

I. **Introduction**

A. If you follow the news at all, then you are aware that we are living in what some are calling a time of “economic crisis.”

1. As we view the world around us, we can certainly see a nation that is in the midst of economic chaos and fear.
 - a. We go to the grocery store, and we see price increases on many of our daily necessities.
 - b. We turn on the news and we see:
 - (1) Businesses laying off workers by the thousands.
 - (2) Factories that have been the backbone of communities for generations suddenly closing their doors.
2. There are real problems facing real people.
 - a. These problems are affecting us right here in Parsons, Tennessee.
 - (1) We see the rising costs of food, and we are afraid, because we have to eat.
 - (2) We see the falling numbers on Wall Street, and we are afraid, because it represents drops in our retirement plans.
 - (3) We see the falling prices on housing, and we are afraid, because for many of us, our house is the biggest investment we have.
 - b. We are afraid, because these are problems that affect us, they affect our families, and they affect our friends.
3. So, we worry and wonder what we are going to do.

B. As we consider the struggles that are facing our nation, I want us to take a few moments to consider **Habakkuk 3:16-19**.

¹⁶ When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at the voice; Rottenness entered my bones; And I trembled in myself, That I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, He will invade them with his troops. ¹⁷ Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be

on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - ¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.

(Habakkuk 3:16-19 NKJV)

II. **The Key Point**

- A. The book of Habakkuk paints for us a picture of a man who has been brought into the presence of God and conversed with Him.
 1. In this conversation, he has listened to the righteous judgment of God.
 2. His reaction upon hearing these words is to say:
 - a. “I was afraid!”
 - b. “I trembled to know what was to come upon us - to know what we are facing, and to know that this is the righteous judgment of God!”
 3. There was fear here - fear for what was about to befall the people of Judah.
- B. What I want us to key in on tonight is the mind-set that came out of Habakkuk’s fear here - how Habakkuk reacted to his distress:
 1. Habakkuk says:
 - a. Though the fig tree may not blossom.
 - b. Though there be no fruit upon the vines.
 - c. Though the olive may fail.
 - d. Though the fields may bear no fruit.
 - e. Though there be no flocks of sheep.
 - f. Though there be no herds in the stalls.
 2. In other words, Habakkuk is saying that even if we are faced with total economic collapse!
 - a. When you read these things, these were the cash crops of Judah.

- b. The Jews were dependent upon these things for their very survival.
 - (1) They needed grapes for wine to drink.
 - (2) They needed olives for oil to be used in lamps, cooking, and healing the sick.
 - (3) They needed the figs and fruit of the fields to eat.
 - (4) They needed the flocks and the herds.
- c. These things represented the whole of Judah's economy!
- 3. Notice Habakkuk's attitude as he says, "But even if we were to lose everything, if our entire economic system was to completely come crashing down upon our heads and we had nothing left - what will be **my** response to such chaos?"
- C. Habakkuk says, **Habakkuk 3:18-19**:
 - 1. I will still rejoice in my God!
 - 2. I will still have joy in the God of my salvation!
 - 3. The Lord God is my strength!
 - a. He will make my feet like the feet of the deer.
 - b. He will make my feet to walk upon the high places.
- D. What is Habakkuk saying here?
 - 1. He is saying that even if everything crumbles around me and there is no hope whatsoever, I will still find joy in my God - because my God is a God of salvation!
 - a. I will find a reason to have joy in my life.
 - b. I will find a reason to be happy, a reason to be content.
 - c. That reason is: I trust in my God!
 - d. My God is a God of salvation - a God of deliverance.
 - 2. When we read this passage, we have a powerful lesson.
 - a. It is a lesson that is so relevant for our circumstances today.
 - (1) I get so tired of hearing people argue that the Bible is not relevant for the 21st century.
 - (2) I get tired of people who accuse the Bible of being

- outdated and unsuited for the modern world and modern problems.
- b. Brethren, this passage is so relevant for the problems that we are facing today.
 - (1) It's message ought to call out to us and inspire us.
 - (2) It ought to encourage us to place the same confidence in God that Habakkuk shows in his own tragic circumstances.
 - (a) Habakkuk says, "I was afraid!"
 - (b) "But, I came to understand that, though all prosperity be taken away from me (though I be left with nothing), I will yet rejoice in my God - because my God is a God of salvation."
- E. As we consider this lesson, I want us to note some things about the context of what is taking place here.

