

Minor Prophets: Habakkuk

Introduction

This tiny book deals with one of the largest issues of all in human philosophy. He asks God why the righteous suffer amidst the prosperity of the wicked, namely why Judah suffers and Babylon grows strong. God's answer is that everyone who trusts in Him will be taken care of even in calamity. This little book serves as one of the foundational pillars of Paul's understanding of salvation by faith and also lets us know that we can indeed as Job and Habakkuk ask God, "Why?" in the midst of our pains and sorrows. And He will answer. We may not like His answer, but His answer is true.

About Habakkuk the Prophet

Habakkuk gives us almost no information about himself in the book at all. Nothing in the opening remarks helps us get to know him, not even his father's name, which is usually common to the prophets. He jumps right into his problems in verse two. However, unlike Jonah, this prophet listens and integrates what God teaches Him in his questioning.

It is possible, more likely in my opinion, that Habakkuk was a Levite who served in the temple. The reason we can come to this conclusion is based on the internal evidence in the book, especially the third chapter. Habakkuk sings a prayer to the Lord, and it is consistent with other Levitical songs, as well as the Psalms. The instruments that he refers to are core parts of temple worship and he seems to have a firm grasp of temple and Levitical methods.

His name means "embraced." Indeed, this prophet is embraced by God when asking some of the hardest questions that we still ask today concerning pain and suffering. Why would a good God allow such suffering? God embraces him by answering his questions, and the prophet finally offers a prayer unto the Lord for His goodness and how He protects those who trust in Him.

Habakkuk in History

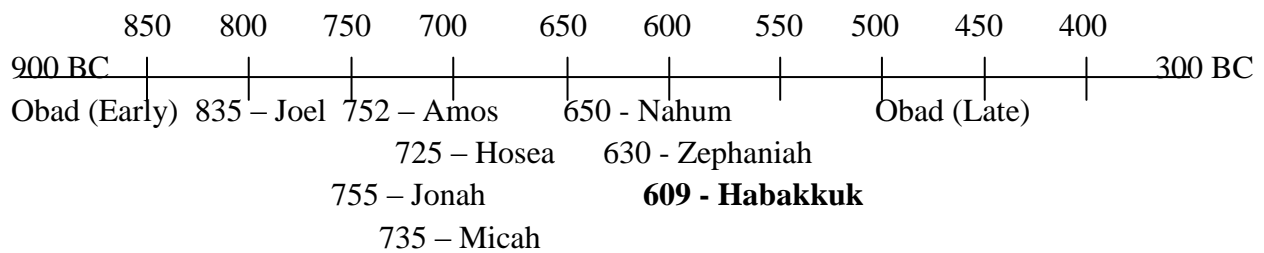
As the last of the seventh century prophets, Habakkuk is hard to date. Internal evidence from the second chapter indicating that Babylon had already risen to a state of power can place the book anywhere between 625 (the breakaway of the Babylonians from Assyrian dominance) to about 605 BC, the battle of Carchemish where the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt.

Some dates that help us to narrow this down is that the Assyrian city of Nineveh fell to the Babylonians in 612 BC. The book might have been written shortly after this because in chapter two, the prophet is well aware of the Babylonians' grabbing for power and being drunk with the blood of nations. But it must also fall before the fall of Judah beginning in 597 BC when Judean King Jehoiachin is taken after three months to Babylon.

I agree for the most part with a dating of 609, giving time for the fall of Nineveh to sink in for Judah, and this is also the very beginning of the reign of an extremely wicked king in Judah, Jehoiakim. In 605 BC, the Babylonians invade Judah for the first time and take the first wave of captives from the nation. The second wave is in 597 BC when a weak Judean king, Zedekiah, is taken along with others. Finally in 587 BC, Jerusalem is sacked and burned, and the whole land is laid waste by the Babylonians. They take more captives, but they also leave the peasants of the land there because they do not fear them.

Dates and Timelines

* I am using James Smith's Survey of the Minor Prophets as a guide.



Outline of Habakkuk

- I. Habakkuk asks the Lord why the righteous suffer (1:1-11).
 - A. Habakkuk asks the Lord why Judah suffers (1:1-4).
 - B. The Lord answers that He will bring Babylon to punish Judah (1:5-11).
- II. The Lord's response prompts the prophet to ask the question more dramatically (1:12-2:20).
 - A. Habakkuk is so surprised that he questions God's wisdom and ways (1:12-17).
 - B. Habakkuk goes to the watchtower and the Lord answers him there (2:1-5).
 - C. The Lord will judge the Babylonians for what they are about to do in Judah (2:6-20).
- III. Habakkuk prays a prayer of response and trust in the Lord (3:1-19).
 - A. The prayer starts with God's mighty power and character (3:1-5).
 - B. The Lord moves about the earth in righteous anger (3:6-16).
 - C. Habakkuk rejoices in God's justice and goodness (3:17-19).

The Prophetic Message of Habakkuk

Chapter 1

1:1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw:

Habakkuk's prophecy begins with one of the simplest and most information-choking superscripts. We are given no information other than the genre of the book, an oracle or proclamation, a prophecy, and its author, a man named Habakkuk. Because this is all the information we receive concerning this prophet, we have very little help in assigning the letter's date and audience and anything about its author. We will have to rely on the events and internal evidence discussed within the letter for dating and perhaps the genre of the letter will give us possible specifics about the author Habakkuk.

1:2 How long, O Lord, will I cry out for help, yet you will not hear? I cried out to You, "Violence!" yet you did not save!

The prophecy opens with the prophet asking the Lord the ancient question that many saints have asked Him, from Job to Jonah, and now to Habakkuk. This oracle's main message comes here in the crux of sovereignty versus human free will. We are always asking God this question when faced with trial or things that we don't understand. Even the martyrs under the altar in Revelation ask God about His timing and will. They ask Him how long He will wait to avenge their lives.

The prophet starts his prophecy by asking the Lord how long he will cry to the Lord for help and receive what he sees as no response. Apparently, Habakkuk has been praying and asking God for an answer to his dilemma. He assumes that the Lord is not listening or does not hear his request. Within this assumption is that God does not act when He does not hear. But God hears all things! So perhaps His inaction is part of the response to our prayers.

We are always left wondering why God doesn't answer our prayers in the way we expect. I believe it is a matter of perspective. We ask the Lord, thinking that He will do it a certain way, perhaps as He has in the past, or the way we think it should be done. But God is greater than us in perspective, and sometimes He answers a prayer in a different timing than we expect, or in a different method than we wanted. Sometimes the answer is "Yes in that way I will do it." Sometimes the answer is "Yes, but not in that way." Other possibilities range from "Yes, but later" and there is also "No."

The prophet offers more of a context, saying that He was crying out to the Lord concerning the violence that his eyes beheld. Now we would think that God would want to stop violence! So the prophet expects for God to respond immediately, of course. But instead, the violence was allowed to continue and the Lord did not deliver or save the person from that

violence. Why does God allow violence to happen when He as sovereign and almighty could easily stop it? This is the dilemma for the prophet.

1:3 Why do you make me see injustice and make me gaze at trouble? Now devastation and violence are before me, and strife and quarrelling arise.

Continuing the argument, Habakkuk does not want to have to endure these images of violence and injustice. The word for injustice here speaks of a sin or trespass and the word for trouble will be used several times in this chapter as well as the word for violence in the above verse. Trouble here speaks of anxiety, distress, harm, or hard labor. The word for gaze or look at here implies being forced to watch or to view the distress. It might have been all around the prophet in Judah at this time. We are only years away from the Lord sending the Babylonians. Devastation and violence speak of the destruction of a city or person. It is most likely that Habakkuk endures watching people taken advantage of, even their very livelihood stolen from them.

Let me ask you a different question. We can talk all day about why God allows injustice to happen. But what do you do when your eyes see injustice? Do you run to the person's aid? Do you watch and do nothing? Do you find someone else to do something? We are the people of God and when we see injustice happening, instead of asking God why we are exposed to such tragedies, we should attempt to redeem them in some way, even if small.

We must be softened toward the plight of people in a sinful world and people in their own sin. The Lord looks on them with compassion who are in sin, broken, beaten, abused. How can we not do the same and do whatever is in our power to help them? I pray that I never have an uncaring or cold heart toward the tragedies I see. I attempt to put myself in that person's place, to at least empathize or sympathize with them.

The prophet must endure watching people who live out their days in strife and quarrelling with one another. When Moses saw such quarrelling between two brothers, he tried to intervene. What would we do when there is a quarrel? Do we stand off aloof and bear the pain of watching two people sling words of slander and vocal abuse? Do we attempt to be peacemakers? It might cost us something to become involved and entangled in other people's problems. But should we simply watch their distress? What is a good balance for the believer? Did Jesus ever leave someone to their own devices and troubles?

1:4 So then, the law is made powerless and justice surely never goes forth because the wicked surround the righteous so that justice goes forth distorted.

This prophet who may have at least had a Levitical background, as we will mention in chapter three, draws this conclusion about the problem of having to endure observing injustices and violence of all kinds. It must be that the law of God, the Torah, is weak and powerless to save. The law which has solutions to such problems seems to be ineffective, impotent, and

paralyzed in such situations. Has it not the answers that bring peace? To this prophet, when the people do not follow the law, there is only more evil at work.

More than the law's own impotence is the powerlessness of justice, the judgments that are made based on the heart of the law. The reason justice doesn't happen for the victims of violence is that those who judge are wicked and evil. Those who are wicked outweigh and surround those who are righteous. There are more wicked than righteous people in the nation. Because of the sheer outnumbering of those who would be righteous to give justice, then justice itself is twisted or perverted. It is distorted so that it does not work like justice should. So injustice is given even by wicked judges and no justice can be found for the victim.

