

# THE SUCCESS OF SIN

**TEXT:** Habakkuk 1:1-12

**THESIS:** To pose five basic problems and their biblical solutions.

**INTRO.:** A. Sin is the most successful business in the world. If you want to make big money and do not care about whom you may hurt and have no conscience, get in the sin business. Sell pornography, become a pimp, open a night club or bar room or a casino -- you will be successful. There is always a good market (and markup) in sin. The local bar room never has to have attendance campaigns – the suckers line up to get in the houses of sin.

**ILLUS.:** Recently a bar room/night spot in New Jersey had male strippers, and the females packed the place out. Some preachers picketed the place and were ridiculed on the nightly news and by their neighbors and castigated by the women who attended.

B. The Bible is a contemporary commentary and right up-to-date on the subject of sin. Habakkuk saw **"THE SUCCESS OF SIN"** in his day, and in this short prophetic book grappled with the questions men (saved and unsaved) still ask today.

**TRANS.:** In chapter 1, verses 1-12, Habakkuk deals with five basic problems which have perplexed professors, priests, pastors, prophets, and people ever since...

## I. PROBLEM #1: WHY DOESN'T GOD ANSWER PRAYER? vv. 1,2

A. The Problem Presented: v.2

1. Habakkuk says: "I have been crying and asking You for a response, but You haven't answered."
2. Habakkuk, like us, felt alone, ignored, and neglected.

**ILLUS.:** We pray for healing, and God seemingly turns a deaf ear. We ask for a way out of our dilemma, and we seem to have no solution. We cry out when we see "THE SUCCESS OF SIN" around us and things keep getting worse! Why?!!

B. The Problem Answered:

1. Scripturally, because He is longsuffering and loves people.

**NOTE:** Peter pondered this question the scoffers who say: "Where is the promise of His coming?" His answer in 2 Peter 3:3-9 is that our time table and God's is different. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." He further answers that God "is not willing that any should perish..." so He waits till more hear the Word and respond before He sends His Son and this age ends. He has a better plan and is motivated by a higher love.

2. Scripturally, our viewpoint is different than His.

**ILLUS.:** A child is riding in a car going to grandma's house 300 miles away. After only 15 minutes on the road, he starts asking "Are we there yet?" In our relationship with God, we are children and our timing is different than our Father's. We are impatient – God is longsuffering.

In John 11, Jesus heard Lazarus was sick – He didn't hurry. Lazarus' sisters and disciples were perplexed and stated: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here (he) would not have died." But He had something better in mind. We never read of Jesus running or hurrying. God is never in a hurry. We are geared to schedules, time, clocks, and calendars; and though He has a plan and a schedule it does not follow ours.

## II. PROBLEM #2: WHY DOES GOD PERMIT SIN AND INJUSTICE? vv. 3,4

A. The Problem Pondered:

1. One of the deepest problems with which humans can agonize over is "Why sin?"
2. Habakkuk saw violence, strife, contention and injustices, or "wrong judgment" all around him. (The conditions of his day were much like those today.)
  - a. His soul was vexed.
  - b. His heart was heavy.
  - c. His anger was stirred.

#### B. The Problem Solved:

1. God allows sin that He might display against that black backdrop the brilliance of His grace.

**NOTE:** "Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound." Abraham was promised the land of Israel, he grew impatient and asked God "When?" God answered: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full!" or "There is not enough sin yet!"

Jesus the sinless One came, was rejected, despised, beaten and crucified. Through the very scenes in the Gospels, though very dark, the brilliant saving grace of our Savior shines forth.

2. God allows sin that man might condemn himself and turn to God.

**ILLUS.:** Because we are sinners, we are crooked. All our laws are necessary, because people are sinners and do wrong. God's Word is given as a mirror so we can see how depraved and in need of outside help we are. Christ came not to call the righteous, but SINNERS to repentance.