III. Points to Consider

A. **Judah's suffering was a promised reality.**

- 1. Habakkuk is not speaking in hypothetical terms here.
 - a. This is not a case where Habakkuk is sitting at the table, taking his ease, surrounded by comfort and prosperity.
 - b. This is not some idle speculation where Habakkuk in his boredom contemplates, "Well, what if...?"
 - (1) Well, what if I did lose everything?
 - (2) I am sure that if it ever happened then I would still be faithful to God.
 - c. This is a reality!
 - (1) God has already promised that these things were going to happen.
 - (2) The picture that God paints for Habakkuk is so grim and dark that Habakkuk tells us that he trembled in his bones upon hearing it.

2. God had promised major destruction across the land of Judah.
 - a. Going back to **Habakkuk 1**, Habakkuk cries out to God, asking why God would permit the violence, wickedness, and abuse of justice to continue in Jerusalem.
 - b. In response to his plea, God replies in **Habakkuk 1:5-11**:
“⁵ Look among the nations and watch - Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. ⁶ For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. ⁷ They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. ⁸ Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. ⁹ They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. ¹⁰ They scoff at kings, And princes are scorned by them. They deride every stronghold, For they heap up earthen mounds and seize it. ¹¹ Then his mind changes, and he transgresses; He commits offense, Ascribing this power to his god.” (**Habakkuk 1:5-11** NKJV)
 - (1) Habakkuk cries out to God, “How long?”
 - (a) How long will You allow this wickedness to continue in this land?
 - (b) How long will You allow Your justice to be perverted?
 - (2) God replies, “I will not allow it to continue!”
 - (a) Even now, I am preparing a mighty army (the Chaldeans) to sweep across the land of Judah and bring forth my punishment against her for her sins.
 - (b) This army will sweep across nations, seeking whom they can conquer.

- (c) They will be:
 - i) Terrible and dreadful.
 - ii) Swift and strong.
 - (d) They will be filled with violence, and they will fear no one.
 - (3) God is preparing an invading army to punish Judah for her sins.
 - (a) This army would bring violence and destruction against Jerusalem and Judah.
 - (b) They would take the people captive and ignore the dignity of their kings.
 - (c) God says that the destruction will be so terrible that Habakkuk would not believe it even if God told it to him.
 - (d) Notice (**1:5**), God tells Habakkuk that this invasion and destruction would take place in Habakkuk’s lifetime - “*For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe....*”
 - i) This is going to happen during Habakkuk’s lifetime!
 - ii) He would live to see this terrible destruction!
3. Brethren, we need to understand that when Habakkuk talks about this total destruction (a time when he would be left with nothing), Habakkuk is not talking about something that is *hypothetical* - “Oh, I’m sure that if it ever did happen I would still remain faithful....”
 - a. This is a promised reality!
 - (1) This will happen!
 - (2) God has spoken, and He has said:
 - (a) I am raising up an army.
 - (b) They will sweep across the land.
 - (c) They will leave only destruction in their path.

- (d) The people will be left without!
- (3) That is what happened.
 - (a) The Chaldeans were a part of Babylon.
 - (b) They were a people that God raised up and brought to power, so that they might punish Judah for her sins.
- b. When we look at the problems that we are facing today, we need to see that:
 - (1) First of all, some of these problems are real.
 - (a) There are real economic problems taking place in our nation.
 - (b) They are problems that are effecting some of us today.
 - i) Some of us are struggling.
 - ii) It is tough.
 - iii) We are having to make some tough decisions as a result of it.
 - (2) But, we have not yet reached the bottom.
 - (a) I know that there are many who fear that the worst is yet to come.
 - (b) But, that is just hypothetical.
 - (c) We do not know what is going to happen.
- c. Habakkuk was not faced with the luxury of hoping that things would get better.
 - (1) God had already said that this destruction will come.
 - (2) It will come in Habakkuk's lifetime!
 - (3) Habakkuk is not making some vain boast.
 - (a) He has seen a vision of the destruction to come.
 - (b) Yet, he still says, "I will find joy in my Lord."
 - (4) Habakkuk understood what it meant to face true economic hardship.
 - (5) Yet, it just strengthened his resolve to trust in God.

