the walls, or the machines could be used as a battering ram to knock down the wall. At the same time, the walls of the besieged city would be undermined by a digging tunnel. At the appropriate time, the full scale assault would begin led by heavily armed infantry scaling tall ladders. Archers then increased the attack with their arrows, which served to protect the infantry. No wonder the Chaldean attackers scoffed at kings. No one seemed able to stand before them. They had it dialed-in. They had a dialed-in war strategy and technique that... No fortress could hold them off. They laughed. They laughed at these things. The pride of these nations and these cities...their fortress that has never been attacked or besieged...and yet the Babylonians just laugh and come on in and take them over, no problem. They're ruthless. They're attitude and they're actions, both ruthless in this conquering.

The last thing we see is quite interesting, actually, and hopeful at the same time. They are religious as we see here at the end verse 11. Once again, “Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on.” So, as they take each city, they just continue on their way, on to the next city...on to the next city. And in the end of verse 11, “But they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god...they will be held guilty, they whose strength is their god.” This is the looming question here as this scene gets painted. You can definitely understand now why this is not the answer that Habakkuk expected or wanted. He was hoping for God to say, yes, there will be revival in the land, and the people will follow My law, and you’ll uphold justice and righteousness, but God says, no. Yeah, Habakkuk, I see the wickedness; I see the inequity, and I’m bringing someone in to wipe you guys out, and Habakkuk’s thinking, that’s not what I wanted to hear at this point. So the obvious question that then comes, which is what will be addressed even more so next time is, what will happen to these Chaldeans? Is that the new nation that God is going to bless and use? Does God just forget all the promises to Abraham, and all the promises to the nation of Israel, and now he’s using the Chaldeans? What will then happen? What is God’s plan next? And God is very clear with Habakkuk on this. God says very clearly; they will be held guilty. They’re not going to get off scot free. They’re not going to get away with all this and now become the new super power of the entire known world at that time and be fine. God will hold them guilty for all their ruthless and reckless deeds of conquering these nations. They will be held guilty even though God has raised them up. They will be guilty for their deeds that they have done. God has just allowed them to be able to exercise their dominance over the world at this time.

And then look at this further description of them. They, these Chaldeans whose strength is their god...they look at their own hands. They look at their own armies. They look at all their basic conquerings, and looking back at the spoil of everything they’ve done, they worship themselves, their own strength, their own might; that is their god. They look to no outside force. They look to no outside being that has set them up, but obviously you and I know the truth, and Habakkuk got to know the truth here, too. The only reason for their success was God, and really if you look back in scripture, it’s the same thing with Assyria. How did Assyria get to the position of prominence that they got to? God. God was the one that brought them there. Isaiah 1:5-7 says this in reference to Assyria; “Woe to Assyria the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hands is My indignation, I send it against a

godless nation and commission it against the people of My fury to capture booty and to seize plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets. Yet it does not so intend nor does it plan so in its heart, but rather it is its purpose to destroy, and to cut off many nations.” This is what God did with Assyria, but notice God goes on in Isaiah 10 to talk about how Assyria was essentially just a tool in the hands of God. In verse 15, He said, “Is the ax to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it? That would be like a club wielding those who lift it, or like a rod lifting him who’s not wood.” It’s a silly picture. There’s no way this choice weapon could all of a sudden turn on the one who’s wielding it. A sword cannot all of a sudden start to fight the one who’s wielding it...and so is Assyria...so is Babylon. God is using these nations as tools in His hand to accomplish what He wants. He wants to bring judgment on His people because they have not been just. They have not been righteous; so he raises up Assyria, the club, and He raises up Babylon, the sword, and He brings justice. He brings judgment upon His people. It is not them. They are not doing it themselves. It is all God. God is in complete control of not just the scene of Judah in Israel, but internationally, everything that’s taking place in the nations. So for these Babylonians...they trust in themselves, having no recognition of what God has done and how God is using them. They trust themselves completely. So God alludes to what He will do. He’s not done with these Babylonians. He’s not letting them off the hook so easily. There’s still more that will be done for these that trust themselves.

So we see this first complaint by Habakkuk; God are You there? Do You even care about the wickedness and the iniquity in our nation? And then we see God’s response; oh, I’m here, and I’m way ahead of you, Habakkuk. I’m raising up some people that are going to come and bring judgment just like it’s deserved, just like I promised I would do to you in the law if you would not obey Me.

So bringing us back to our application, the hope, that we had at the beginning of this message. Like Habakkuk, are you craving God’s presence in all things? What is the substance of your requests to God? Are they trivial? Are they superficial, or are they actually substantially built upon the glory of God? Is that what breaks your heart, God’s glory, God’s name being defamed? That’s the case for Habakkuk, here. He looks around; he recalls the days of Josiah, and then he looks at the iniquity now taking place, and

his heart is broken, and he cries out to God. Is that us? Do we see sin as a mar on the name of Christ, and thus reason to call out to God? What is the substance of our request? Do we crave the presence of God, His working in these things? And secondly, do we trust God's plan? Do we trust God's plan, because you have to admit, is this the answer that Habakkuk wanted, is this the answer that Judah wanted? Absolutely not. God heard us, and now He's going to wipe us out. Great. That's not the answer that you want to hear, but can you trust God's plan? Is God working something that is good just maybe not your worldly standard of good or your ideal standard of good?

So back to that verse that is often misused, Romans 8:28. What is the good that God is working in all things? In this situation, it's clearly justice and righteousness. God does not let this sin, this iniquity, off so easily. He must judge it, and He upholds His word and brings in the Babylonians to bring judgment on His people. That's good. That upholds the character of God and who He is. He's a righteous God, and He's following through with that, and bringing the Babylonians against Judah is not the answer that Habakkuk wanted. And for us in our day, there are things that take place and we are tempted to look at God and say this is not the answer to my prayer request this morning. This is not what I've been praying for this last year, God. This is the opposite of what I was asking for. But obviously, what do we know compared to a God who sees all things and who's working internationally in all the nations, in all the hearts of kings and presidents, and everything that's taking place. Do we, will we, can we, trust God's plan? That's the key that we're going to get to, and we're going to see happen in the book of Habakkuk, and there's hope, if you want to read ahead, go for it. ...Habakkuk chapter 3...you'll see a wonderful, pleasant turn in Habakkuk's thinking. It's a great ending for all this.