

August 17, 2003 by Steve Brandon



Does Your God Do This? (Part 3)

Habakkuk 3

1. "God, where are You?" (1:1-4)
2. "I am Raising Up the Wicked." (1:5-11)
3. "God, how can You?" (1:12-2:1)
4. "I will Judge the Wicked." (2:2-20)
5. God, I will Fear You! (3:1-19)
 1. Pray for mercy (3:2)
 2. Think about God (3:3-15)
 3. Resolves to worship (3:16-19)

I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Habakkuk. For the past two weeks, we have been looking at the message of this book, examining a chapter each week. This morning we will finish our look at this great prophet of the Old Testament by expositing the third chapter. The reason we have turned to Habakkuk in recent weeks is because of the doctrinal issues that came to our attention during our study of Matthew 11. In Matthew 11, Jesus raised the issues of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Jesus cursed the unbelieving cities because of their refusal to repent (Matt. 11:21-24), thus demonstrating that they are responsible for their sin. But Jesus also praised the Father who was pleased to hide and reveal the truth as He desired (Matt. 11:25-27), thus demonstrating that God is sovereign in the salvation of men. Furthermore, Jesus freely offered "rest for your souls" for those who would come to Him by faith (Matt. 11:28-30).

For the past 5 weeks, as a church, we have wrestled with these topics. We first examined them topically (on 7/13/03). We saw that the Bible teaches both of these truths, without any sense of contradiction at all. Then, we examined them in specific texts. We began with Romans 9 and then turned to the book of Habakkuk. In each of these texts, the themes of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility were brought to the forefront.

Habakkuk is a dialog between a man and God. It contains five stages. In the first stage, Habakkuk prays, "God, where are You?" Habakkuk was an eye-witness to the wickedness that has surrounded him, and found God to be absent and silent (1:2). In the second stage, God answers Habakkuk, "I'm Raising Up the Wicked." The Chaldeans would eventually come and conquer Judah (1:6). In the third stage, Habakkuk questions God, by asking, "God, how can You?" He challenges God's purity in doing such an act (1:13). In the fourth stage, God assures Habakkuk that He will judge the wicked. He does this by pronouncing a series of woes upon those who practice evil (2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19).

This morning, we come to the fifth stage of the book of Habakkuk. We find Habakkuk responding to God's assertion of His coming judgment. Before I tell you how I have summarized Habakkuk's response, I want you to try to feel the weight of the situation in which Habakkuk finds himself. Imagine with me the following scenario. You had a conversation with God. In the midst of that conversation, He told you that the days of America were numbered. Then, imagine that God proceeded to tell you how the collapse of our nation would take place. It would all begin with the collapse of our economy. Within a few months, the Dow Jones, which has been hovering around 9,000 would sink below 100. Our money would become worthless. As a result, unemployment would rise drastically; you would lose your job. Within a few years, our government would be in such financial crisis that it too would begin to collapse. Violence would ensue in the streets as police forces were reduced and people were trying to survive with no financial help from the government. Our military focus would be turned from a focus upon the world, to a focus upon restoring the peace in our nation. Then, at our most vulnerable time, systematically controlled terrorist attacks would break in upon our land. It would continue with simultaneous attacks at key points in our nation's electrical grid, which essentially would wipe out power to our entire nation for weeks. Small-pox would be introduced into our society through terrorists dropping large amounts of the vaccine upon large cities with single-engine planes. Then, China and North Korea would get into the action by seizing us in our vulnerability and would launch a full-scale attack on us, using their giant nuclear arsenal. Some of their nuclear warheads would be focused upon our nuclear power plants, which would send radio-active waste into the air. Millions of Chinese troops would march across our land. They would come and kill at will. They would take sons and daughters away from parents to be trained in their own armies. By 2010, America as we know it today would no longer exist. Now, how would you react to these things if you knew with absolute certainty that they would happen? This might help you to sense a bit of Habakkuk's situation. His world was crashing around him. There was iniquity. There would be destruction in the near future. It would surely happen.

