Title: When Life Doesn't Make Sense

Text: Habakkuk 1–3

Introduction

14th December 2025.

This is a day that will forever be etched in the minds of Australians – and in the annals of Australian history.

The event?

Well – it's none other than the tragic shooting in Bondi Beach. One that claimed the lives of 15 people – including 11 men, 3 women, and a 10-year-old girl.

And while the number of casualties – thankfully! – are way less than that of – say – 9-11 or the Holocaust – it's nonetheless still nonetheless sad, shocking, and disturbing.

Adding to the list of atrocities, brutalities, and monstrosities that have sadly littered the pages of world history.

And there's only one way we can describe these horrific events:

> Evil. Pure evil.

And – brothers and sisters – it is this – the EXISTENCE of evil – the PREVALENCE of evil – the PROBLEM of evil – that have led many a people – both Christians and non-Christians – to question the GOODNESS – the POWER – and perhaps even – the EXISTENCE – of God in this world.

A classic case in point would be that of Scottish philosopher David Hume – who wrote:

> "Epicurus's old questions are yet unanswered. Is [God] willing to prevent evil – but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able – but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"[1]

In a similar vein – Rabbi Harold Kushner – after the death of his son – wrote this in his book – *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

He writes:

> "I can worship a God who hates suffering but cannot eliminate it – more easily than I can worship a God who chooses to make children suffer and die – for whatever exalted reason."[2]

Now – what Hume and Kushner are saying – and they are by no means alone in this! – is that:

- God – if He exists – can EITHER be good – OR – He can be powerful.
- But one thing God can NEVER be – so they say – is BOTH good AND powerful.

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Well – the problem of evil. Or – the question of theodicy.

These are questions that – perhaps! – we ourselves have wrestled with:

> Maybe you've reflected upon some of the atrocities of world history – and you wonder: Why would a good, loving, and all-powerful God allow such evil to exist?

[1] David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1980), Part X, 198.
[2] Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken, 1981), 134.

> Or maybe – at a more personal level: You're the recipient of some misfortune or tragedy. Perhaps it's the death of a loved one. Perhaps it's the unfaithfulness of a spouse. Perhaps it's the loss of a job. Perhaps it's wayward children. Perhaps it's cancer.

Whatever the misfortune may be. Your faith is shaken. Your world is turned upside-down. Doubts creep in. And you ask:

> "God – why is this happening? Where are you in all of these? Why are you silent in my pain?"

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Now – brothers and sisters – if that's you – let me just say that doubts and perplexities about God and His ways are by no means unusual or abnormal in the Christian life.

It has plagued many a saint. And even the strongest of Christians has been assailed by seasons of doubt in their Christian pilgrimage.

- We think of giants of the faith: People like Luther. Spurgeon. Or Lewis.
- Or biblical characters: People like Job. Elijah. Or John the Baptist.

These all struggled with doubt. These all wrestled with God and His ways – at one point or other – in their life.

And that's what we see with Habakkuk in our text – or book – this morning.

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Now – the book of Habakkuk – as you may know – is part of what is known as the Minor Prophets in the Bible.

And they are 'minor' – not because they are less important – but simply because they are shorter in length than that of the Major Prophets. Books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Now – the book of Habakkuk is somewhat unique.

It's unique in that – unlike the other Minor Prophets:

- Habakkuk does not speak to the *people* on behalf of God.
- Rather – he speaks to *God* on behalf of the people.

And the structure of the book is pretty simple:

- In the first two chapters – we have Habakkuk's DIALOGUE with God.
- And then – in the third chapter – we have Habakkuk's PRAYER to God.

And what we see in this book is that of:

- A man – a prophet no less! – who struggled with the problem of evil.
- A man who wrestled with the mysterious ways of God.

And – YET – by the end of the book – we see a man who – although his circumstances have NOT changed – his attitude and perspective have. And:

- He comes out praising God.
- He comes out with a deeper sense of awe and trust in God.

Here's a man who has gone:

- From despair to delight.
- From frustration to faith.
- From turmoil to trust.

And – as such – this little book has much to teach us on what to do:

- When doubts assail us.
- When we cannot make sense of life.
- Or when facing the dreaded ‘dark night’ of the soul.

And the main point that the book of Habakkuk teaches us – I believe – is this:

When we can’t trace God’s hand – we can trust His plan.