### III. PROBLEM #3: WHY DOESN'T GOD DO SOMETHING? v.5

#### A. The Problem Considered:

1. Habakkuk had prayed, but sin in Israel continued, increased, and prospered.
2. Habakkuk and others were asking in their hearts: "Why doesn't God DO something?!"

#### B. The Problem Attacked: v.5

Compare **Daniel 4:32-35**: And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

1. The answer is that God IS doing something!
2. God is WORKING according to a plan, even though His plan is not always perceptible or even believable.

**ILLUS.:** The fact that we cannot see, understand, or believe it makes no difference – God IS working! Example: Under the snow in winter, the plants are coming alive to grow and bloom in spring – regardless of appearances! God too is working according to a plan. Another example: Building a bridge over an expanse of water. Someone must do all the planning, taking into consideration stress factors, wind velocity, water currents, etc. The workers never see the whole plan and often wonder: "Why do I have to do this, this way?" But, he must do what he is told and lo and behold, when each one does his part, sooner or later the bridge is built. All the parts working *together* gets the job done. God's plan is progressive and progressing. Compare Romans 8:28

Compare Paul's use of this passage in Acts 13.

**Acts 13:38-41** Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for *I work a work in your days*, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

#### **IV. PROBLEM #4: WHY DOES GOD ALLOW THE UNGODLY TO PROSPER?**

A. The Problem Examined: vv. 6-8

B. The Problem Explained:

1. God's work is revealed. "I will raise up..."
2. God uses the ungodly to do His work!
3. God allows the ungodly to prosper temporarily.

**ILLUS.:** The problem in the mid-east today with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Israel, etc. (the same general area of the Babylonian empire) only reflects the fact that God is working – He is in the driver's seat. Example: By simply changing the weather pattern in the past few years, God has detoured OPEC and the oil cartel.

#### **V. PROBLEM #5: WHY DOESN'T GOD RESCUE HIS OWN? vv. 9-11**

A. The Problem Weighed:

1. The world and the devil are in the driver's seat, it seems.
2. The world and the ungodly think they are winning. v.11

B. The Problem Concluded:

1. God has intervened in history in the past by breaking the kingdoms of Egypt, Babylon, Nazi Germany, etc.
2. God will intervene in the future by breaking the power of kingdoms and nations like communism, Islam, etc., by sending His Son to rescue His own.

**CONCL.:** Men look at "THE SUCCESS OF SIN" while God looks at "THE VICTORY OF HIS SON." Men look at the problems, God already has the solutions. Men operate in the sphere of darkness, unbelief, and doubt; God operates in the sphere of light, purpose, and sovereignty.

Looking at things from man's perspective makes one a pessimist, but looking at things from God's perspective (from Scripture), makes one an optimist! (I read the last chapter of the Bible and we win!)

God has the answer to all life's problems...even yours!

# WHY DO THE BAD GUYS ALWAYS WIN?

**TEXT:** Habakkuk 1:12-17

**THESIS:** To reveal the solution to a complex problem, posed by Habakkuk: "Why do the bad guys always win."

**INTRO.:** A. The prophet Habakkuk addresses some of the most profound and complex problems which confront men. He has met head-on the questions: Why God doesn't answer prayer? Why does God permit sin & injustice? Why doesn't God do something? Why does God permit the wicked to prosper? and – Why doesn't God rescue the believer?

B. In this next section, he addresses another sticky issue. "WHY DO THE BAD GUYS ALWAYS WIN?" From the human standpoint it often does seem that the ungodly and sinner come out on top while the believer often struggles and is victimized. As in Habakkuk's day, an ungodly and idolatrous nation was punishing others (especially Israel), and prospering greatly (Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was called the "Golden Kingdom"), so today, the ungodly Islamic nations seem to be growing stronger and the "Christian" nations diminish in power and prestige; and more specifically, the lost prosper and the Christian is persecuted. The state assumes more power, and the Church suffers persecution. "WHY DO THE BAD GUYS ALWAYS WIN?!"