Here is how I would summarize Habakkuk 3, "God, I fear You." Look at verse 2,

"LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear." (Hab. 3:2a)

He said the same thing in verse 16, "I heard and my inward parts trembled. At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble" (Hab. 3:16a). Habakkuk was a physical wreck. His stomach was churning within him. His voice was unsteady. His throat was dry. He could barely stand up. What a change had come across this prophet! In chapter one, after God's initial reply, Habakkuk was ready to continue his little debate with God even though he had just been reproofed. But at the end of chapter two, things had changed. Habakkuk was no longer the questioning prophet. Rather, he was a fearful prophet. He understood the weight of what God had said to him:

"But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him" (Hab. 2:20). God was going to do this and there was no thwarting His purposes. God called the earth to an entire, humble submission to His rule and reign. Habakkuk willingly complied.

Facing tragedy, Habakkuk offered up a prayer to God, which is contained for us in chapter three. Notice how verse one calls this, "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet." This prayer is highly instructive for us. Habakkuk finds himself facing a huge trial in his life. His beloved nation of Judah is about to be overrun by the Chaldeans and shipped off to Babylon. Yet, he faces it. He faces it not with doubt, anger, or resentment against God, but by willingly submitting to God's plan: "Yet, I will exult in the LORD. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:18).

Trials are certain to come in our lives also. Perhaps you won't see the collapse of America like I described earlier. But, you might experience your own difficulties in this life. You could have a sudden illness that lands you in a hospital for weeks. You could be involved in a car accident that causes you physical difficulties for the rest of your life. You could lose your job. Your basement could flood and cause great damage. You could experience a financial collapse in your own home. A child of yours could go wayward. Your marriage could end up on the ropes. Cancer could take the life of your dear spouse. An automobile accident could take the life of one of your parents. Do you think that some of these things might happen? Every single one of these have taken place in the life of those in who attend our church. You simply need to think about it for a little bit and you can discover many more tragedies that could come upon your life. Your house could burn or be leveled by a tornado. Your retirement account could vanish. You give birth to a child that is severely handicapped. Your child commits suicide. Your two year old drowns in a neighbor's swimming pool. Your husband is fatally electrocuted by a falling power line. You wake up and your husband has died of an insulin reaction in his sleep. Your leg is run over by a car and is amputated. You cut off several fingers with a saw. These things are far from exhaustive. Church family, it isn't "if" tragedies come in your life. It is "when" tragedies come in your life. When they come, how are you going to deal with them?

Habakkuk's prayer teaches us how to deal with the tragedies of life when they come. Habakkuk dealt with them with great success. Notice at the end of verse 1. This prayer is "according to Shigionoth." Most translations simply leave the word untranslated. The Amplified Bible translates it, "set to wild, enthusiastic and triumphal music." The Jerusalem Bible translates it exactly the opposite, "tone as for dirges" (i.e. a lamentation, slow, solemn, mournful). The MKJV translates it, "concerning His erring ones." We have no idea what "Shigionoth" means. It is probably some type of musical notation, as chapter 3 ends with these words, "For the choir director, on my stringed instruments" (verse 19b). Add to this fact that the word, "Selah" occurs three times in this chapter (verse 3, 9, 13). We don't know what "Selah" means, but it probably is some type of musical notation for either a crescendo or a pause. It is used 74 times in the Bible. Every instance of it comes in the Psalms, except for the three occurrences here. For these reasons, I believe it to be a Psalm that Habakkuk composed. It is a Psalm of victory. It is a Psalm of hope. Though Habakkuk's world is soon to collapse, Habakkuk has found his anchor in God, and so can we.

Habakkuk teaches us three things to do that will help us through the difficulties in life. The first one is, ...

1. Pray for mercy (3:1-2)

"LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years make I known; In wrath remember mercy." (Hab. 3:2)

Habakkuk had resigned himself to the fact that Judah will be conquered. Yet, even during this time, Habakkuk prayed that God would be merciful to the nation. He said, "in wrath remember mercy." Ray Stedman pointed out that "Habakkuk began this book by saying, 'Lord, why don't you do something.' Now he says, 'Lord, be careful, don't do too much. In wrath remember mercy' (Ray Stedman in a sermon entitled, "Habakkuk: History is in God's Hands" preached August 28, 1966).

Habakkuk is specific in his prayer for mercy: he prays for "revival." Habakkuk is praying that God would stir in the hearts of His people to make them spiritually alive to know and acknowledge the things of God. Sure, trouble is coming down. But even as it does, even in the "midst of the years" of this trouble, Habakkuk's prayer is for God to make Himself known in the hearts and lives of the people of Judah.