And so – without any further ado – let’s walk through the book – and follow Habakkuk on his journey:

- Looking first – at the PERPLEXITIES of faith in chapters 1 and 2.
- And then – at the PRAYER of faith in chapter 3.

So – first – the PERPLEXITIES of faith ...

1. THE PERPLEXITIES OF FAITH (1:1–2:20)

Look at verse 1. The book begins:

“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.”

Now – a bit of context:

Unlike some of the other Minor Prophets – the book of Habakkuk does NOT mention the kings who reigned during the prophet's ministry.

And – as such – we can't be exactly sure when Habakkuk ministered.

However – having said that – based on the contents of the book – we can reasonably postulate that Habakkuk's prophecy most likely took place in the latter half of the 7th-century BC:

- Perhaps sometime between the fall of Assyria to Babylon in 612 BC.
- And Babylon's first invasion of Judah in 597 BC.

And with the rise of Babylon as the new superpower of the Ancient Near East – we can only imagine the political upheaval and turmoil that it would have caused to the surrounding nations. The southern kingdom of Judah notwithstanding.

- And so – EXTERNALLY – it was a time of political unrest and instability.
- But as if that's not bad enough – INTERNALLY – life in Judah was *anything* but pretty.

We see hints of this in Habakkuk's opening words.

And – here – we find his first perplexity.

Perplexity #1

Verses 2-4 – Habakkuk says:

> *"O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes*

forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted."

Now – what we can surmise from Habakkuk's opening lament is that things are NOT looking good in Judah.

The nation is in a state of social, moral, and spiritual decay:

- There's violence.
- There's oppression.
- There's injustice.

And it seems that this has been happening for quite some time now – as evidenced in his opening words – *"O LORD, how long ...?"*

By the way – this has led some scholars to contend that this probably took place in the aftermath of King Josiah's sudden demise in 609 BC.

Now – we all know Josiah. He is a *good* king.

But – as we know the story – in spite of his promising reforms – the nation quickly declined and descended into a state of chaos after his untimely death.

- The moral fabric of society was disintegrating.
- And the nation found itself mired again in a cesspool of idolatry and sin.

Not only were they SPIRITUALLY BANKRUPT – they were also MORALLY CORRUPT.

And Habakkuk – having seen glimpses of revival under Josiah's reign – was DISTURBED – he was DISHEARTENED – he was DISILLUSIONED – by what he was now seeing.

And he had – it seems – been crying out to God to intervene and do something about the widespread depravity that he sees in his beloved nation.

But in spite of that:

- Habakkuk's pleas seem to have fallen on deaf ears.
- His prayers seem to have bounced straight back off the ceiling.

And Habakkuk was PUZZLED. He was PERPLEXED at the seeming silence and indifference of God.

He could not understand how a holy and righteous God would allow such rampant evil and injustice to go unpunished.

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Now – maybe some of you have felt that way before:

Perhaps you witnessed some atrocity in the world or in the community. And:

- You're disturbed.
- You're perplexed.
- You're baffled.

And you wonder:

> "God – if you are so good, loving, and all-powerful – why do you allow such blatant acts of evil to occur? Why don't you act? Why don't you intervene? Why don't you do something?"

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Well – that's EXACTLY what Habakkuk was feeling.

But – friends – what Habakkuk did is instructive. And it's something we ought to do as well.

What we see is that:

- Habakkuk brought his concerns to God.
- He bared his soul to God.
- He was honest before God.

And – note this! – he PERSEVERED in it!

And God – in His grace – *responds*!

Response #1

Verses 5-6:

> *"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own."*

So – in response to Habakkuk's complaint of God's apparent inactivity and indifference in the face of widespread evil in Judah – God tells Habakkuk that:

- He's FAR from inactive.
- He's FAR from indifferent.
- He's FAR from oblivious.

In fact – God has been working behind the scenes of world history – setting in motion events that would address Habakkuk's concerns.

And here – friends – we learn a simple truth. And it is that:

> Even when God seems silent or inactive – He's *not*!

No! God is always acting. Always working. Always in control.

God is saying:

> "Don't you worry – Habakkuk! I've got a plan. In fact – I am doing something so drastic and dramatic that you would not believe it when you hear about it!"

And what's God's plan? What's the unbelievable thing that God would do?

Well – God asks Habakkuk to lift his eyes – and to survey the international scene.

For in answer to Habakkuk's complaint – God is raising up the Chaldeans – (that's another name for the Babylonians) – in judgment against the sin of Judah.