So the things that God has placed on this earth to make sure righteousness is found, His law and just judgments based on that law, are impotent in the face of wickedness. Can that truly be so? In our own world today, there is a lack of justice. Is it because the law is not carried out? Is it because those who enact law are unjust, and therefore create injustice? How can these things be resolved? We are left with so many philosophical dilemmas and questions by the prophet as he raises up the question of a good God and a wicked world.

1:5 “Look among the nations and gaze. Now be astonished and amazed, for I am working a work in your days you would not believe when it is recounted.

Beginning in verses 5-11, we see God's opening response to the prophet's provocations. The Lord is not silent and He hears everything the little prophet says. He knows the pains of injustice deeper than anyone and will finally answer the prophet's prayer, but not in the way that the prophet thought. He commands Habakkuk to look at the nations, to observe them in detail. He's doing something there. The prophet was referring to the wickedness he found in his own nation, in the nation of Judah. The Lord responds that He's going to take care of the wickedness in Judah through the intervention of another nation. This is not unprecedented and the Lord has worked in this way before. I believe that He still uses nations to His advantage.

After observing the nations in detail, there is only one response the prophet can give the Lord. He must be amazed and astonished, shocked and awed by what the Lord is about to do. The Lord is using the nations in subtle ways and it takes careful observance to see His master plan. He is going to use nation against nation. Another nation coming to deal with the wickedness of Judah is not what the prophet had on his radar.

The words for astonished and amazed speak of awe and wonder, of reverence for the Lord. The Lord tells the prophet that all along when he has been complaining that the Lord does not respond, he was inaccurate. The Lord has been moving entire nations to respond to the prophet's questions about His interaction. The Lord is working a work among the nations. This is a deed that will be accomplished shortly, in the prophet's own time. He will live to see what God does among the nations.

Even if the Lord's international strategy were written down for the prophet, he would not believe it. God thinks and acts on a much higher scale and level than we do. We see only the

small parts of what He plans and enacts. And yet we still take Him on, challenging every move He makes. Then when He does show us, it is too much for us. I am reminded of Job getting a firm talking to from the Lord when he questioned God. When we question the Lord, we might expect to be blown out of the water by His responses. At least we know that He does listen to our questions and prayers. And if we provoke Him enough, we'll get a response, but it will blow us away.

1:6 “Now behold! I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation who march through the breadth of the earth to possess dwellings not their own.

The Lord lets Habakkuk in on what He is about to do and how He is about to use another nation against Judah to stop the violence in Judah. We are given a firm exclamation from the Lord, a command for the prophet to look and behold what God will do soon in human history, in his own time period. The Lord is raising up and making great the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans are the Babylonians. It is their ancient name that is used here for some reason.

Then the Lord describes, one might imagine with absolute delight in His choice of this nation above any other, the Chaldeans. They are a bitter and hasty people. They are quick on getting things done whether they are superb strategies or not. They are arrogant in their choices and bitter against their enemies. They are quite the nation!

They march through the whole land, conquering nations and peoples without regard for them. They are rude and crude, taking other people's lands and doing what they will with them. They do what they want. They are the bosses. They are the new bully on the ancient block. The Babylonians are as ruthless and quick as the Assyrians with better weapons and an axe to grind. They have malice in their hearts and arrogance on their sleeve. They will teach the nations a lesson, but the Lord will then humble them greatly after they have overstepped their bounds long enough.

How great God is to control such forces, to use against them their own character like this. But the prophet can't see this aspect. All he hears is that God is going to fix Judah's injustices by bringing a bigger and more unjust nation in as its captors. While that will get rid of the smaller stain of Judah's injustices, it gets rid of that smaller stain with a bigger stain of more wicked injustice! The prophet will respond to this aspect momentarily.

It is not up to us to decide whom the Lord uses and does not use. We often judge others based on what we see. He's not good enough to do that for God or she's not humble enough to be in leadership. Are we right? Sometimes. But it is not up to us. It is up to God to use as He wills and for the time that He wills. We must learn to observe His sovereignty in these matters. But it is so hard for us to humble ourselves and not get in the way of what the Lord is doing. He might put us in our place if we were to react in such ways.

1:7 “Terrible and frightful are they! From them go forth their justice and exaltation,

The Lord seems to be pleased with his pick of Babylon here as He touts their strengths and weaknesses. They are a fearful people that makes victims out of other nations. They are trouble with a capital T. They'll stir the pot just for fun. They are terrible and dreadful, a fighting force to be reckoned with that will strike fear into their opponents. The Lord seems to enjoy His choice of Babylon as an outside way to deal with what the prophet understood to be an internal issue of more wicked than righteous people in his nation. Babylon decides its own justice and it exults itself. The Lord will not always answer our prayers in the way we expect!

1:8 “and swifter than leopards are their horses, even quicker than evening wolves. So their horsemen charge along and their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour.

The Lord continues to praise His choice of Babylon for Judah's demise. He dotes on them as one who is smitten. He has chosen one of the most vile empires to take His people into captivity. Surely they will learn their lesson now! These guys are pure evil. They are swifter than leopards, those quick cats of the field. They have horses that can cover ground quick. These horses are fast enough to outrun the fastest wolves!

They can cover so much ground that they literally have come from afar off, from a long ways away from the people of Judah. The Lord is impressed with them because they are a perfect instrument to show Judah what happens when they choose sin and idolatry over Him. Judah has messed with the bull, and now they will get the horns. Their monstrous sin and idolatry will cost them everything. These Babylonians have a nose for the kill. They can smell blood in the water. They swoop down like an eagle for the kill and they are unrelenting.

Although we may find it perverse for the Lord to dote on His means of execution to show Judah their end when they side with sin and idols, we must remember that our own sin is no different. It leads us to death and destruction. The Lord would not be the perfect Judge if He lessened the consequences of sin upon those who sin against Him. To side against the Lord is an endangering choice. We must be the people of the Lord who live in His light and life, avoiding the dangers of the sin that so easily entangles and ensnares. A healthy fear of the consequences of sin is just what the doctor ordered.

1:9 “They all come for violence; all of them face forward and they gather captives like sand.

There is no question in anyone's mind of the Babylonian's DNA. They're out for blood and gore and violence. They don't care about your feelings or anything else. They love violence and are open to its uses. If Habakkuk thought the people of Judah were committing violence against the Lord and one another, they are about to be schooled in true and deep violence. These men fear no city or country or empire. They face forward and keep on marching, like fighting

machines they give no mercy or quarter. They heap up the mounds of their captives as trophies and prizes of their work. The grace period is over for the people of Judah.

1:10 “So they scoff at kings and they laugh at officials. They laugh at every fortress, and they pile up earth and capture it.

Anyone who thought that they would be able to instill fear in this battle-hardened empire misunderstands their place. Instead, they are scoffed at and made fun of by these beasts of the battlefield. Kings and officials who attempt to wage war with the Babylonians or even bribe them find that their lands and people are quickly no longer theirs.

Anything or person that can be placed in front of these armies to slow them down is viewed as a joke, like when Goliath laughed and scoffed at David. Civic authorities have no authority when their necks are on the swords of Babylonians war bands. These soldiers of the empire know they’ve got the upper hand, so any defense offered is a joke and they laugh heartily.

Every fortress that shows the strength of their victims is also laughed at and piling up earth refers to how quickly they conquer and lead into captivity their victims. There are so many lands that now belong to them that they can be piled up. These guys have a great resume. They know how to capture a land and people and they’re pros at it.

1:11 “Then they fly along *like the wind* and pass by, the guilty whose own strength is their god.”

They are so quick that they are now compared to the wind that flies by and passes by quickly. The wind is gone before you even see its effects. But these Babylonians have a weakness, so says the Lord. They think that their strength is their god. They think that their strength makes them invincible and immutable. This reminds me of Samson in the book of Judges when I see the Lord say this, and we know that the Lord humbled Samson. So also these who believe in their strength and own merit rather than the grace of God using them, will be humbled by the Lord.

We must always evaluate our own strength. Does our strength come from the Lord? Do we acknowledge the power He places in our hand to wield and to steward? No matter how strong you or I become, we must never forget that all of our resources, from strength to any other resource, is given to us by God and He who gives can take away when we begin to think it is our own strength or resource that did this. Let us be humble instead of being humbled by the Lord when we think we are the strongest.

1:12 Are you not from ancient times, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We will not die, O Lord. You have ordained them for judgment, and You, O Rock, have established them for rebuke.

After the Lord has told the prophet of His plan to outsource the solving of Judah's internal wickedness problems, Habakkuk reacts to His plan with shock. In his horror at God using such an evil and deadly force against His people, the prophet asks the Lord a rhetorical question. He asks the Lord if He really is from ancient times, the Lord who is unchangeable through time. And then He sugar coats the question with God's titles, like Lord my God, speaking of His covenant with the people He's about to squash, and Holy One because of His choice to use such a profane nation against Judah.

Then the prophet realizes that the Lord is not out for destruction as much as He is out for disciplining His children. He takes solace in the fact that the people will not die and that even with the Babylonians, they are still in the Lord's hand. The people will not be senselessly killed, but God's judgment will be palpable. The Lord has decided to use the Babylonians. The prophet is not happy about it, but it is the Lord's prerogative. It is the Lord who ordained using them. He wants to use them for the judgment of Judah. No one can stop Him from bringing that judgment.

Once again we see titles for the Lord of sovereignty, like Lord and Rock. He is the one who is the foundation that establishes His judgment however He wishes. His ways are higher than Habakkuk's. We are not always going to understand God's moves and strategies. He has a greater perspective than us, but it is still hard to go along with His plan when you're staring at a nasty situation in your own life that is only a small part of His plan.