There were several men in our church who read the "Life and Diary of David Brainerd" this past year. We read about the remarkable things that God did among the American Indians in the early 1700's. It was revival. It was the sort of revival that Habakkuk was praying for. When David Brainerd first came among the Indians, they were a drunken, superstitious, wicked people. Many of the Indians ignored him and his message that he brought to them. One night (July 21, 1744), he was particularly discouraged in that the Indians were going to celebrate an idolatrous feast and dance in the morning. During this activity, they would worship devils and not the true God. He had planned on coming to them and interrupting their feast to preach to them. In his journal (dated July 22, 1744), he wrote, "I had a strong hope that God would 'bow the heavens and come down' and do some marvelous work among the heathen." That day, he found them "engaged in their frolic" and broke up their dancing than they might attend to his preaching. But nothing happened. Nothing happened until about a year later when God did open the heavens and did come down and did visit the Indians with His Spirit in remarkable ways. A year to the day after he learned of this pagan feast, he baptized his first convert among the Indians (July 21, 1745). The next year for David Brainerd was one of true joy. This was some of my favorite reading this past year -- to see these wicked Indians come to Christ, glory in His cross, and embrace the forgiveness that is found in Jesus. They were so transformed that David Brainerd would later write,

"I know of no assembly of Christians where there seems to be so much of the presence of God, where brotherly love so much prevails, and where I should so much delight in the public worship of God, in general, as in my own congregation; although not more than nine months ago, they were worshiping devils and dumb idols under the power of pagan darkness and superstition. Amazing change this! effected by nothing less than divine power and grace! 'This is the doing of the Lord, and it is justly marvelous in our eyes!' ("Life and Diary of David Brainerd" March 2, 1746).

Indeed, the work that David Brainerd experienced was "the doing of the Lord." There is no way that we can create revival in our days. But we can pray that God would do it. There is great application for us here. Habakkuk did not give up on his nation. Rather, he prayed, "O LORD,

revive Your work. ... Make it known" (verse 2). He even prayed this after he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt what was going to happen to his nation. Judah was soon to be conquered by the Chaldeans. People would be taken away into captivity. But Habakkuk still prayed for God to revive His people. And to spread forth his work.

The United States of America is much like Judah. We have been a nation that has been extremely blessed of the LORD. What we read regarding God's work through David Brainerd was actually a very small part of what took place in much of colonial America during what we call, "The Great Awakening" in the early 1740's. Perhaps you have read of how God used George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards and many other preachers to stir the hearts of people to confess their sins and embrace Jesus Christ. So astonishing was the work that took place in America that Jonathan Edwards once wrote a piece entitled, "Narrative of Surprising Conversions." God's spirit was upon America in these times. A little less than 100 years later, "The Second Great Awakening" took place in America. The spiritual interest that came across our land is astonishing. Timothy Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, was involved in this. In Kentucky you had camp meetings with 10,000-20,000 people attending.

Yet, today, we are on the decline. Oh, perhaps we have never before been as powerful, wealthy, or technologically advanced as we are right now. But iniquity, wickedness, destruction, violence, strife, and contention are all around us. God's word is ignored. His church is facing difficult times. Do you desire that God would "come down" and spiritually bless the United States of America? If you do, you will pray for God to "revive His work." Do you pray for God to "revive His work" in America? Do you pray for God to "make it known" in America? Do you desire for spiritual interest in this country to abound? Or, have you given up on our nation? Do you desire for God's church to prosper? Then, I exhort you to pray. Habakkuk prayed for Judah, even when Judah was facing impending doom. Though Judah was soon to be conquered, Habakkuk prayed for God's blessing upon the land. This is summed up when he prayed, "In wrath remember mercy." "God, though you will come and punish us, as we deserve, please remember mercy during this time. Even in the midst of things getting bad, please, revive your work!"

How can you get through the difficulties of life?
2. Think about God (3:3-15)

The solution to his problem is a look to God, which he does in these 13 verses. Verses 3 through 15 are filled with thoughts of God. In fact, we have 13 verses in this section. All but one of these verses speak about God and what He does. And the one verse that doesn't speak about God directly, talks about how people are responding to God's work (verse 7). In many ways, these verses are the core of the message of Habakkuk. Habakkuk is facing tremendous difficulty as I described earlier. Yet, when he ponders who God is, his difficulties are diminished.

