

Dear Friends in Christ,

Some years ago a member who was a college student at the time, confessed that she walked out of one of her classes. The reason she walked out was that the professor showed a pornographic movie to the class. His excuse was that it was teaching them something about what our society views as truth. She was sickened and so walked out.

You may not be aware of it but our country moved away from rationalism, man and woman are the measure of all things, to the New Age movement which taught that we are all gods and included a worship of spirits and angels. After that our country moved into the general belief that truth is relative. In other words, whatever you believe is true. This allows for some college professors to show pornographic movies and pass it off as a certain kind of truth.

In all of this humanism, paganism and immorality, the Christian cries out, *“Where are you Lord? Where is justice and truth?”* At times it seems that the Lord is doing nothing. He is silent. However, the Lord promises in the Bible to act. When he finally does we are dumbfounded. He allows a religious entity like the Muslims to arise and become influential. He allows some groups of Muslims to carry out Jihad. As result terror and violence to spread across the globe. We cry out, *“Lord! The cure is worse than the disease!”*

Welcome to the prophet Habakkuk’s world. Now you know something about a man whom we know little about. He likely spoke after the reign of good King Josiah, 609-605 B.C. He had to carry the heavy burden of the prophecy of punishment and destruction of God’s people who had turned from the Lord to violence and injustice. God’s people had turned into idolatrous unbelievers. The prophet brought comfort and direction for those still in the faith. Things would change in the future after the day of punishment. They were to have faith and hold on. So we have this word of God as we live through similar times, **“The Righteous Will Live by Faith.”**

1. The Righteous receive the Lord’s word.

The book of Habakkuk is basically a dialogue or talk between Habakkuk and the LORD. That is in chapters one and two. Chapter three closes with a psalm of praise. In chapter one Habakkuk is expressing the cries and pleas of the believers to the Lord and we have the Lord’s response.

A. I will re-read verses two and three, **“2 How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Why do you tolerate wrong? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? 3 Why do you make me look at injustice? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.”**

Everywhere that Habakkuk and the believers looked they saw violence and injustice. It was among the rich. It was among the poor.

This is not the only place in Scripture where you have this kind of prayer. In Psalm 73 Asaph moans about the wicked, **“They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.”** (5,6) Jeremiah makes a similar complaint early on in his book. Even in the book of Revelation the saints in heaven who have martyred cry out, **“How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?”** (Revelation 6:10)

Habakkuk and the believers were distressed because it didn't seem the LORD was listening or answering their cries for justice. We at times feel the same way.

B. Good news is found in the first verse of Habakkuk's book. It says, **“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received.”**

1. The Lord heard the sincere prayer of his people and he would not remain silent. He answered in an oracle or prophecy. The message was a heavy one, but it was an answer from a gracious God who cares.

Today the Lord speaks to our prayers and our fears in the Bible. While he does not necessarily give specific answers to our questions, he does bring peace to our souls. He tells us that he is acting in love and he is doing what is best for the salvation of his people. He strengthens us for the journey ahead.

When you are troubled by the headlines and by your personal experiences. Stay home, turn off the news and open your Bible. There we hear of the Lord's love for us, especially in Jesus, our Savior and we hear of his promise to work things out.

2. God answered Habakkuk and other's prayers about violence and injustice amongst the Jewish people. He would punish them. He would bring justice. He informs Habakkuk in verses 5-11 that he will send the Babylonians to do this. The prophet was horrified. The Babylonians were violent pagans. The “cure” was worse than the disease. In verses 12-17 he asks how a holy Lord could use greater evil to punish a lesser evil? If the Lord uses Muslim terrorists, Russians or Chinese to punish America, we would voice the same complaint.

2. The Righteous watch with patience.

So Habakkuk objected to the Lord's method's. What would Habakkuk and the believers of his day do? We find out in chapter 2:1: **"I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint."**

A. Habakkuk will continue his role as a prophet. This means he also has to play the role of a "watchman."

1. Israel's watchmen were normally soldiers who stood on the gigantic walls of the city. It was their job to watch for people who were approaching the city. If it was a messenger, they would alert the king. If it was an invading army, they would sound the alarm.

The prophets were the spiritual watchmen. They watched for signs of the coming Savior. They watched for messages from the Lord. The prophets then had the work of preaching to the people regularly so they remembered to watch for the Savior and so they had the Lord's words on their hearts and minds.

2. When watchmen stood watching on the walls of the city all night, it may have been an ideal time to pray. Habakkuk as the spiritual watchmen prayed for the people. His words in this book are all prayers to the Lord.

B. This was Habakkuk's response the crises of his day. He would wait patiently for the Lord to respond. However, he was doing something while he waited. He was caring out the role that the Lord had given him. He was a shepherd of God's people and he worked at being the best shepherd.

This is exactly how the Lord wants you and me to live in these times. We wait patiently for the Lord to fulfill his plan of salvation. In the mean time while we wait do the things the Lord wants us to do. We watch Scripture that is we read, hear and learn it. The word causes us to grow in knowledge of the Lord and in faith. We also pray. We pray for ourselves, our family, our church family and our world. Then we live our faith by caring out our vocation and the roles God has given us. This is how we watch and wait.

3. The Righteous are sure of the end.

We are not told how long it took for the Lord to respond to Habakkuk's second prayer about using evil to punish evil. The Lord does respond.

A. He tells Habakkuk to write down the revelation and make it public.

1. What the Lord is about to tell him is plain. Judgement was coming on Jerusalem and Judah in the form of the Babylonians and the people needed to repent of their sins.

Today we would put it this way, *“Judgement Day is coming. The world, including you and me, needs to repent of its sins.”* One of our sins is that we worry and complain about evil, instead of trusting in the Lord. God had promised Israel forgiveness in the coming Savior. You and I know that Jesus came. God’s Son paid for all evil with his suffering and death at the cross. This is the plain message that is to be shared with the world.

2. When the Lord says write it down, he actually seems to be saying, **“Put this message of judgement and forgiveness on big bill boards, so that even someone running by can read it.”** Or the Lord may have meant what our latest English Bible says, **“Write it down and run with it.”** Either way the message is clear: share the message with the people. Today we would say, *“Share it with the world.”*

B. At this point we may say, *“The Lord really hasn’t said why he uses evil to punish evil.”* However, he does offer a comfort. Evil will be punished.

1. He tells Habakkuk, *“The prophecy about judgement will not be fulfilled until the appointed time, but it will not prove false. Even though it takes a while it will come. When it comes, there won’t be any delay.”*

2. We have fulfillments to strengthen our faith. We know from history that the Babylonians did come and eventually destroyed Jerusalem. Later on as the Lord promised in chapter 2 the Babylonians were punished. The remnant of God’s people returned as he also predicted. Believers waited for a long time for the Savior to come, but in the fullness of time he was born. At just the right time Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. So at the right time Jesus will return and defeat evil for the last time and bring us to heaven.

C. In the meantime the Lord says, **“The righteous will live by faith.”** We live trusting that we are forgiven and Judgment Day is mere formality for us. We trust that even as the world is in chaos our job is to live for Jesus and to share him. To help us focus, we keep ourselves in the word of God.

Conclusion: The Lord never does tell us why he allows the wicked to prosper and one evil regime after another to rise up. What he does tell us is much more satisfying. The Lord is in control. He will keep his word. He will save us. So he says, *“My dear child trust me. Live according to that trust.”*

Amen.