**TRANS.:** The prophet is a man of faith, but he frankly admits he has unanswered questions - questions which confront his faith.

## I. FAITH'S AFFIRMATION: v.12

### A. God Is Everlasting (Security) v.12a

1. There is great security in knowing an unchangeable God.
2. Everything we know of in this life changes, deteriorates and dies; God alone never changes.

**ILLUS.:** You can allow your mind to drift backward past creation and you will find God was there, or permit it to race forward into the future, and God will be there. He is everlasting.

- a. It is discouraging to focus our lives upon the transient.
- b. It is stabilizing to occupy our minds upon the transcendent, everlasting God.

**ILLUS.:** Someone says: "That's just a crutch – an adult security blanket!" My reply is: "It's better than YOUR crutch – the bottle, drugs, pills, etc. Mine is real, satisfying, and eternal. Yours is temporary, never satisfies, and temporal. I can take mine with me – you can't!"

3. The everlasting God is a personal possession. "My God..."
  - a. The Psalmist declares: "The Lord is MY Shepherd..."
  - b. Since He belongs to the believer and the believer to Him, surely He will protect His property.

**ILLUS.:** The prophet is thinking about the Chaldean (Babylonian) armies advancing on Israel – the "bad guys" – engulfing everything in their path and reflects on His relationship to God – as God's purchased property. How comforting to know we belong to Him personally. How secure to trust in an everlasting God. "The eternal God is my refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy before thee..." Deut. 33:27

### B. God Is Holy (Purity) vv. 12b,13

1. A holy God must ALWAYS do right.
2. His holy character regulates all His other attributes.

### 3. His holy nature demands protection for His own – “we shall not die...”

**ILLUS.:** Habakkuk is affirming His righteous, holy character – while his head is swirling with the question of how we can permit the “Bad Guys” to win! He realizes the everlasting nature of God and the holy character of God, but stumbles over the possibility that He has somehow lost control.

#### C. God Is Mighty (Stability) v.12c

**NOTE:** Before allowing himself to entertain thoughts of God being out of control, he immediately refers to Him as the Rock.

##### 1. The word is literally “Rock.”

**Deuteronomy 32:3-4** Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.  
**Deuteronomy 32:18** Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.  
**Deuteronomy 32:31** For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

##### 2. Even though unable to comprehend the ramifications of the Chaldean invasion, Habakkuk understands the basic reasons, i.e., “...for judgment...for correction...”

**ILLUS.:** Here is a partial answer to the question of “WHY DO THE BAD GUYS WIN?” God is using the “BAD GUYS” to chastise the “good guys.”

## II. FAITH’S ACCEPTATION: v.12c

#### A. God Is Sovereign (Control)

1. “Thou has ordained them...” - Habakkuk realizes God’s statement is true. (cf. v.6)
  - a. “Ordained” does not mean to force, but to use.
  - b. God did not make them attack Israel; He simply permitted them to follow their own inclinations.
2. “Thou has established them...” - Habakkuk recognizes God’s purpose is best.

**2 Chronicles 33:1** Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever: Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

#### B. God Is Omniscient (Wisdom)

1. Since God knows everything, we are assured that He does best.
- b. God always acts in wisdom, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary.

### III. FAITH'S ASTONISHMENT: vv. 13-17

#### A. Imperfect Faith Asks "Why?"

1. "Why" is a favorite word for immature children.
2. Why do WE ask "Why?"
  - a. Because of imperfect faith and trust in God.
  - b. Because of imperfect understanding.

**Isaiah 55:8-9** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

**NOTE:** Sometimes we even think God does wrong. Habakkuk is questioning God's wisdom. Paul grappled with this in Romans 9:13: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." But then he responded with v.14-21!!

**Romans 9:14-21** What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

(I have no problem with the 'Esau have I hated' but more with the 'Jacob have I loved!' AMEN!)