Before we run through these verses, you need to know that it is often difficult to know exactly what Habakkuk is describing. There are times where he seems to dwell upon some past action of God. There are other times where he is anticipating God's future action. There are also some differences in our translations concerning these words. In fact, verse 9 has been translated more than 100 different ways. But, though the details are difficult, the overall message is quite simple and straightforward: **"God will come and reign supreme over all the earth."**

This description of God's reign provides a picture of God as the warrior who will come, wage war and gain victory. The victory is certain. Reflecting upon God's reign in this way brought tremendous comfort to Habakkuk in this time of great difficulty. As you face trials in your life, this understanding of God will bring comfort to you as well.

a. God's presence (verse 3a)

"God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah." (Hab. 3:3)

The "Selah" in this verse causes us to stop and reflect upon what was just spoken. Verse 3 gives us a glimpse of God coming. (Some translations say that God "came.") Habakkuk's thought begins with the presence of God by mentioning two locations: Teman and Mount Paran. Each of these locations are associated with God's guiding the nation of Israel and conquering his enemies. Teman is located in the mountainous area of Edom, which is south-east of the land of Judah, through which the Hebrew people traveled in their march on the way to conquer the promised land. Mount Paran refers to one of any number of prominent peaks in the mountains of the Sinai peninsula, and might possibly be the place where God revealed Himself to Moses.

God is seen as coming from these two mountains to help His people. God's presence is the key to understanding Habakkuk's comfort. It isn't so much just "thinking about God" that will give you comfort. It is when you believe and trust that this God "came" and is "with you" and "will come again." It isn't thoughts of God that will sustain you in your time of difficulty. It is God who will sustain you in your difficulty. Habakkuk remembers when God came to rescue Israel. And He will come again to rule and conquer.

b. God's radiance (verses 3b-4)

"His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise." (Hab. 3:3b)

Habakkuk is describing the brilliance of God's presence. God's presence and glory is all around us. The Psalmist tells us that "the heavens are telling of the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1). You look about on the earth and it gives testimony to God's creative powers. The hymn is correct, "There's not a plant, nor flower below, but makes Thy glories known" (Isaac Watts). This is what Habakkuk is getting at when he says, "The earth is full of His praise." Verse 4 continues to describe God's radiance,

"His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, And there is the hiding of His power" (Hab. 3:4).

Have you ever gone outside on a sunny day, just after the snow has fallen, when everything is sparkling white outside? The brightness can overwhelm you to such an extent that you can't even open your eyes! There are times, where this can even affect your whole body. Verse 4 tells us that "His radiance is like the sunlight."

Perhaps Habakkuk is reflecting upon the time when Moses was on mount Sinai speaking to the LORD, saying, "Show me Thy glory!" (Ex. 33:18). God told Moses, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (Ex. 33:20). This is because God "dwells in unapproachable light" (1 Timothy 6:16). So, remember how God put Moses in the cleft of the rock and was able only to see His back as He passed by (Ex. 33:22-23), lest he die! If people crumble at His presence, how much more will they fall when He exerts Himself against them!

c. God's power (verses 5-7).

"Before Him goes pestilence, And plague comes after Him." (Hab. 3:5)

Habakkuk is probably alluding to the great plagues that took place during the time of the Exodus, all of which were under His sovereign control. He brought the frogs, the hail, pestilence and the swarms of insects. Just as quickly as they came, they also left—all submitting in obedience to the voice of the LORD. Verse 6 and 7 says,

"He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, The ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling." (Hab. 3:6-7)

The picture here is of God, standing as a warrior, surveying the earth before the battle. Nations tremble when they see and understand God's power. After the LORD led Israel safely through the Red Sea, while drowning those Egyptians, who were foolish enough to follow after them, Moses wrote this little song of the conquering power of God, "The peoples have heard, they tremble; Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; The leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone" (Ex. 15:14-16).

God fills the nations with terror when He comes! "Cushan" and "Midian" are two of the nations that Habakkuk saw trembling with terror in his vision. But, further than the nations, Habakkuk saw the "mountains" and "hills" destroyed when God simply looks upon them in preparation for battle. Such is God's power. We look at the mountains and the hills as see them as so vast, permanent and unchanging. Yet, they crumble at God's presence. In reality, it is God who doesn't change. His ways are everlasting. Hills will collapse. Mountains will crumble. But God will stand. God will stand victorious.

d. God's wrath (verses 8-9a).