This is where the prophet finds himself. He has two choices, just as we all do in these situations. He can choose to be unhappy with the Lord's decision, and attempt to derail it as Jonah attempted. Or the prophet can accept what the Lord has decreed and while not understanding every little bit of His plan, agree with His sovereignty and ask how he can be part of God's will in it. The second is the shorter option that hurts us less, but we tend to pick the first option and suffer through our rebellion. May our trust in the Lord be greater than our perspective!

1:13 *You have purer eyes than to look upon evil, and you are not able to gaze at trouble, so why do you gaze at the treacherous, remaining silent when the wicked swallows up one more righteous than him.*

The prophet continues in his response by telling the Lord what upsets him about the plan. He speaks of the Lord having purer eyes than to use a greater evil to extinguish a lesser evil. The Lord cannot look upon evil. He is holy. This is the whole background of why there are sacrifices in the temple. The Lord will not dwell with evil. This is the prophet's point. How can a holy God not only passively allow evil to happen to His people, but also actively use evil against His people?

As has been mentioned, Habakkuk is quite the philosophical prophet. He uses many different words to describe evil, the words trouble, treachery and wicked. He is weighing down his argument with these synonyms that continue to point toward different forms of evil. You may

also notice the verbs here: to look upon and to gaze at used twice. He does use the words “able to gaze at,” pointing to the impossibility of God to view evil.

The question must be asked about the slight shades of meaning between God looking upon evil and dwelling among evil. For instance, there are several places in the Bible where God’s mere looking upon evil causes His action against it, not using it for His purposes. Genesis 6:5-7 speaks of God looking upon wickedness and being sorry for creating humanity. He then causes a flood to eradicate sinful humanity.

Throughout the law of the Old Testament, God warns and makes laws against evil practices so that He might dwell among the Israelites in their camp. Psalm 5:4 tells us specifically that God can’t dwell with evil, not that He can’t look upon it. And finally, there is the understanding that Joseph gives us in Genesis 50:20 that God can use evil for good purposes. What his brothers meant for evil, God meant for and made good.

What the prophet is missing in this question is the higher purpose and perspective that God has. God’s intent is not to use evil for evil’s sake, but to use it for good. The exile is a way of disciplining a wayward and wicked people of God. Because it accomplishes the purpose of making the Israelites aware of the destiny and consequence of their sinful actions, God uses evil for a greater good. But the prophet cannot see this point because he is in the midst of the people who are about to endure that discipline.

The second phrase of his argument that God is silent when a righteous person is swallowed up by a wicked person actually charges God with complicity. Because He does not act in the moment of injustice from wicked to righteous, He stands by and does nothing. Why, the prophet is asking, does He not do something.

This question is hard for us to experience. How many of us have had a situation of pain and sorrow in which we did not ask this question. How can God stand by if He does have the power to do something about evil? That is a question of passive allowance. The prophet here speaks more of active participation, charging that God in using the Babylonians is complicit with evil.

There is a moment in every depression or sense of loss in which these same questions are raised. The question is not if you keep your faith in asking as this prophet and Job and others throughout history have asked, but how you respond to what you perceive is God allowing evil to happen against you. Do you still trust Him after asking the question?

1:14 And you make humanity like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler.

In verses 14-17, the prophet describes the smallness of humanity compared to God using imagery of animals, especially a fishing metaphor. Humanity is like fish when compared to God in His perspective and His person. We tend to forget our place as human beings, but Habakkuk is well aware of that place. Humanity is secondarily referred to in the image of creeping things, such as the insects, that crawl on the ground and have no leadership or ruler. They are anarchist bugs. They need His leadership.

1:15 He brings all of them up with a hook. He drags them away with His net, and He gathers them in His fishing net. So He rejoices and shouts with exultation.

The “He” in this section refers to the Lord. It is the Lord who does what He wills with the humans who are like fish. He can hook them in and catch them if He wishes. He can drag them away in a net, which is what will happen in the exile to the people of Judah. The Lord is the one who gathers up humanity and nations in His fishing nets. He does as He wills with them, and no one can stop Him. Then, when the Lord’s plan of catching is complete, He rejoices in His actions. He can do as He wills.

1:16 Therefore, He sacrifices to his net and makes an offering to his fishing net, thus he is fat with his portion and his food is rich.

After He gathers up the nations, the Lord sacrifices them to His plans and His will. He decides on how they will be used. He will offer up His people to the captors. The captors cannot take them out of His possession. He must offer them up. It is much like Jesus not having His life taken but offering it up instead. The Lord is appeased by the sacrifices and offerings of the wicked nations doing His will. He is like a man fattened in satisfaction and pleased with his food. The Lord gains satisfaction out of His will being accomplished, but it is harder for us to do so because we cannot see the whole of His will since we are stuck within the confines of time and this body.

1:17 Will He then empty His fishing net and continually kill nations without mercy?

The metaphor ends with a question about God, the fisherman. Would the Lord when He is done using a nation or exiling a nation stop using the nations? Won’t He continue to do these things? The prophet is concerned that after the exile the Lord may not return the people to the land. This is why he asks if the Lord will empty the net, let the nation He is holding captive to teach discipline go after they have learned it.

Will the Lord continue to wipe out nations and kill them without any mercy? Where does the Lord’s mercy factor in as He judges? We know that the Lord is merciful in His judgments. And we also know that the Lord does send back the exiles. But for the prophet before the exile, these are hard questions that he must ask. A distinction must be made for him as to whether God is wiping them out or just disciplining them.

In our own lives, we often ask questions of this sort of God, especially when facing a crisis. Does the Lord have an end in mind when He allows us to suffer through trials and pains of this life? When we are going through the pain, these questions become much less philosophical and much more practical. We don’t enjoy pain, so we naturally don’t enjoy going through painful trials. But the Lord does indeed have a method to His madness. And that evil will be

turned into good by a good God. We might take comfort in asking the questions and instead of getting a professor's pat answer getting the Lord of Heaven and earth to comfort us in His special way. A samek ends this first episode of the book and shows us the ending to this line of the prophet's questions.

Chapter 2

2:1 I will take my position at my watch post and station myself on the tower, and keep watch to see what He will say to me concerning my complaint.

After the prophet responds to God's response by saying God cannot look upon evil, he decides to go out of the temple, most likely as we have said in the introduction he worked there, and go up to the watch tower of the city, the highest tower in which one would watch for trouble that was on its way to befall the city. He will get into position to observe what is happening outside the city.

He will station himself there at the tower and wait on God to answer him again. Quite probably, after the Lord revealed His plan to use Babylon against Judah, he wondered how soon this would take place. This also gives us the imagery of him waiting on God and willing to wait as long as it takes. He has a place to wait on the Lord. Not only this, but his conversation is not one-sided. His praying has times of waiting for the Lord's response.

Many times as we pray, especially when we are first learning, we do not have a conversation with God. We have a monologue in which we wish for things and bring requests. Maybe we say something about how wonderful God is to us, but we don't ask Him questions or seek answers through solitude and silence. I want to encourage you to ask God questions that He does not answer with a yes or no and wait upon Him until He gives you clear direction. It is a discipline to learn how to hear God's voice in our lives!

Not only this, but notice the time that the prophet is willing to spend. Too often we are stuck in our quick and instant culture. The prophet carves out time to sit in the Lord's presence and wait upon Him. He has nothing else going on. He just waits. But He watches intently for the Lord's response like a prepared soldier intently watches for an enemy to approach. He devotes himself fully to waiting on God actively and listening to Him. We need to learn how to do this in our culture, how to tarry in God's presence and not leave until we've received answers from Him. We have at least one whole generation that does not know what it is to talk to God face to face and hear His voice and tarry in His presence. God comes to those who wait!

2:2 Then the Lord answered me and said, "Write the vision and explain it on tablets so that he may run who reads it.

We don't know how much time goes by, but the Lord finally answers the prophet's argument about Him not able to look at evil and being one who does what He wishes with the nations. Some versions remove the "and said" after answered, but it is there in the original. It is a Hebrew idiom to answer, saying. We see it a lot in the Gospels.

The Lord starts with a command for the prophet to write down the vision, the revelation, that He is about to bring to Habakkuk. That is why we have this book. It was commissioned to be

written by the Lord, as all of Scripture is God-breathed and helpful to us, yet written by the hands of human beings guided by God's Spirit. The prophet is not only to write it but to give explanation of what it means. Scripture is glorious and wonderful, but without explanation and understanding, we cannot properly respond to God within the pages of His Word. We need instruction and understanding, explanation and application to be able to see the power of God's Word transforming us. Be in a place where you can not only hear the Word, but understand what it says!

The tablets that it would have been explained on were wooden slats, not clay or parchment. That is the imagery of the word used here for the material the prophet wrote upon. Now, that makes our interpretation of the last phrase somewhat interesting. There are several ways to take the last phrase about the person running being able to read it. The first option is that the person who read was a "runner."

This would be someone who had the profession of running an errand or a message to its audience, like a harald. So the message would be written out so that the harald could run throughout the land and give the message. But because the tablets are wooden, they are probably quite large, for the other possibility to interpret this line is that the words are plain and clear, big enough to be seen by someone who is running by them, like a sign on a road.

That, based on the word used for tablets, might be the better meaning here, a sign in a public place that could be viewed at a glance or quickly and easily. One more option that I favor as well is built upon this idea of the signs being readable even for someone running through town. I suggest that the person runs in reaction to the message on the sign. The word is being revealed, but it is coming to pass hastily or quickly as we will see in the next couple of verses, so the person who reads the message responds by running away from judgment. This last option is merely a possibility.