#### 3. Puny man often asks "Why?"

**NOTE:** Men often ask "Why does God permit war?...allow infants to die?...permit suffering and disease?" "WHY DO THE BAD GUYS ALWAYS WIN?" They are saying either that God does not exist, He doesn't care, He is impotent, or is not a good God.

#### B. Imperfect Understanding Asks "Why?"

**Psalms 37:34-40** Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

**Read Psalms 73** – Go ahead, read it!

**ILLUS.:** Blot out God and the problem is solved. If there is no God, then sin, suffering, and sickness present no problem. But the moment you admit the existence of an all powerful God, you come face-to-face with problems and paradoxes and seeming contradictions. The man of faith finds the solution in the Scriptures; the unsaved man concludes "there is no God!" And the Bible declares him to be a fool!

**CONCL.:** Today the "BAD GUYS" may appear to be winning – but tomorrow...! "He Who sitteth in the heavens shall laugh! We who will rule and reign with Him will have the last laugh.

Our faith may be weak, we may "see through a glass darkly," we may not have all the answers; we may not even know all the questions. But we have an everlasting, holy, sovereign, omniscient God Who HAS all the answers and we will trust in Him!

# JOIN THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

**TEXT:** Habakkuk 2:1-4

**THESIS:** To reveal Habakkuk's response to the conundrums of life.

**INTRO.:** A. The title of this message is not to recruit people to become a "Jehovah's Witness" or to espouse the "damnable doctrines" of the "Watchtower Society." They have desecrated the scriptural use of the biblical term "watchtower." I am rather encouraging everyone to join Habakkuk's watchtower society – as you will see in the text and in this message.

B. Habakkuk has been pondering some of the most perplexing questions in life, e.g., "Why does God allow sin to prosper?" "Why does God permit injustice and suffering?" "Why do the 'bad guys' always win?" – etc. He has had a direct revelation from God. He began to fill himself with the wonder of God. He recognized God's eternality, purity, might and sovereignty (1:12). This gave him a measure of security and stability, but he still had problems unresolved. The Chaldeans were still on the march.

**NOTE:** The prophet had received a revelation from God of the approaching, invincible, unmerciful, ruthless, Chaldean army. This fact seemed contradictory to the nature of God. Why would people permit the ungodly to destroy the holy city, God's Temple and His people? (1:13-17)

**TRANS.:** Habakkuk's three-fold response is recorded in this passage...

## I. WATCHING: v.1

A. Faith Expressed: v.1a

1. Habakkuk expects no answer.
2. Habakkuk demonstrates common sense in the context of his faith.

**NOTE:** He is saying that he believes that there is no answer to the perplexing problems facing him and the nation, and is therefore going to his "watchtower" to look for that answer. He will get alone with God (many feel the watchtower is symbolic and not literal, i.e., a place on high, near God, but I believe it is both literal and spiritual); there he will meditate, wait and watch.

- a. He believes that God will reveal Himself. "...watch to see"
- b. He believes in a God Who speaks to man. "...what He will say to ME"

**ILLUS.:** Habakkuk went to his "watchtower" to wait on the Lord and His revelation. Men usually seek answers everywhere but from God! The humanist runs to man (philosophers, psychologists, scientists, etc.) Humanism teaches that man is the source and center of all wisdom.

- c. God is not silent!
- d. God has said something!

B. Submission Exhibited: v.1b

1. By this statement he realized that he is in a position of arguing with God.
2. He expects that God's reply to his arguments will be a reproof.
  - a. He recognizes his insignificance in relation to an everlasting, holy, mighty, sovereign God.
  - b. He realizes his arguments or conclusions will never stand God's rebuttal.