"Did the LORD rage against the rivers, Or was Your anger against the rivers, Or was Your wrath against the sea, That You rode on Your horses, On Your chariots of salvation? Thy bow was made bare, The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah." (Hab. 3:8-9a)

Again, this "Selah" will stop us mid-verse to reflect upon these words. Verse 8 contains the rhetorical questions. It wasn't the rivers or the seas that has filled up God's wrath. It is the wickedness of those who are against Him that God unveiled His bow and revealed his arrows as He rode against His enemies. Note that God is described as coming as riding on His horses and chariots to bring salvation. This is similar to the return of Jesus in Revelation 19, when He comes, riding on a white horse, surrounded by His armies. He will "smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty" (Rev. 19:11-16). How different the horse that God rides, rather than the horses that the Chaldeans rode (1:8). When God comes to ultimately claim the victory and bring our ultimate salvation, it must be as a warrior. Satan, along with all those who hate God will rebel until the end. God cannot bring His salvation until the people who resist Him are defeated.

e. God's power (verses 9b-11).

From the second half of verse 9 through the end of verse 15, we see God's power and wrath coming again. It is almost as if God is a prize fighter, ready to come out at the ringing of the bell in round two. Notice the description of God's power:

"You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw You and quaked; The downpour of waters swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, It lifted high its hands. Sun and moon stood in their places; They went away at the light of Your arrows, At the radiance of Your gleaming spear." (Hab. 3:9b-11)

When God goes to war, nature fights with Him. In sports, it's called "home-field" advantage. In some basketball games, it is as if there was a sixth player on the field, helping you. God decided where the rivers would cover the earth. The great mountains were subject to His every command. The floods, which cause tremendous damage, sweep by in front of God, clearing the way for Him. Even the seas are viewed as worshipping God with uplifted hands. The sun and moon remain motionless when needed (an allusion to Joshua's great victory at Gibeon (Josh 10:12, 13). The sun and moon will leave when they are no longer needed (i.e. "they went away" according to verse 11). Such is the power and dominion of God, that the mountains, rivers, rains, seas, sun and moon are all fighting with Him.

f. God's wrath (verses 12-15).

"In indignation You marched through the earth; In anger You trampled the nations. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil to lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah." (Hab. 3:12-13)

We see the "Selah" again. It is time for a pause and a reflection on God's victory. Notice again that you see God's wrath coming to save His people, by trampling the nations before Him. Suppose a hostage is taken in a foreign land by force. In order to release the hostage by force, you have to go on the offensive, march through their land, and trample those in the way. Only then can you get to rescue the one held captive. In God's anger, this is what He does to evil doers when His patience runs out. He comes and destroys them for the sake of His beloved. Verses 14 and 15 continue with God's wrath against the wicked.

"You pierced with his own spears The head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; Their exultation was like those who devour the oppressed in secret. You trampled on the sea with your horses, On the surge of many waters." (Hab. 3:14-15)

They came fighting and God turned their own weapons of war against them. Though they stormed in, they were eventually trampled themselves. This is Habakkuk's vision. It is all about God. It is all about His victory. It is all about how He will come, rule and reign.

My message is entitled "Does Your God Do This?" This has been the sermon title throughout my series on Habakkuk. Each week, I have boiled my message down to one question. The question for chapter one was, "Does your God use evil to accomplish His purpose?" The question for chapter two was, "Does your God punish evildoers?" And the question for chapter three is, "Does your God come and reign supreme on the earth?"

The great application of this truth this morning is that God's reign and rule will be your comfort when difficulties come. When difficulties come, you may struggle with several things. You may struggle with the problem of evil (Why did this happen to me?). You may wonder about God's goodness (Is this really good for me?). You may question God's sovereignty (Could God have prevented this?). A view of God's supremacy will get you through it all! It worked for Habakkuk! He may not have had all the answers, but He knew that God did. It settled him. It ought to settle you.

All of the wickedness that is now upon the earth is not out of God's control. In His patience, He allows it to take place and even uses it for His purposes. But, God has never lost control. There have been times in the past when God has arisen and destroyed those who have resisted Him (Egypt and Jericho and the nations in the promised land). There have been times when God has allowed the evil to reign. But, He has always been on the throne. When God decides to establish His kingdom, He will come and you will see the most lop-sided victory that there has ever been. But when that happens is in His time, not our time.