The point of this verse and of all of Scripture is to provide us with a clear and plain understanding of God's communication with us. Do you hear God's voice? Do you know His Word? Do you run your life in accordance with His commands? We need to be a people who seek Him and His word in all things, who seek Him out. Let us be the ones to inquire of the Lord what He desires and what He says. Let us be a people who listen more than we talk to Him.

2:3 "For still the vision is for an appointed time and it hurries toward the end, yet it will not lie. If it delays, wait for it because it is surely coming! It will not delay."

The prophet is told that the vision is coming quickly. It has a certain time to be fulfilled. The vision will happen just as the Lord proclaims, but it will be within His plan and His timing. We might think the Lord works things too slowly, or in some cases too quickly. But the Lord appoints things within a certain timeframe. He does this purposefully and He has a reason for His timing. Who are we to challenge Him on His timing?

The vision speeds toward the end from the perspective of the Lord. It has a goal in mind, an accomplishment to perform with extreme accuracy. It speeds toward that end. It works

quickly for that goal to occur. This vision or revelation will occur speedily. Even if the prophet or the people think that it is too slow in coming, they must wait upon it for it has an appointed time.

Just because the vision is not coming according to our timing does not mean that it is a lie or that it is false or that it won't happen. We get so impatient that we think the promises or visions of God will never come. We need to realize that they are coming as fast as God permits. Some suggest that because in their perspective the Lord's return is taking too long, but what they don't know is that the Lord's appointed time has not been reached by us, not Him!

I consider the vision to be the coming of the Babylonians. Some commentators refer to this vision being the destruction of the Babylonians, saying that verses 4-5 and following are the vision that is written down. That may very well be. But I consider the vision to be the whole of this book, the revelation that God will use the Babylonians and then discard them when they have fulfilled His purposes.

So we can speak of both their invasion and their being invaded and destroyed. But the context before this verse warrants that the vision is of the greater evil nation swallowing up the lesser. After this verse, the Lord evens the score by showing how they will be dealt with. The whole of the vision is both events tied together. But the surprise of the vision so far has been that God would use the Babylonians, an outside, more wicked force, to deal with Judah's inner wickedness.

God is outside of time, so we are the ones waiting on what to Him is already understood and performed. We are the slow ones stuck within a timeframe. God is outside of that timeframe working within it. Let us not be impatient and watch with wonder and awe, waiting on the Lord to reveal in His time His deeds!

2:4 “Behold his soul is twisted; it is not strait within him. But the righteous by his faith will live.

Beginning in verse four we have the Lord's response to how He can look upon evil and use it for His purposes. We will see the fuller purpose of God in the humbling of this Babylonian nation. They will reap much more over what they are about to sow among the nations. The vision or revelation from the Lord that responds to the prophet's question starts with an attention-getting “Behold!” This is a call to pay attention, for what follows is important.

The “his” in this section throughout is the empire of the Babylonians. They are characterized for us by the Lord through His quotation of the peoples of the nations of the earth when they judge the Babylonian empire at its fall. The prophet first tells from what He sees in the Babylonians. Their soul is twisted and not straight within them. The word for soul can also be life or throat.

This is an expression speaking to the nation's never ending desire. It chases after all things. It seeks to have and possess nations. It is never at rest. Wickedness is usually characterized in the prophets by twisting. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the forerunner for the

Messiah making straight the paths of righteousness. Wickedness is twisted and righteousness is strait in prophetic imagery.

So the nation's soul is wicked, longing for things beyond its grasp, chasing the elusive goals of owning the world of nations. It is not straight at its very core. The inner life of the nation is not righteousness or has not righteousness at its center. It is bad from the inside out. And that will later be its decay and downfall, the wickedness eating it away from the inside out until it falls and implodes upon itself.

We must live life not as the Babylonians but as the Lord gives us His righteousness and strength. We must be straight and righteous in our dealings with others or we also will experience the same decay and death the twisted Babylonians experienced. We must walk the straight and narrow road with Christ as our Guide, living in obedience to His perfect and straight commands.

The second part of this verse has been quoted and used in theology by Paul and Martin Luther. It is a quote that Paul uses as part of the basis for his own exposition on what it means to be saved by God's grace and to live out the hope of the promise of God by faith, but trusting in the Lord. In contrast to the crooked and twisted ways and wickedness of the Babylonians, the righteous person will live, and not die, by trusting in the Lord.

The wicked of Judah will die by the swords of the Babylonians and be taken into exile. But those who are righteous before the Lord will live. They will not die. They will trust in the Lord because one of the byproducts of being righteous is to trust the Righteous One. It is through leaning on God that life comes to those who walk the straight path. We need to learn to trust more and more the Lord each moment of our lives, for we gain our lives by that trust. When we do not trust in Him, we forfeit the life that He wants to bless us with and we work toward death caused by sin instead.

2:5 “Moreover wine is a deceiver, an arrogant man yet not successful. His appetite is wide like Sheol and he is like death, yet he never eats his fill. And he gathers for himself all the nations and he collects for himself all the peoples.

Not only are the Babylonians twisted or wicked in their soul and inner person, but they are also drunkards. They are deceived by wine at least as much as they deceive other nations. They are arrogant but not successful. They take pride in themselves, but not because they have accomplished much. They simply take pride in themselves. Their reason is not credible. They do not point to their successes but to their existence as a reason for pride.

They have no success, and therefore nothing to boast about, yet they still boast. The Babylonians have a wide appetite for the nations. They are as wide in their appetite as the pit, or Sheol, is for storing the dead. Although their appetite for violence and death is so wide and over-ranging, even still they are not satisfied. They continue to seek more land, more nations, the next big thrill, and so on. They are never satisfied, always in want. Even though they gather so many

nations, they never stop and it overgrows the empire until it collapses. They have quite a collection, but they don't stop to enjoy it. And that also will be part of their undoing.

There are some areas in life in which such an approach is not only warranted but desired. For instance, in our relationship with God, we should never settle. We should always long for Him and long for His glory to be displayed in us. We should always feel like we want more of Him. We should be satisfied with moving forward, but never be satisfied enough to be stagnant or back-peddling in our relationship with Him. In fact, Jesus calls us blessed when we are poor in spirit, or realizing that we are desperate and poor in our spiritual lives without God.

But there are other matters in which our desire overwhelms our discipline and we seek in overabundance for things that cannot ever satisfy or fill us. We spend our lives chasing shadows that we think will bring us our desires, only to find out how truly empty these things are and how much we have missed the point of living. Is there anything void and empty in your life? Get rid of it and begin to place your time and efforts into things that satisfy and fill you as you seek after them. Seek after God's Kingdom and His righteousness and after Christ. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Store up treasures in Heaven, not here on earth.

2:6 Will not all of these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, “Woe to him who increases what is not his own – until when? And he makes himself heavy with debts.

The “these” in this verse refers to the many nations and peoples that the Babylonians have collected, and the Lord will begin to quote their taunts as woes that they will taunt when the empire of Babylon falls before their eyes. Just as with the Assyrians, the peoples of the earth will not be unhappy about this empire dissolving. They will stand against the empire when it is no longer feared and taunt it.

Five woes will be set off here as the Lord describes international reaction to Babylon's fall. They will taunt the empire and scoff at it and use riddles to refer to it. It will become a bygone of the past and nothing to remember. They will speak woes upon the empire as follows. Each woe contains a subject or aspect of the empire to be woeful about, and then an explanation concerning the returning of its own practices upon it.

The first woe starts out with the subject of stealing the nations, increasing what the empire did not own. It harkens back to the imagery of the drunkard who demands more and is never filled or satisfied. The Babylonians gobbled up land like a glutton. And so in such pursuits placed itself in a large amount of debt that could not be repaid. The nations ask when the empire will stop adding to itself lands that are not meant for it.

We must learn to live within our means. Debt is a common problem among believers and unbelievers alike. It is the desire for things and the refusal to work for them in some cases. In other cases, it is an impatience to get something we cannot handle. That is how the empire of Babylon was. We must be people who do not weigh ourselves down into slavery to others

through being indebted to them, financially or relationally. We need to be free from the traps of this world!

2:7 “Will not your debtors instantly arise and awake, who make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them.”

The fear of this nation grips it in its clutches, that the debtors will call their debts on the empire. The Babylonians are financially stretched thin in their increase and gaining. What would happen if all of the debtors came calling for their money back all at once? That is a slavery that none of us would like to endure. And yet it would be the right of those who have loaned their money out to the Babylonians.

The debtors will take what they will, whatever begins to cover the payment they deserve from the empire. America is in a bad place right now as far as debt is concerned. What would we do as a nation if other nations began to demand their debts repaid? We cannot do it! We live so far as a nation beyond our means that it's not even close to funny. We must be careful to emulate a clean life from debt of any kind and then work in our nation to see the same happen. Our reputation and worth are at stake! We need to pull in the spending and unsatisfying seeking of pleasure and fulfillment in our nation and culture. We need to learn how to be producers instead of consumers again.

2:8 Because you plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples will plunder you for the blood of humanity and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

The actions of the Babylonians in this verse are returned upon them. They get a taste of their own medicine as the nations they once plundered for resources now plunder them as they pay their debt the hard way and are destroyed as an empire. The peoples of the nation give the reason that they are returning the favor Babylon once brought upon them. They taunt the nation and take back the precious things that empire stole in war and plunder.

The people that are left and the nations that are left, the remnant, will plunder Babylon. But there are some things the nations cannot get back, such as the lives of the innocent who were killed in war, the blood of humanity that was exacted as part of the price of Babylon's blood lust. They also did violence to the earth, the land, as they took what they wished, not caring to replenish the earth. They took cities and peoples and they didn't care about how they took them. They did what they willed, and now they are receiving what they doled out. A Peh is found here, usually ending a section, but here I believe it is just a separation of the first woe and second woe.