Babylon – the rising superpower of the Ancient Near East:

- These ones will be God's tool – God's instrument – God's agent – to mete out justice against God's people.
- These ones will bear the sword of judgment against Judah.
- These ones will – under King Nebuchadnezzar – invade Judah – and exile God's people into the land of Babylon.

That's God's plan! That's what God is orchestrating behind the scenes!

And that's what we should rest in. Namely – that God is always at work:

- Even when life doesn't make sense.

- Even when we can't see it.

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Now – this – if we think about it – must have come as a surprise to Habakkuk.

In no way – not even in his wildest dreams! – would he have imagined that God would use the Babylonians – of all people! – as the rod of judgment against the wickedness of his people!

For notice how the Babylonians are described – verses 7-11:

> *"They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!"*

Simply put – the Babylonians are by no means guiltless! They are by no means innocent!

No – far from it!

For what we see from these verses is that:

- The Babylonians are autonomous.
- They are a law unto themselves.
- They have a 'might makes right' philosophy.

But not just that!

- They're vicious and ferocious!
- They're ruthless and merciless!
- They're self-reliant and self-sufficient!

And God is going to use these people – yes! – this wicked, immoral, and idolatrous pagan nation! – as a means of judgment against His very own people!

A judgment that came to fruition in 586 BC – when the Babylonians invaded Judah and exiled its people to Babylon.

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Now – as I said – this must have stunned Habakkuk! This was NOT what he had expected!

And to help us appreciate how shocking this must have been – let me transpose it to our context today:

> Perhaps we can say that it's somewhat akin to God saying to us that – in response to our cries to Him about the atrocities and perversities that we see throughout our nation – He is going to raise up terrorist groups to invade and judge the nation.

Now – I wonder how you would feel about that?

Well – my guess is: Probably the same way that Habakkuk felt. In shock and disbelief.

We're probably saying – along with Habakkuk:

> "No way, Yahweh!"

And this leads us to Habakkuk's second perplexity.

Perplexity #2

Look with me at verses 12-13.

In response to what he had just heard – Habakkuk responds:

> *"Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"*

Notice how Habakkuk starts. It's pretty impressive!

Habakkuk begins by listing the attributes and characteristics of God.

He appeals to:

- God's ETERNALITY – *"Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God?"*
- God's SOVEREIGNTY – *"You have ordained them as a judgment."*
- God's STABILITY – He describes God as a Rock.
- God's PURITY – *"You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong."*

In other words:

- Habakkuk is no theological slouch!
- He KNOWS his theology!
- He KNOWS his God!

And YET – he struggles with understanding the WAYS of God!

And herein – I believe – lies a lesson for us. And it is this:

> Knowing theology – while good, important, and essential – doesn't necessarily immunise us from the perplexities of faith. It doesn't mean that we won't experience any doubts or struggles in the faith.

After all – Isaiah 55:8-9 reminds us that:

> God's ways are HIGHER than our ways – and God's thoughts are HIGHER than our thoughts.

And so – it only makes sense that our FINITE minds can't fully comprehend the mysterious ways of an INFINITE God.

And that sums up Habakkuk's perplexity. It sums up his consternation.

Habakkuk struggled to reconcile what he KNOWS about God – with what he HEARS from God.

God's response had raised more questions than it solved.

And so – he asks a rhetorical question in verse 13:

> *"[Given what I know of who you are – namely, a God who is of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong] – why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"*

In other words:

> How can God – a holy and righteous God – use Babylon – a nation more wicked and vile than Judah – to punish His people?

That DOESN'T seem right! That DOESN'T seem fair!

Habakkuk – at this point – is probably thinking along with Abraham:

> *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?"*[3]

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Habakkuk then drives home his point by describing the kind of people the Babylonians are in verses 14-17. Reminding God – in particular – of their INHUMANITY in verse 15 – and of their IDOLATRY in verse 16 – before concluding with yet another rhetorical question in verse 17:

> *"Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?"*

In other words:

- Isn't God going to put a stop to this bitter and impetuous nation?
- Will this wicked nation continue to succeed in obliterating all that comes across their path?

This – clearly – in Habakkuk's mind – is NEITHER right NOR fair!

And so – in chapter 2 verse 1 – Habakkuk puts his gauntlet down. He challenges God for an answer. But he does this not as a HARDENED SKEPTIC – but as an HONEST INQUIRER.