How can you get through the difficulties of life? Pray for mercy. Think about God. And, ...
3. Resolve to worship (3:16-19)

"I heard and my inward parts trembled. At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones. And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us." (Hab. 3:16).

Habakkuk responded in fear, because he knew that the destruction that was prophesied was coming upon him and upon his nation. But, he had to wait for it. "I must wait quietly for the day of distress." This is what Habakkuk was told in 2:3, "Though it tarries, wait for it." He knew that the Chaldeans would arise and invade Judah. He knew that things could get pretty bad. Yet, here is the remarkable response of Habakkuk:

"Though the fig tree should not blossom, And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail, And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold, And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3:17-18)

Habakkuk had a resolve to worship regardless of how bad it might get. As he was anticipating this foreign invasion, he was expecting the worst. In time of military occupation, things can get pretty bad. Food and water can become quite scarce. In fact, one of the war strategies at the time of Habakkuk was to surround a city and starve it into submission. Habakkuk was anticipating a time when he would face a struggle even to survive. The fig trees, the fruit vines, and the olive trees were all staple foods in Israel. These weren't some type of luxury T-bone steaks or shrimp cocktails. Figs, fruits and olives were foods that sustained them. But Habakkuk's resolve to worship goes beyond this. Even if there be no food (e.g. no wheat, no corn, no grains), even if there be no flock (e.g. no lamb, no goat, no cattle of any kind), Habakkuk's resolve is to be a worshiper of the LORD. This is the point of verse 18,

"Yet, I will exult in the LORD. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3:18)

He is saying that God will come, rule and reign for his salvation to rescue him. That is his hope. Regardless of how bad it gets, Habakkuk resolved to be a worshiper of God, even to death. This was Job's confidence as well. Job said, "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him" (Job 13:15). It is easy to praise God when things are going well. But, face the trials of life, and things suddenly get difficult. How easy was it for Peter to say, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away. ... Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death" (Matt. 26:33; Luke 22:33). You know what happened, don't you? That very night, when the pressure came and it was a matter of

prison or death for Peter, he denied that he even knew Jesus on three occasions. All this took place before the cock crowed, just as Jesus had prophesied (Luke 22:61). How easy was it for the Israelites to affirm the words of the covenant that God made with them at Sinai. When Moses came down from the mountain "and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances ... all the people answered with one voice, ... 'All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!' (Exodus 24:3). Do you remember what happened? As soon as Moses went up the mountain to meet again with the LORD, and was delayed, the people engaged themselves in idolatry (Exodus 32).

I wish we knew what happened to Habakkuk when the Chaldeans came. Unfortunately, we don't know what happened to him. Perhaps he was martyred. Perhaps he was taken captive to Babylon along with Daniel and his friends. Perhaps he spent the remainder of his years in prison, due to the threat of his position in religious leadership. At any rate, he passed his days in obscurity. However, he did leave us with an insight into his plan that would help him to be faithful to his pledge to "exult in the LORD" when the times would get extremely difficult. The key comes in verse 19,

"The Lord GOD is my strength. And He has made my feet like hinds' feet. And makes me walk on my high places." (Hab. 3:19)

From the beginning, Habakkuk wasn't planning on playing the role of the tough man who was going to get through it on his own. Rather, he was trusting in the strength of the LORD to keep him through the difficulty that lay ahead. This is the key to overcoming through the difficulties of life: trust in the strength of the LORD. Jude says that He "is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy" (Jude 24). Paul says that "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). The way of escape is not being strong in yourself. What is the way of escape? It is always the same, it is trusting in the strength of the LORD to carry you through your trials.

As the temptations and difficulties in life come, you should be crying to God for help. You should be pleading for God to help you. You should be trusting in God to help you and finding your strength in the Lord. How are you able to lay aside every encumbrance and sin? How do you run the race with endurance? The writer to the Hebrews told them to fix their eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:2). This is what Habakkuk was resolved to do: trust in the LORD.

Habakkuk tells us how he has already experienced God strengthening him. He said that God "has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places." Just as the deer is swift and is able to escape danger, so has God enabled Habakkuk to do the same. How are you planning on getting through the difficulties of life? They are coming in one form or another. Do you have a plan now? Are you praying for mercy? Are you thinking about God? Are you resolving to worship God? These are the keys to overcoming the trials that come upon you, as you hope in the LORD. Habakkuk has been telling us that God comes to rule and reign supreme over all the earth. Does your God do this?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 17, 2003 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