The worst part about owing someone or being in debt is that it hurts to pay it back. Do we ever think of the consequences of our debt? Do we ever consider them? Have we said that the ends justify the means, and yet when our creditors say such things we don't enjoy the reverse end, being in the shoes they once wore? We must consider how we live and how we interact with

others. We do not want to have our own wickedness turned on us. But this also should not be our motivation for being kind. Our motivation should be to glorify Christ. A side benefit is not experiencing the pain of being plundered.

2:9 Woe to him who profits evil gain for his house, to set his house on high, to be safe from the palm of evil.

The second woe now comes into view and its subject matter concerns the house of Babylon, the dwelling and the place which they called home. It was a place that was wrought by evil means, just as their increasing in collecting the nations through plunder was evil. They had gained by evil means and had built their house on the wickedness of their hands and practices. The second woe concerns how they had built that house, that enjoyable place for themselves.

They had not used sound business practices, cheating and cutting corners, and the house they built would not stand. It would fall like a house of cards because it was not honestly made. They gained profits indeed, but through evil intentions and actions. Those means would not suffice and the house was of very weak and fleeting structure.

Jesus speaks of two houses that were built in the Gospels. The first is built upon the sand and when the rains come and the waters rise, the house falls. But the second house is built upon a rock, and come what may, it stands firm and established. We need to be a people who are established, whose houses, literally and figuratively, are not in danger of collapse. We must base our lives on God's Word. We must allow God to build our houses!

2:10 You have planned shame for your house, cutting off many peoples; you have sinned against your soul.

We see as we read a switching back and forth from the third person singular "he" to the second person singular "you." It's as if the nations are conferring with one another while Babylon is in their midst. We do this all the time with our dialogue. For instance, let's say I have two friends and all three of us are together. I could refer to one of my friends while talking to the other and say something about him. But then I could turn and address him personally. This is what may be happening among the nations.

The nations speak to the Babylonians and complain that they have planned out or schemed shame on themselves because they have cut off many peoples, excessive in their plundering and pillaging. Because of the shameful way they have treated the nations, cutting people off from their homelands and maybe even literally cutting people off from life, the nations condemn them, saying that they have sinned against their own souls or lives.

The word for sin here is not the idea of trespass but the idea of missing a mark or wronging someone. They have a feeling of guilt with their sin as is implied in the word. The other word, their life or soul, is used earlier in verse four when we talked about the soul or life being twisted. The word here and there is the Hebrew word nephesh. It speaks to the whole of

life, not just the soul, but the animating part of life, the thing that makes us move. It also encompasses the inner part of the person, or the inner person itself. They have sinned against their very inward being, violating themselves by the wrong they committed.

In the New Testament in Romans, Paul talks about violating the conscience, which is similar to this idea of sinning against one's own soul. The sins that we commit deeply hurt our own souls, our own inner being. We violate ourselves and our worth in our sinning. We must stop sin because it violates God's holiness first, ourselves second, and then someone else. Nothing good comes out of sinning at any time.

The Roman Catholic Church demanded of Martin Luther to recant his teachings of Protestantism and he is quoted as telling them that he would give an answer and that his conscience was held captive to the Word of God and to go against the Word was neither wise nor intelligent. He did not want to do irreparable damage within his answer to his own soul. He left the judging of his soul up to God. We must also take care to not damage our lives or souls, our nephesh. Let us be people way above reproach in every facet of our lives!

2:11 Thus the stone from the wall will cry out and the rafter from the woodwork will respond.

To some this verse may not make sense, unless you remember that the image is of a house. Now it makes perfect sense. The Babylonians have so violated their own house, their own lives through their sinful practices and shoddy means that even the house cries out against them and their violence. The stones of the walls cry out, something a stone cannot do. And the rafters also cry out and respond to their wickedness. The whole house is collapsing inward upon them. Their lives are falling apart. Another peh here in the Hebrew text once again sets apart one woe from another, showing us the ending of this second woe section.

One guaranteed reaction of sin is to destroy our lives and our houses. Whatever is good that has been built will crumble in our lives when we play around with sin and temptation. We must not allow our lives to implode all around us. We must be people of character whose houses are built upon the foundations of God. Let us be a godly people who never experience the tearing apart of a life of sin. Let us see our house be built on Christ and stand against all evil!

2:12 Woe to him who builds a city with blood and establishes a town on iniquity.

The third woe speaks to the means of building the empire upon blood and sinfulness. This is a matter of how the empire was managed with sin. Not only was it built upon sinful means and practices, but it was administered through sinful practices. The wrongful and sinful practices are not going to make a good empire. They will only produce what they have been in method and administration. Two wrongs don't make a right.

The image now is not of a house but of building a city. This time it is the means of the method of administration. The city has been built through bloodshed and the wickedness was the

way to get things done. The imagery of the word for iniquity speaks of malice and perversion. The Babylonians did not treat the nations well. They mocked them and thought of themselves more highly than the lowly conquered nations. But this arrogance would be their undoing because their administration of the empire would fall apart.

How do we treat others? We must be careful to be kind and Christ-like to others. How we treat others is our administration of people. Are we in a habit of sinning against others, working through malice and iniquity rather than kindness and grace? Do we seek bloodshed over every matter? Do we want to see others bleed or will we be the ones to save face for them? How we treat one another is at the center not only of God's idea of justice but also of our mode of operations and our means. Do we build others up or do we tear them down?

2:13 Behold! Is it not from the Lord of Hosts, and the peoples grow weary just for enough fire and nations grow weary for emptiness?

Instead of building according to the Lord's plan, the Babylonians used cruelty and overworked the people. They took every advantage they could find. The people had no fire for cooking and anything else it could be used for. They grew weary because they were empty, probably referring to not having any food or water. We see the title for the Lord as the Lord of Hosts who uses His divine armies to do His bidding against them for the way they treat the people.

The emptiness of the people might also be spiritual, for the next verse hints at this aspect of their emptiness. Nevertheless, the Lord would use His armies as He pleased, and He would fill the earth with His glory, not that of the Babylonians. This verse tells us that the Lord at the proper time would get involved with His armies and return the justice the people longed for against the Babylonians.

What thing in our world and time does not happen without the Lord either allowing it or causing it? The Lord is sovereign in this verse. We need not fear even when we are abused by the world and don't have basic necessities. We still have the Lord who controls all the mighty armies on our side. Why should we fear or be downcast? Let us boldly seek His knowledge and understanding.

2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God's glory like the waters cover the seas.

The emptiness of the nations is now filled in this verse. The whole earth, all of the lands, are filled with God's knowledge and glory. He sweeps over the lands like the water covers the seas. His glory and knowledge are the very air that we breathe and He alone is all that is needed to fill. Just as empty as the peoples of the earth were in the last verse, the Lord brings them the fullness of Himself. We also can have that fullness of the Lord, a knowledge of Him and His things, and to see His glory come down now!

We need to be the opposite of the Babylonians to see these wonderful things in our time and world. A samek after this verse separates the next woe from this one. We have seen these pehs and sameks be used to separate the woes. It is interesting how they are so nicely separated as possibly a literary device that might make the readers pause at each woe and consider it and ponder it, and hide its truth deep in their hearts. Let us also do the same.

2:15 Woe to him who makes his friends drink, pouring out your wrath and making them drunk in order to gaze at their nakedness.

The fourth woe concerns the influence of Babylon. They had forced the nations around them and their friends, their allies, to drink and get drunk, to accept their vision and plans for the empire. They used peer pressure in its worst forms. The nations were forced to endure and bear the wrath of the empire, forced to drink of its cup of wrath. The cup of wrath is often used in Old Testament imagery. It can be literal, but is almost always used to signify anger and wrath or joy and delight.

The empire took advantage of the weaknesses of the nations around them. They took their land in their nakedness or weakness. If a nation lacked some area of expertise that would keep it from being conquered, the Babylonians would sweep in and take advantage of that weakness. They were relentless and ruthless in their demands. They also used their control to make the nations drunk with their way of doing things. They took every advantage that they discovered without ethical presupposition. No one was safe under their spells.

2:16 You will drink your fill of shame. Drink, even you, and be uncircumcised! The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, and disgrace will come upon your glory.

The “you” in this verse refers to the Babylonians. Just as they made others drink in the destruction and violence of their rule, so also on the day that the Lord punishes them, they will drink their fill of the cup of God's judgment. They will be fully judged. The imagery of uncircumcision speaks of their most evil wickedness, their lack of having even a hope of being part of God's people.

Just like all the other nations around them, the Babylonians would eventually feel the judgment of the Lord in full force. They would be forced to drink in His judgment as they forced the nations to drink of their rule. The Lord's right hand is a favorable hand, but for the people of God, not the uncircumcised nations. So the right hand of the Lord is good for Judah and bad for Babylon. They would be exposed for who they truly are and they would be disgraced. What they were arrogant about and prideful in will be exposed as shameful, the glory actually being the opposite shame.

Those who do evil against the Lord will suffer His judgment. They will endure all of His full judgment. There will be no easy way out or any way out. We have a short period of time in which by God's grace we can introduce them to salvation before that time comes in which they

will be left to the Lord's discrimination. Let us use our time here and now wisely for their salvation!

2:17 Thus the violence toward Lebanon will overcome you and the devastation of the beasts that terrified them, for the blood of humanity and the violence of the earth, to cities and to all who dwell in them.