Habakkuk 2 verse 1 – Habakkuk says:

[3] Gen 18:25

> *"I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint."*

And so – Habakkuk has posed his question. He has lodged his complaint. And now – he patiently waits for God to answer.

And God – in His mercy – *does*!

And – it is here – in God's second response to Habakkuk – that we're given an insight into what we are to do when we can't make sense of God and His ways.

Response #2

Look with me at Habakkuk 2 verses 2-3:

> *"And the LORD answered me: 'Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay."*

So – God's going to give Habakkuk a vision about things to come.

And he's to record it so that God's people – both current and future generations – may be instructed and encouraged.

And even though it may seem slow in coming – Habakkuk is exhorted to wait PATIENTLY – and EXPECTANTLY.

For God's plan will most certainly come to pass – ALBEIT at God's appointed time. For God doesn't operate on OUR timetable – but HIS.

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Verses 4 and 5 – God continues:

> *"Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him ... Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples."*

God here reminds Habakkuk of the INCORRIGIBLE PRIDE and INSATIABLE APPETITE of Babylon. Thus – warning Habakkuk of things to come for him and his people when God's judgment – in the form of the Babylonians – comes upon them.

Simply put – the people of Judah are in for a rough ride!

But – notice importantly! – that nestled in the midst of this description of the Babylonians – stands a key phrase. One that instructs God's people on HOW they ought to live in such trying and tumultuous times.

In fact – so significant is this phrase that it's quoted THREE times in the New Testament.

And it's a phrase that became the catalyst – the catchword – the buzzword – of the Protestant Reformation.

You know the phrase. And you've probably noticed that I skipped over it when reading the verses.

Here's the phrase – verse 4:

> *"But the righteous shall live by his faith."*

Simply put – as God's people:

- We're to trust God!
- We're to live by faith!

Now – I know that this may sound cliché. BUT – it's God's Word!

That's God's counsel to Habakkuk and His people. To you and to me.

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So – what God – in essence – is saying is that:

> "Yes – things are going to get tough. Life would not be easy. And the future may seem bleak. But My people – those who are righteous – will live by faith. They will trust in Me."

Now – as mentioned – this phrase is quoted *three* times in the New Testament.

The apostle Paul uses it in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 as the biblical foundation for the gospel of justification by faith.

That is – one is justified – one is made right with God – NOT by works – BUT by grace alone – through faith alone – in Christ alone.

But faith – true saving faith – as we know – is not just a one-time event – but an ongoing lifestyle:

- It's a faith that perseveres.
- It's a faith that demonstrates itself in faithfulness.

And it is in the book of Hebrews that we see this aspect of faith being highlighted.

For the book of Hebrews – similar to that of Habakkuk – addresses the theme of patient endurance in suffering.

In fact – the quotation in Hebrews has a couple of close connections with what we find in Habakkuk.

Let me read Hebrews 10:37-38. It says:

> *"For, 'Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay ..."*

Now – you probably hear echoes of Habakkuk 2:3 – which says:

> *"For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay."*

So – both passages have to do with waiting – expectant waiting – for something that's sure to come!

And – then – Hebrews 10:38 – citing Habakkuk 2:4 – continues:

> *"... but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."*

In other words – the author of Hebrews is exhorting his readers:

- Not to shrink back in the face of persecution or trouble.
- But to continue living by faith.
- To continue trusting God.

That's how the righteous are to live!

And that's *exactly* what God is exhorting Habakkuk and His people to do – <u>EVEN</u> when things around them seem hopeless:

- They are to trust God.

- They are to live by faith.
- They are to remain faithful to God.

Now – this – of course! – is easier said than done!

For how many of you know that it is hard to trust ...

- When the going gets tough?
- When things don't seem to make sense?
- When we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel?

But it's something that we must learn – and indeed – are commanded – to do:

- We MUST trust God.
- We MUST take God at His word.
- We MUST lean on His promises.

This is how those who are righteous – those who are God's people – must live:

We are to walk by faith – and not by sight.

For – friends – the truth is that we may not always understand the ways of God.

In fact:

- We're not always called to understand.
- But to trust.

And so – the question then becomes:

- Will we trust God – EVEN when life doesn't make sense?
- Will we trust God's plan – EVEN when we can't trace His hand?

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Now – as if to give substance to what He is calling Habakkuk and His people to do – God goes on – in verses 6 to 20 – which we won't read for the sake of time – to assure them of what He will do:

- God WILL judge the Babylonians!
- God WILL hold them accountable for their sins!