**ILLUS.:** Here is genuine humility. Like us, Habakkuk realizes that although we do not have all the answers and cannot figure things out, God does and can. We need to join Habakkuk's "Watchtower Society" of humility and submission instead of murmuring, complaining or demanding that God be accountable to us! Cf. v.20

## **II. WRITING: v.2**

**NOTE:** Habakkuk's faith was not disappointed. God DID answer him. He reveals Himself and part of His plan to Habakkuk. Most of the time, if we will just "search the Scriptures," we will have the answers to our questions.

### A. Revelation:

1. Revelation is that act of God whereby He directly imparts information to man which he could not otherwise obtain or know.
2. Revelation primarily deals with the Person, work and plan of God.
  - a. God reveals Himself to man in the Bible.
  - b. The Bible is the ONLY book of God's revelation.

**NOTE:** The word "scripture" comes from the Greek word "graphe" from which we get the words "graphics" or "graphite" & literally means "something written."

### c. God gave us a WRITTEN revelation because...

- 1) We cannot be trusted to remember and pass on accurately that which is merely spoken.
- 2) The written word can be more widely distributed than a verbal witness.
- 3) God authored the words in the Bible, though they were written by sinful, though saved, men.

### B. Inspiration: (cf. "will not lie..." v.3)

1. Inspiration is that ministry of the Spirit whereby He guarantees the infallible transmission of the information revealed.
2. Thus, though Habakkuk is instructed to "write the vision," he is protected from error by God Himself.

**2 Peter 1:21** For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

**2 Timothy 3:16** All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

### C. Preservation:

1. Preservation is the providential act of God whereby He protects His infallible revelation from corruption.
2. Without the guarantee of preservation, revelation and inspiration are meaningless.

**Psalms 12:6-7** The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

### D. Illumination: "...make it plain"

1. Illumination is the ministry of the Spirit whereby He gives understanding beyond the natural level, of His revelation.
2. Illumination makes God's Word and words "plain" to believers who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit – the Author of revelation.



E. Motivation: "...that he may run that readeth it"

1. Thought the truth of God's Word is static, it is designed to motivate men to do God's will.
2. The revelation is not given for intellectual exercise or to satisfy curiosity, but to stir to action.

### **III. WAITING: vv.3,4**

A. Proper Response: Phase 1 – "...wait for it" v.3

**NOTE:** In verse 1 we find Habakkuk in his "watchtower" listening. Compare RCA's longtime symbol of a dog listening intently to "his master's voice." This is often where we fail.

1. The most difficult part of the Christian's life is patiently waiting for God's Word to be fulfilled.
2. The last phrase provides the encouragement. "...it will SURELY come"

B. Proper Response: Phase 2 – "...faith" v.4

1. Here is the exact point where the unsaved stumbles (because of his pride and crookedness – "his soul is lifted up...not upright").
2. Here is where the believer alone can be justified in God's sight.

a. Faith produces faithfulness.

**Hebrews 10:36-38** For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

b. Faith and faithfulness should characterize God's people in spite of circumstances.

**ILLUS.:** In the 1960's at West Point, General Douglas MacArthur said: "In the sunset of my years and in my fading memories, I always come back to these three words: duty, honor, country." This should be the motto of every believer in every battle.

**CONCL.:** "JOIN THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY" of Habakkuk! Listen intently to God. Read His holy Word. Wait patiently for its fulfillment, and "keep silence before Him." God hears and answers prayer and IS doing something. Don't look around, or you will be discouraged. Don't look within, or you will be disappointed. Just look UP, and be encouraged.

# THE LAST LAUGH!

**TEXT:** Habakkuk 2:6-20

**THESIS:** To show that sin will be dealt with and God will have the 'last laugh.'

**INTRO.:** A. Men curse God and thumb their noses at Him. They violate every commandment and break every one of God's rules. They laugh at morality and mock the moral minority. They boast of their success and scoff at honesty and integrity. They spread themselves as the "green bay tree" and laugh at We "poor, uneducated, deluded and deprived Christians." But, "He who laughs last, laughs best!" And it is the Lord Who will have the last laugh.