Verse 17 gives us a specific historical reference to the people of Lebanon that were abused by the Babylonians. The Lord in His judgment is making that judgment like the suffering of the people of Lebanon for the Babylonians. He is taking the pain that the Babylonians put the people of Lebanon through and making the Babylonians endure it in His full judgment. It is most likely that Lebanon was only one example of the many reasons for and methods of the Lord's retributive and punitive judgment upon Babylon.

The Babylonians will experience devastation and violence as the people of Lebanon experienced. The next part of the verse is a word for word repetition of verse eight's closing statement. The Lord will repay them for the violence that they committed against the earth and the blood of humanity which they spilt in their conquests. They did not care what the results of their devastation were for the nations, so they will experience those results for themselves. Another samek placed after this verse is of interest because it does not conclude the woe, but does change the thought toward the final woe's subject, that of idolatry.

2:18 What profit is an idol when its maker has carved it, a cast idol, and a teacher of falsehood? Because its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols.

This verse has another samek after it, as if the idolatry is the worst offense between two sameks. It broaches the subject of idolatry and the next verse brings the woe. This is the only woe that is out of the order previously followed every three verses. It may seem out of order or unordinary to a first time reader, but its emphasis is without a doubt poignant. This last woe is out of order, and breaking the literary order does provide emphasis to this specific issue. Not only this, but the sameks splitting this verse away from the last woe and the formal woe of verse 19 also show its seclusion from the rest of the passage.

The greatest reason for the Lord's judgment was their idolatry. God hates idolatry because it glorifies with inanimant objects and images either nothingness, for other gods besides the Lord don't even exist, or demonic forces. It is possible that some idols do have a power that is counterfeiting God's power so that it can deceive. The Lord is not ever pleased with humanity that rejects the truth of His existence and power and love. Even though it is not Israel that is in view here as an idolater, any nation that chooses idolatry is in God's dog house.

So as is the tradition among the prophets, Habakkuk makes fun of idolatry, especially the images made by human hands. He asks what profit is in idolatry. What has your idol done for you lately? Nothing? Maybe that's because idols don't really exist! The idol has no power over

humanity as God does because it is created by humanity. The creator is always greater than the creation! Both carved images of wood and cast metal images are in view here.

The idols taught falsehood. Whether they were possessed by demons that used false power or if they simply were worshipped and were nothing, they still encouraged and taught the people to continue in falsehood and idolatry. We must not ignore the warnings against idols today because we can very much still be involved with idolatry without even realizing it. We may not make our idols like they did in the Old Testament times, but we still have things and even people that we put in a higher place than God. That is an idol by definition. Let our lives be free from idols to serve the one and only true living God!

2:19 Woe to him who says to wood, “Awake!”, “Arise” to a silent stone. Can this teach? Behold it, overlaid with gold and silver, yet there is no breath at all within it.

Now we receive the final woe addressed to those who make these idols from the previous verse. The idolater looks like a fool as he demands for the idol he has made to wake up or to arise, as if it could do so on its own. It is somewhat reminiscent of God creating us and breathing life into us. The problem is that we are not God and we cannot create an idol that is greater than ourselves. We can't even create another human being through science. It requires the reproductive process that God put into place.

The prophet calls the woeful idolater to look at the idol and though it may be beautiful on the outside, no one's home on the inside. It can't even breathe, let alone do what the idolater wants of it. Talking to inanimate objects is usually considered a sign of insanity. Yet the idolater makes the images himself and then commands them to do what they were not made to do! Throughout the Bible, idolaters are seen as and described as fools because of their lack of understanding of the principle that nothing you build or make can be greater than you.

2:20 But the Lord is in His holy temple. Hush before Him, all the earth.

Contrary to all of these idols made by human hands and expected to be alive, the Lord is in His holy temple, most likely where Habakkuk worked for a living as a Levitical helper. The Lord is not like idols. He is alive! The whole earth is quiet before Him because He controls all of creation. The Lord stands in stark contrast to silent idols that are commanded to speak. He is the one doing the commanding! A Peh here ends our section on woes and our chapter. We must never consider that any idol even remotely can be considered over the living God. He is true and acts within history. He shows that He is alive. He does not need to be told by us what to do. He tells us what to do. Let us worship Him because He is not some imaginary dream cast by a metalworker but the one who made all things out of nothing!

Chapter 3

3:1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet according to Shigionoth:

After all arguments and points have been laid aside, much like in the book of Job, we are left with a true sense of God's higher purposes and perspective. The prophet is left with a future that may not please him completely, and yet the Lord is in control and will indeed work all things out for the benefit of His people in the end. So the prophet offers a prayer that can serve anyone who is going through a time of trial. It is a prayer concerning the Lord's end-game and what He has in store finally.

It is often helpful to look to the end when God justifies all of us in the midst of looming trials in our lives. Here, the prophet concerns himself with his duty of assuring the people in song and in prayer. He sings a prayer of trust in the Lord despite current circumstances. Would that we had the faith to trust in the Lord even in the hard times and pain. He forms the prayer in a Shigionoth. Shigionoth is the plural of a kind of psalm composed in Psalm 7. It seems to be a dirge or lament. It is described as being a very emotional and rhythm changing style of song. When one is in lament, there are times of slow and lethargic approach and times of quick and cutting expression. Here we see the words to this song the prophet composes most likely for the temple Levites to play.

When you are going through tough times, some of the most calming influences are used here by the prophet and we should consider them. Words of encouragement and prayer go a long way to assuage our fears and prayers are lifted up on our behalf, giving us a sense that God is not ignoring our condition. These all bring comfort to the one in affliction. So also, music has its calming effect. I usually recommend listening to worship music and spending the trial in prayer until it passes, knowing full well that this trial is not the end of all things for the believer. God has a plan, and this is not the end product. You can endure and see the glory that He has in store.

3:2 O Lord, I heard the report about You. I fear, O Lord, Your work in the midst of the years. Revive it in the midst of the years. In turmoil, remember compassion.

The prophet begins by placing himself as those among the faithful, so this song and prayer is raised by those who trust in the Lord no matter what the circumstances. It begins with a vocative address to the Lord, the covenant-keeping God of the people. He begins by saying that he's watching what the Lord does, the working of His ways in human history. He has heard the report, observed God's revelation of Himself.

Next, he speaks of fearing the Lord and His work over the years. This word for fearing is not meant to be one of the emotional fear, but one of the reverence for God and His works. The imagery of fearing was meant as being in awe. It refers to the prophet's approval of God's works and His watching and observing with awe and wonder at what God has done. Once again the

vocative of address for the Lord is used. The prophet has watched God's interactions throughout at least his lifetime and is aware of God's works before his lifetime.

What about you? When you look back at human history and read the Bible and see God's fingerprints upon us, what is your reaction? In the midst of our struggles and trials, it is much harder to see God's moving and working, but in retrospect, we can see His work clear as day. And we find that He is never in the wrong, never unrighteous or unjust. And we must be in awe because as we look back at our lives and how we have interacted with others, we cannot always say that all the time.

The prophet's prayer now is that God would revive His activity in human history, and as He has in the past, would show mercy amidst trial and heartache as the Judeans experience the judgment of the Babylonians upon them. Habakkuk does not ask the Lord to stay His hand or to not send the Babylonians, but instead asks the Lord in His judgment to be compassionate and merciful. These two words in English are the same in Hebrew.

So also we might wish to pray that God remove the trials of our lives or the afflictions or discomforts of life. But that may not be part of His plan. Instead, we can always ask Him to be merciful. He has proven throughout history that He is a merciful and loving God, that even in the midst of His anger and judgment and discipline, He holds out hope and mercy. We must understand that God longs for these to be part of our experience of trials and afflictions, that His grace will pull us through these unavoidable journeys. Rather than blame God for what He allows us to go through, we should ask for His mercy in the storm.

3:3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His majesty covered the heavens and the earth was full of His praise.

Habakkuk sings of a vision he has of God coming into the land that the Israelites now inhabit. God came from Teman. Teman is a city mentioned also in Obadiah 9. It is a city or geographical area within Edom. Mount Paran, or simply Paran, is another name for the wilderness in which we find Mount Sinai. This is an expression of how God led His people to the promised land from Egypt through the wilderness of Sinai and through Edom.

He is described as the Holy One. This is just one of many names that show God's nature and character. He is holy, separate, unique. He is not like any other god. The interesting point about this psalm or lament is that it takes on the legendary nature of other songs of other gods. It has a quality of mythology attested to by several commentators, suggesting that Habakkuk is actually taking hymns to the Babylonian god Marduk and envisioning God here instead. The word Selah in Hebrew can mean a pause to ponder what is said, or it can mean an instrumental interlude. I believe it is often used for meditation upon the imagery of the poetry.

The word for majesty, referring to God's majesty, is also translated splendor. This is the substance that makes Him divine and powerful and formidable. This divine substance emanates from Him and covers the heavens and the earth and they are full of His praise. Some of the psalms

use the same poetic imagery when talking about God as one whose glory is everywhere. It can be found in His creation, trace evidences of His awesomeness and splendor.

Creation is beautiful because God is beautiful. We love to observe it because it is like looking into fine craftsmanship of a craftsman. We observe the excellence and quality of the character of the creator. So here also, God's splendor and majesty rub off on creation and are readily observable to everyone. Enjoy creation. Although it has been marred by the Fall, just like us, there is still part of God's splendor in it, and it connects us to Him because His fingerprints are all over it.

3:4 His shining was like the light; rays from His hand to Him, and there the veil of His strength.

The imagery of God's splendor going before and all around Him as He makes His way on His journey toward Israel through the wilderness and the parts of Edom remind the prophet and the people of how God worked in the past, in the exodus. The prophet continues to poetically speak of God's glory and strength. The word for glory, although not specifically used here, can speak of a weightiness or importance, but it can also have the meaning of brightness or light, a glowing presence.