And God does this – God promises to judge the Babylonians – by means of five woes.

- Five woes that make up a taunt song against the Babylonians.
- Five woes that spell the certain defeat of the Babylonians.

Habakkuk can rest assured that the Judge of all the earth will indeed do what is right!

- Babylon WILL fall!
- They WILL be brought low!
- God WILL hold them accountable in His time!

And this – as we know – was fulfilled in 539 BC – when the Persians – under King Cyrus – defeated the Babylonians – replaced them as the new superpower – and brought God's people back into the Land.

But all of that – of course! – is still *future* for Habakkuk.

In the meantime:

- He'll have to live by faith.
- He'll have to wait patiently.
- He'll have to take God at His word.

And so – that's God's word to Habakkuk. And – by extension – to us.

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Now – having seen THE PERPLEXITIES OF FAITH in chapters 1 and 2 – we come now to THE PRAYER OF FAITH in chapter 3.

And – here – we see a very different Habakkuk. For here – as mentioned – we see a man who has gone:

- From despair to delight.
- From frustration to faith.
- From turmoil to trust.

So – let's briefly examine Habakkuk PRAYER OF FAITH – and draw out some lessons that we can learn for our own walk with God ...

2. THE PRAYER OF FAITH (3:1-18)

Now – for the sake of simplicity – Habakkuk's prayer can be broken up into three segments:

- A REQUEST.
- A RECOUNTING.
- And – a REJOICING.

A Request

First – the REQUEST.

Look with me at verse 2:

> *"O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear.*
> *In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known;*
> *in wrath remember mercy."*

So – in light of what he knows is to come for Judah – namely – judgment in the form of the Babylonians – Habakkuk prays for God's intervention:

- He prays for God to REVIVE and to REVEAL His work of redemption.
- He prays for God – in the midst of His wrath – to REMEMBER mercy.

What a wonderful prayer!

And – of course! – the ultimate culmination, manifestation, and revelation of God remembering mercy in wrath is found supremely in the cross of Christ – where Jesus – the sinless Saviour – died in the place of sinners such as us – shielding us from the wrath of God.

And this is something that – as Christians – we will spend eternity praising God for!

A Recounting

Well – having put forth his REQUEST – Habakkuk next RECOUNTS – and REFLECTS upon – God's power and deeds.

We see this in verses 3-15.

Now – I won't read it – but most scholars rightly point out that this passage is filled with imagery drawn from God's past dealings with Israel:

- Both in the Exodus – (think plagues and pestilences).
- And in the Conquest of the Land – (think the sun standing still).

And in all of this – there's one motif that shines forth. And that's the motif of:

God the Divine Warrior.

God is the omnipotent One who fights for – and on behalf of – His people!

He is:

- Their Redeemer!
- Their Saviour!
- Their Deliverer!

And God's faithfulness in delivering His people is seen throughout the history of Israel.

And that – importantly! – is what Habakkuk RECOUNTS and REFLECTS upon in the midst of his present crisis.

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Now – notice – finally – where this RECOUNTING and REFLECTING – leads Habakkuk:

It leads him to a place of RESTING – and REJOICING – in God.

A Rejoicing

Verse 16 – Habakkuk says:

> *"I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me."*

So – Habakkuk – having heard of what is to come – namely, the invasion by Babylon and the exile of Judah – responds the way anyone would: With fear, trembling, and dread.

But notice:

- Habakkuk doesn't stop there!
- He doesn't throw a pity-party!
- He doesn't say – "Woe is me!"

No! What does he do?

He continues with an attitude of trust and rest.

He says:

> *"Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us."*

In other words – he's saying:

> "Yes – times are going to get tumultuous. But I will trust – I will rest – in God my Saviour. I will wait for Him – the Divine Warrior – to do what He has promised. To bring justice to bear upon the Babylonians."

And that's what Habakkuk resolves to do:

- To <u>WAIT</u> on God's timing.
- And to <u>REST</u> in God's promises.

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Again – friends – this is easier said than done.

For how often do we want things done in OUR way – and according to OUR timetable?

But – as we've seen – and have probably experienced:

God DOESN'T operate on OUR timetable – but HIS.

And so – the question we need to ask ourselves is this:

Will we trust God in everything?

- EVEN if things do not make sense?
- EVEN if we may not see the fulfilment of His promises in our lifetime?