**Psalms 2:1-6** Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. *He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.*

B. Today things are backwards. The wicked prosper, and the righteous perish! The ungodly laugh, and the saved weep! The sinner scoffs and the saint sorrows! Habakkuk pondered this inequity and injustice in his day. The ungodly, idolatrous and heathen Chaldeans were on the march, and God had revealed to him that they would be victorious over Israel. God had also revealed in a vision (v.2,3) that wrongs would be righted and judgment would come on the sinners. God pronounces five "woes" on five sins which the Chaldeans (and Israel!) were guilty. Oh yes, He will have 'THE LAST LAUGH!'

**TRANS.:** There are only two principles of life in the world, that of those who are self-centered and "puffed up" and have a "do your own thing" philosophy, and those who are God-centered and trust the Lord to work everything out. "The just shall live by faith..." v.4

## I. WOE TO THE PROUD: v.6 (cf. v.4,5)

### A. Pride of Race:

1. The Chaldeans thought they were invincible.
2. Some think that through an accident of birth they are better than others – a "superior race."

**NOTE:** No one had anything to do with his place of birth, time, health, strength, intellect, or even the color of his eyes. Pride of race is the height of stupidity. We need to thank God for who we are, where we are, and what we are.

The Jew in Jesus' day felt superior to all others, because God had chosen him...but that should prompt humility, not pride.

### B. Pride of Place:

1. This is the "Diotrophes syndrome" – he "loved to have the preeminence."
2. Jesus said he that is least shall be greatest and that he that humbles himself shall be exalted.

### C. Pride of Grace:

1. Some who are saved sin by thinking themselves to be superior to others.
2. But we did not save ourselves – it is 100% of God, so we have nothing to be prideful about.

### D. Pride of Face:

1. Because some are more handsome or prettier than others they become "puffed up."
2. The shape of your nose, color of your eyes, etc. was determined before you were born.

**NOTE:** (Cf. 6b) "Woe to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!" Whatever you are proud about is a burden to you. None of us have any right to be proud! Pride was the number one sin in the universe. Your pride only proves that Satan is your father!

**Isaiah 14:12-14** How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

The five "I wills" of Satan is balanced by the five "woes" of Habakkuk. Pride goeth before a fall. Cf. v.7

## **II. WOE TO THE COVETEOUS: v.9-11**

A. This is the Sin of Shameful Greed:

1. The Chaldeans had an insatiable appetite for more and more land, power, and possessions.
2. The Chaldeans built the great Babylonian Empire because of their greed, but God says He hates this sin and will punish it. "Woe..."

B. This is the Sin of Pseudo Need:

1. Like the child who "needs" every new toy or everything he sees at the store.
2. The covetous must have what others have.

**ILLUS.:** The commercial world advertises every product as a "need" – a necessity. Credit cards make covetousness simple. Come and get it...no money down...don't pay a cent now!" But, you WILL pay!

## **III. THE WOE TO THE OPPRESSOR: vv. 12,13 (Cf. v.8)**

A. This Was Military & Political Oppression:

1. The Babylonians were ruthless!
2. They "buildeth...with blood."

**ILLUS.:** Today the Muslims want to "convert" the world to Islam through the use of force. They are ruthless and teach their children in school to hate all "infidels" (every Jew and American, specifically). In the 50's, 60's & 70's it was the Communists who wanted to take over the world and "bury" the West. Now Islam is on the march. They do not understand any language but violence.

It is this author's belief that you cannot trust ANY MUSLIM who believes the Quran! The Quran teaches hatred, and violence towards all non-Muslims. The nominal Muslim, like nominal Christians, may not know what their "scriptures" teach, but if they understand it and believe it they are dangerous and untrustworthy.