Here the Lord is described in His goings as Shamesh, the Babylonian sun god, is described. The difference is that Shamesh is worshipped as the god of the sun only or even the sun is worshipped as a god itself. But here, the prophet speaks of God controlling the sun and its rays. The Lord is brighter than the sun, controlling its rays with His hands. The reference to His shining or glory being like the light refers to the daylight, to the sun. He has rays that come out of His hand and His strength is seen as glorious, a place that rests in His hand. The Hebrew word for hand can also refer to someone's power or ability, because we accomplish things with our hands. What must be clear is that God is greater than Shamesh in any account. He is greater because He is not the sun but controls the sun.

3:5 Before Him walked pestilence and after Him a plague followed at His heels.

As the Lord continues His approach, there is fire and pestilence and plague. These verses become harder to translate as they become more poetic and image driven. I would surmise that this refers to the coming judgment, the plague of foreigners taking God's people away. The Babylonians would indeed come from the east in this same fashion. This may not be their direct route, but it is close enough to understanding the pestilence, the fire, comes from the east.

The importance of this imagery is that God brings with Him the judgment of pestilence, maybe referring to the Babylonians and the exile, and plague. These words for pestilence and plague have several different nuances, but are both synonymous with sickness. We have seen from other minor prophets like Hosea that Judah was described as a very sick person.

What we must understand is that God does not always bring us the easy and comfortable life even as believers. Sometimes He brings discipline with Him, or we must endure trials or even the consequences of our sins. But because these things walk before Him or nip at His heels, He has complete control of them. We can take solace in that point. God will allow trials and things to happen in our lives, but He is always at the helm. We need not fear these things because God decides our fate, not outside forces of affliction or pestilence.

3:6 He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations. And the eternal mountains shattered; the everlasting hills crouched. His processions are everlasting.

The Lord now measures the earth when He comes to a standstill. The word for stood is a word of establishment and foundation. The Lord is our foundation no matter what is happening around us. As He stands, He measures the earth. Usually throughout Scripture, measuring something was part of owning it. In Revelation 21-22, we see an angel measuring the New Jerusalem as a symbol of God's ownership of His people.

Here the Lord measures the whole of the earth. His ability to measure it shows His ownership. Part of owning a piece of property was measuring out its dimensions. When a person was given a plot of land, he would survey and measure it as part of his preliminary dealings in his new property. The Lord owns the earth and we have no doubt of this from Scripture. Because He created it, He owns every bit of it and all that is within it. We can rest safely in knowing that our God owns all things and nothing is outside of His jurisdiction or purview.

Of course when the Lord owns the whole earth and everything in it, He also owns the nations and can do with them whatever He wills. Even a mere look from the Lord and the nations shake and quake in fear and in humble obedience to His will. He is the sovereign of every aspect of His creation. In the Lord's judgment, the nations shake and the mountains shatter. Mountains are seen as foundations and formidable, long-lasting and established parts of the earth, immovable. But to the Lord, they are nothing.

What are mountains in your life, things you don't think can be changed, foundations that you believe are immovable? God can do all things whether in your life or in the earth around you. Trust in Him to do what you might see as impossible. The Bible tells us that with God nothing is impossible. Surrender your own mountains to Him and watch what He does! Even the hills, which are smaller mountains, are seen as everlasting or long lasting, lasting forever. But in His presence, they crouch and they tremble as well. Everything responds to its Maker!

The prophet speaks of God's processions, His doings, His goings. Everything the Lord does, every procession that He makes is everlasting. It endures forever and He lives forever. He is more foundational and was here in the beginning before the oldest and strongest and most established mountain. He is more everlasting than the ripples of hills throughout the earth. The Lord is eternal, and though His creation shows an imprint of such eternity, it simply pales in comparison to Him. He alone is everlasting!

3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan underneath disaster, the tent curtains of the land of Midian trembled.

Not only does creation react to God's coming through these mountains and hills and wilderness areas to get to His people. but the tents of Cushan and the tent curtains of Midian react to His powerful sovereignty. It is likely that Cushan and especially Midian are some of the first oppressors during the time of the Judges for the Israelites. The enemies of God's people are also in submission to Him.

This is a very important point that Habakkuk makes here. Sure, the Babylonians are about to be used by the Lord for discipline and exile of the wicked Judeans, but they are also within the realm of God's control, just like former foreign adversaries of God's people. We must never think that Satan or any other enemy actually has a shot at beating God! They are weak and can easily be crushed by Him when He so desires. Let us not attribute to our enemies a strength that they do not have. Let us instead trust in the Lord to do our fighting for us, the divine warrior coming to the defense of His people in His desired time.

These two previous foreign adversaries of the people of Israel must bow to the Lord in terror and trembling. He will bring to the Babylonians also in His time the same fate that He brought to these enemies of His people. The Lord is always fighting on our side. In the end, He passes out perfect judgment and carries out the sentence of that judgment. We must trust in His judgment and timing! A samek here ends one part of the song, but also begins another. Now we will see the Lord coming on the waters.

3:8 Was wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea when you rode on your horses, on your chariots of salvation?

The imagery of this next section, which could have been the next movement musically of this song and poem switches from images of God coming by land with His judgment to God coming by water to judge. While some see this as God coming to rescue Israel, the clear understanding of its final verses are a trust in the midst of being taken in captivity. The Lord is coming for Israel, the Lord of Hosts who uses other armies.

The prophet asks why the Lord is so brutal to His own creation. Is His wrath for creation itself? The answer to that is, "No." Creation reacts to God in His wrath, responding to His presence, not as a judgment against it. The waters are kicked up as the divine warrior rides His chariots and approaches the judgment. The Lord is seen as a divine warrior who is riding on His chariot, a chariot of war. The horses pull the chariot and He is also seen riding atop a warhorse here.

Quite a sight is being poetically drawn for us here. The Lord in His wrath is speeding through the waters and the seas and they react in kind as He makes waves with His coming to judge. Not even the water can stop Him from coming to judge. There is no barrier to God's plans or will. When He decides something, He moves on it and nothing can stand against Him. He will

bring His wrath or pleasure and not one thing in all of creation can keep Him from it. No barrier can be raised.

3:9 You stripped naked the sheath from your bow, calling oaths for arrows. Selah. With rivers you split the earth.

The Lord prepares for His judgment and for battle as He comes toward that judgment. He pulls out His bow and sets ready His arrows. The unsheathing of the bow is poetically described as making the bow naked. You can take the next line of the verse two ways, as is sometimes seen in poetic imagery. The first is that God has given an oath that He will supply all the arrows or weapons needed for battle. The other is that God's oaths are now coming to fruition as He prepares for judgment and battle.

The image of God preparing for war whether with the wicked among His people or in their defense produces another Selah, a Hebrew word used for a musical pause or an instrumental interlude. It demands that the reader or listener take a moment to meditate upon the image and apply it. The Lord cuts through the rivers and splits the earth. The prophet might be referring in historical context here to the Tigris and Euphrates, rivers in the land of the Babylonians, effectively saying that God is using the Babylonians to cut up the earth with their empire. The Lord uses so many tools and weapons that we are unaware of, and we can often be caught unawares of His intentions or plan. But we must maintain communion with Him to know Him first, and then His plans. We must draw close to the Lord and as the prophet, learn of His ways.

3:10 The writhing mountains saw You, the flooding waters rushed on. The deep surrendered its voice; it lifted its hands on high.

Creation does not even attempt to fight with the Lord. It knows its place in His sovereignty. It reacts to Him without disobedience. The mountains writhe when they see the Lord coming. This can be taken positively or negatively, although most likely negatively in this section on His coming for judgment. They can react in writhing like an expectant puppy waiting for its master to arrive home, or it can respond like a puppy knowing that punishment is coming from its master for the mess it has made.

So also the mountains respond to the Lord, and the waters flood and rush on. The word for rush has its root in the word for walking. Throughout the psalms we have images of the deep of the water, the very depths, also responding to the Lord. Here the depths of the oceans respond to Him by surrendering their voice, giving up their ancient right to speak. The Lord often uses the depths in mythic imagery. For instance, it is Jonah who is left to the whales of the deep only to be rescued by a great fish. Often images of drowning imply the depths.

The waters lifting their hands on high is an image of worship and service to the Lord. It is a personification of the depths because the depths are not a person that has hands to lift up. But by doing so, the depth surrenders to Him. The lifting of the hands is an image of surrender

throughout Scripture. So from the highest of the mountains to the depths of the seas, creation responds in humble submission and reverent worship of the Lord. So too we must worship Him in the same ways, in surrendering ourselves to His will and to His way, of giving ourselves to Him totally without abandon.

3:11 Sun and moon stood still in *their* dwelling at the light of your arrows as they flew, at the flash of your lightning spear.

Even the celestial heavens respond to the Lord's desire. The sun and moon stand still in their dwelling. They do not continue in normal course when the Lord is upon the earth. They stay in their dwelling places or stand there. They are not needed to light up the earth as the Lord unleashes His arrows of light. The imagery here might even be of lightning or shafts of lightning. The arrows are en route to their destination, meaning that either the Lord has sent His weapons or that the Lord is bringing to fruition His word and will.

There is also mentioned the flash of God's lightning spear. This may also speak of lightning strikes. He is using creation against His enemy, whether that is the wickedness among the people of God or their captors. We can be sure that God always has complete control over all of creation and He can use it to bless or to judge.

3:12 In indignation you marched through the earth; in anger you trampled the nations.

We receive a summary image of the Lord traipsing around the earth with His wrath and judgment ready and in hand. He marches with indignation that stirs up the waters and He brings His anger and judgment to the nations. They have already been shaking and trembling at His arrival. So this verse summarizes the imagery that we have seen in this second part of the song.