As difficult as it may be – we trust that WHATEVER our God ordains is right?

That – friends – is the question! That's the challenge!

And that's EXACTLY what Habakkuk resolves to do. Even though he doesn't know if he will live to see the fulfilment of the prophecy.

In fact – we're not sure if he did!

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Now – what comes next is one of the most amazing – poetic – and faith-filled – verses in the Bible.

Verses 17 to 18:

> *"Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from*

> *the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation."*

Friends – what we see here in the conclusion of Habakkuk's prayer is nothing but amazing! It's nothing but inspiring!

For what we see here is a resolve – a deep-seated resolve – a faith-filled resolve – to rejoice REGARDLESS of the circumstances.

Come what may – Habakkuk resolves to REJOICE in His Savior!

In fact – given the agrarian culture in which Habakkuk lived – the scenario depicted in verse 17 is nothing short of extreme!

For here – Habakkuk describes what must be the worst situation imaginable in such a society.

It's almost as if Habakkuk is saying:

> "Even if I experience barrenness. Even if all security is stripped away. Even if all hope seems lost. Yet – even then – I will hope! I will celebrate! I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!"

How amazing!

Friends – if this is not a picture of the righteous living by faith – then I don't know what is!

For here – we have a picture of absolute trust, confidence, and rest in God.

It's somewhat akin to Job's statement in Job 13:15 – where he says:

> *"Though he slay me – I will hope in him."*

What confidence! What trust! What rest!

Simply put – Habakkuk exemplifies what William Cowper's famous hymn – *"God Moves in a Mysterious Way"* – exhorts us to do. Namely – to:

> "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense – but trust Him for His grace. [For] Behind a frowning providence – He hides a smiling face."

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Now – the all-important question we need to ask at this juncture is this:

> How did Habakkuk get to this point of solid, unshakable faith?

After all – his circumstances have not changed. In fact – they're about to get worse!

So – what caused this change?

Well – as we reflect upon the text – there can only be one answer:

> Habakkuk's gaze has now been lifted from his circumstances – to the God of his circumstances.

He now has a Godward, God-saturated, and God-besotted focus!

He knows that God is great – and that God is good.

This much is hinted at in verse 19 – where he makes this confession of faith – declaring:

> *"GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places."*

Habakkuk knows – and is convinced that – come what may – God is his strength – and will grant him grace to surmount all obstacles.

He knows that – come what may:

- God WILL keep him.
- God WILL sustain him.
- God WILL hold him fast.

And so – even though he cannot trace God's hand – Habakkuk commits himself to find rest in the God who holds all things in His hand – and who works all things according to His plan.

So – brothers and sisters – to sum up: What we see in chapter 3 is this.

What we see is that:

> Habakkuk's REFLECTION on God's faithfulness to His people in the past – has led him to a CONFESSION of faith in God for the future.

And this – I believe! – is instructive!

For what is true of Habakkuk – is also true of us:

- Yes – the world – with its many atrocities, perversities, and monstrosities – may seem out of control.
- Yes – life may have its fair share of challenges and setbacks – whether in the form of suffering, sickness, or death.
- And yes – God may seem silent – even indifferent – through it all.

But – friends – what Habakkuk teaches us is that we can rest in the fact that God – our sovereign King – is in control – and will do what is right.

- God will right all wrongs.
- He will cause all things to work together for the good of those who love Him.[4]
- And He will one day – as Habakkuk 2:14 reminds us – cause the earth to be filled with the knowledge of His glory – as the waters cover the sea.

And that's a day – a *glorious* day:

- Where we will see God face-to-face.
- Where God will wipe every tear from our eyes.
- And where sin, pain, and death will be no more.

For the former things have passed away.[5]

That – friends – is where all history is heading!

And that's what the book of Habakkuk is calling us to do. Namely:

To trust God – and to rest in His plan.

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And the thing is this:

As Christians living <u>THIS SIDE</u> of the cross – we have <u>MUCH MORE REASON</u> than Habakkuk ever did – to trust and rest in God.

For:

- If Habakkuk – when he reflected upon God's past acts of deliverance of His people in the Exodus – found hope, rest, and even joy in God.

[4] Romans 8:29
[5] Revelation 21:3-4

- HOW MUCH MORE should we – as Christians living this side of the cross – find hope, rest, and joy in God – when we reflect upon what God has done for us in Christ?