- a. The oppression was God's chastisement of Israel. v.13
- b. The day will come when oppression will cease. v.14

**NOTE:** God permits oppression now for His own reasons, but could intervene at any time and will do so ultimately. V. 14 gives insight into the human reason for oppression – no knowledge of God!

B. There Was Economic & Religious Oppression:

1. Economic oppression occurs where employers take advantage of employees & God is aware of it.

**James 5:4-5** Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; ye have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter.

2. Religious oppression occurs when men wish to force their religious beliefs upon others or deny religious freedom to others; in Habakkuk's day that was Babylonianism – today it is Islam (and Catholicism where they are in power.)

**ILLUS.:** America was founded on the principle of freedom from religious oppression by our Baptist forefathers, but we are in danger of losing it due to the ACLU, the liberals in politics, and other non-believers in our society.

#### **IV. WOE TO THE DRUNKARD: vv.15,16**

##### A. The Sin With A Twin: Nakedness

**ILLUS.:** Drinking and nakedness are Siamese twins; like lust and pornography, and greed and gambling – they cannot be separated. Booze and topless go-go girls go together. Near naked cocktail waitresses are a part of the booze scene. Show me a booze hound and I will show you a man with a problem with fidelity (adultery), fornication, pornography, homosexuality, or some other lewd and lascivious sin. If it is sinful to drink, it is sinful to serve booze! Our nation has a booze problem of epidemic proportions. We have made airline stewards and stewardesses into bar-maids! Booze flows freely on every level of government and the business world as well.

##### B. The Drinker Is A Stinker: Multiple Sins! Cf. v.5 "...BECAUSE he transgresseth by wine"

1. He is proud.
2. He is unfaithful. "...neither keepeth at home"
3. He has an insatiable appetite. "...enlargeth...cannot be satisfied"
4. He is greedy. "...gathereth...heapeth"

#### **V. WOE TO THE IDOLATER: vv. 18,19**

##### A. A Stupid Sin: "...make dumb idols"

**Isaiah 44:9-16** They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

1. A "do-it-yourself" god.
2. Attempts to remove God's authority over man.

**CONCL.:** God has not abdicated His throne! One day all the world will hush the cacophony of the sounds of sin and hear His "LAST LAUGH" of judgment and justice.

Woe to YOU...if you do not repent of your sins and receive Christ as your Savior. If you do, ALL your sins will be blood covered! Accept Him now and escape the "woes" of an omnipotent God.

# HOW TO SING WHEN 'THE BOTTOM FALLS OUT' or "THE PSALM OF HABAKKUK"

**TEXT:** Habakkuk 3

**THESIS:** To teach God's people the secret of rejoicing in trials.

**INTRO.:** A. There are basically two ways to respond when "the roof falls in" or "the bottom falls out." One is to look around and within, and the other is to look up. If you look around at the circumstances, you will become more discouraged; if you look within, you will be defeated – but if you learn to look up, you can rejoice and even sing. Habakkuk did.

B. In Habakkuk chapter 3, this final chapter, we find recorded the prayer and song (psalm) of Habakkuk. (Cf. v.1 w/v.19b) This is literally a psalm of Habakkuk. The progress of the book is: The prophet's perplexity over the success of sin, his honest doubts expressed as to God's awareness, his retreat to his watchtower to see what God would do. Then, God speaks and tells Him that He is working. Habakkuk receives the Divine viewpoint of life and now begins to sing and praise the Lord.

**TRANS.:** He started with doubts and a dirge and finishes with a Psalm and a song; a virtual paean of praise.

## I. THE PRAYER FOR GOD'S MERCY: vv. 1,2

A. The Prophet Prays: v.1

1. Habakkuk's response to the "woes" of chapter two is to fall on his knees in prayer.
2. When he grasps God's judgment against sin and sinner, he cries out to God in prayer.

**NOTE:** The word "Shigionoth" in v.1 means "loud cries" and is also used as the title of Psalm 7. There the cries were those of men in trouble. Here they are the cries of joy of a man who finally views things from God's perspective.