3:13 You went out for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed one. You crushed the head from the house of the wicked, exposing him from foundation to neck. Selah.

Some have suggested that this is the salvation of the people of God from the Babylonians because of the implication of God's chariots of salvation in verse eight and the salvation of God's people in verse 13 here. Because the samek ends the last section, this is very much a possibility. The Lord comes against the enemies of His people. Now I would maintain that the Lord has already made the target of His aggression not the righteous in Israel, for 2:4 tells us that they will live through this event of exile because of their trust in Him. Rather the enemy of the Lord is either the wicked in Judah historically, or this section of the song is meant to speak of God's setting the captives of His people free after the exile later.

Of great interest is the prophet's mention of God's anointed one. The suggestion is that God fights for His people and for His anointed one. This anointed one is historically seen

probably for the prophet as that special Davidic king, whose role is most certainly fulfilled perfectly and forever by Jesus Christ. It is very possible to see the lameds here referring to the instruments of God's moving or going forth. IN other words, the Lord went out or went forth with His people and with His anointed one, making Jesus the instrument of His salvation which agrees with the rest of Scripture.

The understanding of salvation is furthered by the explanatory next line that tells us how God brought salvation. He destroyed or crushed the head of the house of the wicked. The head of the wicked can physically speak of smashing the heads of the wicked, however, the word for head is singular here. It most likely refers to the king of the wicked, the Babylonian emperor, or more recently to Satan himself, the father of wickedness and evil. The word head describes a leadership role usually within a family or house. So through Jesus, God crushed Satan and his desires and works and rescued His people by saving them! That salvation is readily ours today!

This plan is so great and God's power so magnificent and applicable to us through that Messiah, that anointed one Jesus that we must stop and think about it, so another Selah is inserted here to help us meditate on God's plan for our lives, His way of rescuing us from wickedness. This is followed by a section dividing peh after the verse that denotes a larger section break. The final section will speak to us about how we can trust in His great plan for us despite our surroundings and situations. We can believe in faith that if He can and will crush the enemy of our souls, the head of wickedness, He will work all things out for our good!

3:14 You pierced with his own arrows the head of his troops. They surely stormed to scatter me, rejoicing to devour the poor in secret.

Finally, in this last section of the song and prayer, the prophet shows the method God will use to judge His enemies and the enemies of His people. He will turn their own weapons against their heads. He will allow the enemies arrows to pierce them. God will use friendly fire to humiliate His enemies in His judgment.

The head of his troops most likely refers to the leader of the enemy's forces. The prophet once again inserts himself, and by way of prayer so could we for the day where the Lord will vanquish Satan, into the imagery here. He says that the enemy surely stormed against him and his people to scatter them. This refers in his day to the exile. They "surely stormed" language is the use of two verbs of storming that, when used together, intensify their war against him and his people.

The enemy went further than simply wanting to captivate God's people. The enemies of God and God's people also sought to secretly commit injustices against the poor and downtrodden. Their desire was to rejoice in the consumption of the poor. They wanted to do this in secret. Possibly this might be a double-headed or hypocritical use of God's people, to feign being sorry for the plight of the poor in public and yet rejoice that the poor suffer in private.

However one understands this poetic text, the enemy wishes to enjoy doing injustices of every sort to God's people, but the Lord will rescue them by destroying the enemy with friendly

fire. One example of this in the Old Testament comes to mind with Gideon when the armies of the Midianites turned against one another and destroyed one another out of confusion. The Lord has used this tactic before, but most likely not on such a large scale. The Lord will always fight for His people, no matter how high the stakes or how undesirable the odds. He is on your side and will vindicate you in every matter!

3:15 You tread on the sea with Your horses, the foaming of great waters.

Another image of God walking upon the water, earlier riding a chariot or horse upon the water, shows up here to summarize the image of God coming for battle across the sea and breaking any barriers that stand in the way of His judgment. The image changes so that He is treading upon the waters instead of riding the chariot. The image still denotes God's wrath is coming and He will deliver it personally. The waters foam because of the waves He makes as He walks or runs on the water. Even the river's foaming waters obey and react to His presence upon them.

3:16 I hear, and my belly trembles; my lips quiver at the sound. Rottenness enters into my bones and *my legs* underneath me tremble, so that I will groan for the day of distress to ascend upon people who attack him.

Imagine the deafening sounds of waves foaming over and breaking and mountains splitting into pieces and shattering, chariots and horses coming, and all of the other images of this section. If you heard that, you would react the same way the prophet does here. He trembles in his guts or in his belly. His inmost being trembles before the Lord in His wrath. Not only does His belly tremble out of fear, but his lips quiver and shake because of the knowledgeable coming destruction.

The rottenness of the bones speaks of a disease in which the bones rot from the inside out or become dry and brittle. The prophet also experiences his legs going out from under him. It is a physical reaction to God's power and presence that is involuntary for his body as much as it is involuntary for creation. The prophet gives us a response that shows us the tension and discomfort of God's judgment and the unusual feelings that exist in someone who sees and hears God's wrath coming. But he also presents an image of the longing for God's day of judgment to come upon His enemies and the enemies of God's people. He longs for the day so much that he groans as in pain until that day.

Do you long for God to bring His judgment and justice to this unjust place? Have you laid in wait for His justice? The feeling of God coming upon His enemies might give the same impression at least physically that any animal or human would get when backed into a corner. We need to be a people who long for the day of God's justice. We need to feel the pain of the absence of justice. We need to know the pain of those who are treated unjustly. How do you react when you see injustice?

3:17 Though the fig tree may not blossom nor there be produce on the vines, the produce of the olives grow lean, and the fields do not yield food, the flocks be cut off from the fold nor there be cattle in the stalls,

In the final three verses of our song, the prophet expresses the worst possible situation he can think of and then declares his trust in the Lord and that he will rejoice in Him. He starts with the worst case scenario of the fig trees not blooming or producing any blossoms. Figs were a main staple in the region and without them, the people would go hungry. But it gets worse. To not have any grape produce on the vines would suggest the inability to make wine, which was like water for us in America.

These are not the loss of luxuries but of the very fundamental and basic needs, food and drink. The olive produce growing lean or becoming scarce would further complicate the possibility of survival because olives were used to make oil, one of the most common cooking elements in every household. There's a story in Kings about a widow who could not survive with her sons because there was no oil and Elijah gave her instructions that would make her household profitable again.

Even if the fields stopped yielding their crops and there was no food in the land, and everything had failed, reminding us of the times of the prophet Joel, the prophet would still rejoice in the Lord. If the flocks of sheep were cut off from the fold, lost to wolves and other hunters, still the prophet would not lose heart in the Lord's will. Even if there were no cattle in the stalls and they were all gone, the prophet would still trust in the Lord.

All of these worst case scenarios are outside influences, circumstances that draw our trust in the Lord away from Him. What is your worst case scenario? At what point would you turn away from trusting in the Lord? For the prophet, even the loss of life giving basics and necessities would not keep him from praising the Lord. How far does Satan have to go to keep you from praising the Lord? What comfort will you not be able to live without and would you turn on the Lord?

Some believe every person has a price. What's yours for losing trust in the Lord? Is it something that drives you to the brink of death? Or is it the loss of a luxury you don't even need? Is it the loss of control? Loss of a loved one? What is your worst case scenario? Would you still rejoice in the Lord despite extreme circumstances? This is obviously not a Sunday School question and answer. It is a heart answer.

3:18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will shout with joy in the God of my salvation.

Despite every possible worst case scenario, the prophet does not fail to rejoice in the Lord, to offer up praises to the King of the universe. He trusts in the Lord beyond what can be seen or needed even for living. Our trust in the Lord must go beyond death, for His promises go beyond death. The prophet still turns to the Lord in praise and rejoicing. He shouts with joy to

the Lord because He is the one who has provided salvation. Do we treasure our salvation that much? Is it more precious than our comforts and luxuries? More precious than even the basic necessities of life? The next breath?

3:19 The Lord my God is my strength and He sets my foot like the deer's, and He makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster with stringed instruments.

The Lord is here YHWH, the covenant-keeping God who provides all things and brings joy to all who trust in Him. He is the strength of every believer. The strength and power, the resource of every believer, comes from knowing the Creator and Sustainer of all life and all things. It is in this Lord whom we trust, and our trust is never put to shame or empty.

God always is faithful even in times of want, He takes care of us in miraculous ways. Even in times of despair in which we experience pains and trials in this life, the Lord will work all things out for our good. Just like Job, Habakkuk puts his trust in the Lord of Lords. God is the one who sets his foot like the deer's foot. He is the one who ordains his steps and provides all things for him. Even in captivity the righteous will live by faith in God!

He sets us up even on high places so that we can enjoy Him. The high places referred to are most likely mountain tops. Mountain tops are symbolic of God's blessing and greatness in our lives. We need to enjoy those times and remember them in the valleys or trials of life. Finally, after the song is over, the prophet in the same fashion as most of the beginnings of the Psalms addresses the song that is just written to the choirmaster in the temple to play on stringed instruments. This is our strongest evidence that Habakkuk was trained in the temple cultis. The word used for instruments is a technical term for certain instruments used only in the temple. So this is essentially a song the prophet writes that is like a prayer for temple worship.

Would that we would worship the Lord with such fervor despite our circumstances. Instead, we allow everything around us to control our mood and how much we feel like worshipping God. But the prophet here teaches us a lesson by rejoicing in the Lord despite outer circumstances. We need to become a people who worship the Lord with everything in us despite how we feel and what we perceive to be injustice in our lives. That is a lesson we learn best in the midst of trial and pain.