B. Judah's suffering was a judgment from God.

- 1. Going back to **Habakkuk 1:2-4**, Habakkuk cries out to God: "2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' And You will not save. 3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. 4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds."
- 2. God replies, **Habakkuk 1:5-6a**, "Look among the nations and watch - Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans...."
 - a. Habakkuk cries out to God, "How long will you allow this wickedness to continue?"
 - (1) They are sinful.
 - (2) They plunder and bring violence.
 - (3) They have corrupted your justice, so that the law is powerless to protect the people.
 - b. These people are involved in gross sinfulness, and Habakkuk is crying out to God, "Why? Why do you allow this to continue and the righteous to suffer?"
 - c. God says, "I'm not!"
 - (1) Judgment is coming!
 - (2) I have seen what is taking place, and you just watch!
 - (3) You have never seen the likes of the judgment that I am about to bring!
 - (4) This destruction that Habakkuk saw is a judgment against Judah for the wickedness that they have committed.
- 3. In my lifetime, I have listened as people in this nation have asked some of the questions that Habakkuk asks in this passage.

- a. Why does God sit back and watch as a fourth state legalizes homosexual marriage this past month?
 - b. Why does God sit back and watch as countless innocent babies are aborted because of our “freedom to choose”?
 - c. Why does God sit back and watch as government officials continue to commit some of the most corrupt and immoral acts imaginable?
 - d. Why does God allow these things to continue?
4. Then, I think back to God’s response to Habakkuk, when God essentially says, “I don’t.”
- a. God sees, and God passes His judgment.
 - b. Those who persist in this wickedness will face a wrath that is unimaginable.
 - c. No nation stands forever.
 - (1) When a nation persists in wickedness and immorality, they will eventually fall.
 - (2) Brethren, we cannot make the mistake of assuming that we live in such a great nation that God is always going to love us, and we always be a powerful nation on the earth.
 - (a) The Babylonians were a great and mighty empire - but, today they are no more.
 - (b) The Medes and Persians were replaced by the Greeks, who in turn, were replaced by the Romans.
 - (c) The Romans thought they were so great that they proclaimed their Caesars as gods!
 - (d) Yet, where are they today? They, too, are no more.
 - (3) No nation is so mighty that it will stand forever.
 - d. God sees the wickedness of the people, and He passes judgment against them.

- C. **Judah’s suffering was to *turn hearts back to God*.**
1. In **Habakkuk 2**, God presents His case to Habakkuk for why He was destroying Judah.
 - a. He emphasizes the terror of His judgment and the justice of His judgment.
 - b. He particularly addresses their idolatry - how they worship the image rather than the Creator.
 2. Then, in **Habakkuk 2:20**, God says, “**But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.**”
 - a. Essentially, God is pointing out to Habakkuk, number one, His majesty.
 - (1) God is still in His holy temple!
 - (a) God is great, and He is in control.
 - (b) He still reigns over the earth.
 - (c) He still has the power and the authority to pass His judgments.
 - (2) A part of this judgment is to show the world that our God is a great and awesome God!
 - (a) God says in **Habakkuk 2:14**, “**For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.**”
 - (b) God wants the world to know Him - to know His awesome power.
 - (c) The point of this passage is to show us, number one, the glory and majesty of God.
 - b. Secondly, this passage is written so that we might understand that we ought to be in awe of Him!
 - (1) When you look at Habakkuk’s response to God’s word, we read, “**When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at the voice; Rottenness entered my bones; And I trembled in myself, That I might rest in the day of trouble.**” (**Habakkuk 3:16**)

- (2) He says, "When I heard God's judgment, I was afraid!"
 - (3) We ought to be silent before our God!
 - (a) The idea of this silence in the Old Testament is reverence - to understand that when God speaks, we listen!
 - i) We respect.
 - ii) We respond - just as Habakkuk responds.
 - a) By being afraid.
 - b) But, by being moved to a greater faith in God
3. Brethren, the real question about the current economic struggles is not, "How am I going to make it financially?"
- a. The real question is, "How will this turmoil shape my relationship with God?"
 - (1) Will I turn in ever more upon myself and seek to prosper myself?
 - (2) Will I see this as an opportunity to increase my faith in God - to put my trust in Him and to rejoice in Him?
 - b. Let me tell you, that our God is still a God of salvation.
 - (1) Whatever chaos may come today or tomorrow, there is a day coming when the child of God shall truly become rich - when he enters into heaven to enjoy the rewards that await him there.
 - (2) ¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills. (Habakkuk 3:18-19 NKJV)