B. The Prophet's Prayer: v.2

1. He states his fear, awe and reverence for God.
2. He prays for revival.
3. He requests mercy in judgment.

**NOTE:** Previously he wanted God to "do something" about Israel's enemies, the Chaldeans. When God reveals what He will do (the five "woes" of chapter 2), the prophet cries out for mercy.

God did just this on Calvary. In His wrath on our sin upon His Son, He remembered mercy...toward us.

## II. THE PICTURE OF GOD'S MAJESTY:

A. His Person: vv. 3,4

1. This statement is a paraphrase of Deut. 33:2.
2. It speaks of the majesty and glory of God.

**NOTE:** Habakkuk finally sees God for Who He is! He now has Divine viewpoint instead of human perspective.

B. His Power: v.5,11,15

1. In these verses Habakkuk rehearses the history of God's miraculous intervention in Israel's history.

2. In these verses Habakkuk is praising the God of power Who has in the past revealed Himself in His omnipotence.

**NOTE:** Reviewing Israel's history he realizes that if everything were destroyed, God was able to create. If we grant the first miracle: "In the beginning God created..." everything is possible. By the activity of God and the power of God chaos becomes cosmos, disorder becomes order, nothingness becomes something.

- a. He recalls the plagues of Egypt. v.5
- b. He remembers the power granted Joshua. v. 11
- c. He refers to the progress of the Exodus. v.15

**NOTE:** Three times he pauses to catch his breath and to meditate on the picture of God's majesty and might (vv.3,9 & 13). He inserts the musical rest "selah" (think about that!).

### **III. THE PRAISE OF GOD'S MAN: vv. 16-19**

#### **A. Resting in the Midst of Trouble: v.16**

1. He declares that externally he was shaking. "...shook up!"
2. He says that because of Divine viewpoint he was inwardly resting at peace.

**ILLUS.:** Only the true child of God, living with Divine viewpoint, can "rest in the day of trouble." While others become "unglued" and more and more depressed, the believer experiences and unreasonable peace..."the peace that passes all understanding."

#### **B. Rejoicing in the Middle of Trials: vv. 17,18**

1. He speaks of the desolation facing him & Israel. V.17
2. He also speaks of his own rejoicing and joy at this very time! V.18

**POEM:** Cowper was inspired by these two verses to pen this poem:

"Though vine nor fig tree neither, their wonted fruit shall bear;  
Though all the fields should wither, nor flocks nor herds be there;  
Yet, God the same abiding, His praise shall tune my voice:"  
For while in Him confiding, I cannot but rejoice."

- a. The root of the word translated "rejoice" means to "jump up and down with joy."
- b. The word translated "joy" means "to spin around with great emotion."

**NOTE:** The use of these words indicate that our response to trouble and trial should be active praise; excited and extemporaneous joy!

Our joy is always in proportion to our confidence in God, and our confidence in God is in proportion to our knowledge of Him! Habakkuk had had a revelation of God and got excited about Him even in the midst of, or in spite of trials.

#### **B. Rejuvenation in the Mount of Testing: v.19**

1. The Source of Habakkuk's strength is Jehovah God.
2. He claims the promise that God will make him like an antelope so he will not have to fear the high, rocky crags of testing!

**NOTE:** The believer can have strength and confidence in the most precarious positions in life. Instead of languishing in the valley of despair, we can leap like an antelope on the mountain peaks. He will give us strength and stability as we come to Him for rejuvenation.

**CONCL.:** Yes, you can **"SING WHEN THE BOTTOM FALLS OUT!"** "The Lord is in His Holy Temple," and if we get the Divine viewpoint, we can stop complaining and start rejoicing. Let us too sing **"THE PSALM OF HABAKKUK"** in the midst of

adversity, anxiety and anguish. Only the believer can partake of God's peace and claim God's promises & see things from His perspective.