For God's deliverance of His people in the Exodus is but a FORESHADOW of the GREATER deliverance – the ULTIMATE deliverance – that we have in Christ.

For there – at the cross of Christ:

- God's wrath and mercy meet.
- God used what is the MOST ATROCIOUS of evils – namely, the death of His Son – to accomplish what is the MOST AMAZING of ends – the salvation of sinners.

And therefore – Paul can emphatically say in Romans 8:32:

> *"He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all – how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?"*

That – brothers and sisters – is the CERTAINTY that we have in Christ!

And that's why we – of all people! – have reason to trust, hope, and even rejoice:

- No matter what we may be facing in life.
- No matter the perplexities of life.

So – as we close – let me just say this. For the last thing I want is to downplay or diminish the pain we may face in life.

- Yes – it may not be easy.
- Yes – it may be difficult.
- Yes – it may even be overwhelming.

But what the book of Habakkuk teaches us – if anything – is that:

When we CAN'T trace God's hand – we CAN trust His plan.

And so – may we – by the grace of God – and with the Spirit's help – lift our eyes:

- From our circumstances.
- To the God of our circumstances.

And as we gaze upon Him and His beauty – may our hearts be satisfied – and find rest in Him. In His goodness. And in His greatness.

Let us pray.

Trusting God in Tumultuous Times
(Habakkuk 1–3)

Main Point: When we can't trace God's hand – we can trust His plan.

General Questions:

1. Read Habakkuk 1:2-4.
    a. What is Habakkuk lamenting about?
    b. Using your own words, describe what Habakkuk must be feeling at this point.

2. Read Habakkuk 1:5-11.
    a. How does God respond to Habakkuk's lament?
    b. What do you find amazing about God's response? What does it teach you about God and His ways?
    c. How would you feel if you were in the shoes (or sandals!) of Habakkuk?

3. Read Habakkuk 1:12–2:1.
    a. How does Habakkuk respond to what he hears from God?
    b. Using your own words, summarise Habakkuk's complaints in a single sentence (or question).
    c. What do you think is the significance of Habakkuk appealing to God's attributes and characteristics in verses 12-13?

4. Read Habakkuk 2:2-20.
    a. Read verses 2-3.
        i. What is God's challenge to Habakkuk?
        ii. What does it teach us about God and His ways?
    b. Read verses 4-5.
        i. Who are the two groups of people God compares in these verses?
        ii. What is God's exhortation to Habakkuk and His people in these verses?

iii. What is the significance of the author of Hebrews quoting Habakkuk 2:3-4 in Hebrews 10:37-38 – especially given the historical context of the book Hebrews?
iv. How does God's exhortation apply to the way we ought to live – especially in difficult and challenging times?

c. Read verses 6-20.
i. What is God seeking to teach Habakkuk in these verses?
ii. What do these verses teach us about God?
iii. What do you think is the significance of verse 20 – especially in light of the five woes pronounced upon the Babylonians?

5. Read Habakkuk 3:1-19.
a. Read verses 1-15.
i. What do you think Habakkuk is doing in these verses?
ii. What can we learn from Habakkuk?
b. Read verses 16-19.
i. What mental image of Habakkuk do we get from these verses (as compared to what we see in the first two chapters)?
ii. What do you find amazing about Habakkuk's resolution in these verses?
iii. What – in your view – caused this dramatic change in attitude / outlook?
iv. What can we learn from this that we can apply in our own lives?

Application Questions:

1. Have you ever experienced times when you felt helpless and perplexed by your circumstances? Share.

2. What are some lessons you can learn from Habakkuk's honesty with God that you can apply in your own walk with God?

3. Do you find it hard to reconcile the idea of a holy and just God using a sinful nation like Babylon to fulfil His plans and purposes? Why or why not?

4. Do you find it easy to trust God even when things seem out of control / when life is challenging / when undergoing suffering of some sort? Why or why not?

5. Have you ever experienced God turning an unfortunate or difficult event around for your good – or to bring about something great? Share what you learned from this experience.

6. How do you think we can cultivate a heart and resolve like that of Habakkuk in Habakkuk 3:16-19?

7. How would you counsel a fellow Christian who might be struggling with – or is overwhelmed by – the circumstances of life – or who is questioning why God allows bad things to happen in their life?

8. Why do you think God, in His wisdom, included the book of Habakkuk in the Bible? What are some purposes of the book – and what are some lessons we can learn from it?