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**Habakkuk 1:5-11 Adversity Provides Astounding Answers about God’s Sovereignty**

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Introduction (with pics)

Okay what has the buzz been these last two week –the Olympics…so how can I not start off my sermon with a hook from the Olympics and the greatest Olympian ever—Michael Phelps

Did you see the first american relay where Jason Lezak came back in the last 50 meters of the 4x 100meter relay and beat the French who had bragged

Most of the pictures were not of Jason Lezak but of Michael’s Phelps response

Or did you see Michael Phelps 1/100 of a second finish in the …on his way to his seventh gold tying Spitz’s record….

But do you realize that those 8 gold medals, the million dollar endorsement deals the world records set could have all be jeopardized at one point If Phelps had been narrowly focused on the extreme pain and discomfort in one of the first races.

In the 200 meter butterfly, Michael Phelps Goggles began to fill with water

Only after still setting a world record and winning this race did he evidence the pain he was in as he swam the race virtually blind with eyes burning.

He immediately threw the goggles away.

Although Michael termed the incident a “wardrobe malfunction” which was a play on Janet Jackson’s super bowl fiasco a couple of years ago, I did not hear what kept him going through the pain

You know this…any time you and I have goggles on in the pool and they begin to fill with water…all swimming activity comes to a halt as we surface and yank those things off our head..

I’m also sure though of this…. we don’t have world records, million dollar deals at stake

Phelps was able to see while limited in vision the bigger picture and that kept him going.

So also will we discover that principle about God’s sovereignty as we look at today--at

**Seeking God’s Plan in Adversity** a verse by verse study of Habakkuk and today we will see

Adversity Provides Astounding Answers about God’s Sovereignty

This entire year we are emphasizing Seeking God’s Plan

It is a natural theme at this period of our church because last year we finished up our second ever 5 year strategic plan that resulted in ministry blessings such as the Community Center, Seminary and Vision of Hope

This year we are taking a step back and reflecting on the next five years and asking the question if the Lord wills, where does He want to take this church….

So this year, we have studied matters such as Seeking God’s plan for the church, seeking God’s plan for suffering, seeking God will, seeking God’s plan for Unity, and now seeking God’s plan for adversity

[update]

Just to update you on where we are in the process of planning….

Men and women of our church have been surveying ministry needs, community needs, ministry strength and weaknesses.

We have taken that data and then brainstormed ministry initiatives

Finally the church family has attempted to prioritize those initiatives to determine what best fits our ministry and what best serves our community

An these things we will consider to do --if the Lord wills over the next 5 years

Now, these initiatives have been finalized and sent out to the church family.

A copy of those are also available at the welcome center

We invite you to look over them and make any final suggestions

In September at our church family night we will present them again and approve them---’’Presentation and Approval” NOT DISCUSSION and DEBATE

 [COLLEGE STUDENTS—NOTE ABOUT BIBLICAL COUNSELING CENTER]

Now, back to Habakkuk…

Let’s take a look at the book of Habakkuk now.

If you don’t have a note sheet with the text we are examining on it then please turn to page 684 in the Old Testament (the front section) of the chair bible in front of you.

Now, Habakkuk was a prophet who lived and wrote around 600 BC

God’s people had been immersed in idolatry for a long time

God had been very patience with his people

One good King , named Josiah, was characterized by godliness—he actually made reforms and made God’s Word a primary part of the nation once again

But after he died—the nation went back to its old ways---

Habakkuk lived through King Josiah’s reforms and now he is witnessing once again the deterioration of His people

He observes the wickedness of the people…

He observes the injustice of the people

He observes the utter chaos of people living without God

And He wonders “WHERE IS GOD” in the midst of what he is seeing

Habakkuk is experiencing adversity in his life—the problem of chaos all around him because of people’s wickedness-

--But he has no idea of what’s coming

--if he knew what was coming it would make what he is witnessing now seem like a vacation at Disney world

Now take a look at the back of your hand out—explain the format of Habakkuk

Look at the front of the handout –Read the text for today

 (Bring out from Pastor Viars section last week—Adversity leads to legitimate questions)

Today we will see that **Adversity Provides Astounding Answers about God’s Sovereignty**.

Now I realize that many folks who are new to the Scripture may not understand a term like “Sovereinty”…Let me define that for you. This text doesn’t necessary define the term, but it has this real concept in the background so I need to define the term and then we will explore what the text says about Sovereignty

**Definition of God’s Sovereignty—God’s constant care for and His absolute rule over all His creation for His own glory and the good of His people. –Jerry Bridges**

Bottom line—God is in control of al things and all people at all times for His Glory and His people’s good. That is-- God is in control!!!

What are the Astounding Answers about God’s Sovereignty?—God’s Control that Adversity begins to bring to the forefront…

**God’s Sovereignty…**

1. **Is clarified in the big picture—Look around!**

Take a look on the left arrow there in regard to Habakkuk’s complaint look at verse 3….

His major complaint against God—is God “WHY DO YOU MAKE ME SEE”

 “WHY DO YOU CAUSE ME TO LOOK”

Also just prior to that in verse 2, Habakkuk accuses God of not hearing….. “HOW LONG OH LORD WILL I CALL FOR HELP AND YOU WILL NOT HEAR?”

Habakkuk at this point seems to have the corner on the market of observation skills

Habakkuk can hear—God seemingly can’t

Habakuk can see—God seemingly doesn’t see what Habakkuk sees

KEY: From *Habakkuk’s perspective* He seems to have a good assessment of the situation and knows what should be done

And as we learned last week Habakkuk legitimately and authentically questions God about

God Don’t you hear?

God DON’T YOU SEE what I SEE?

GOD WHY DOESN”T WHAT I THINK SHOULD BE HAPPENING MATCH UP WITH WHAT YOU ARE ALLOWING TO HAPPEN?

Habakkuk has now found himself in a very dillusioning state—His expectaions do not conincide with what is happening

Please note that every time we are brought to a point where are expectations do not coincide with what is happening we are brought to a point of decision

And over time if our expectation continually fail to materialize we can get bitter and depressed and disilllusioned and that is where

God can begin working to conform individuals to his expectation and not our own…but the process is hard…and that is why Habakkuk cries out…

Now…God responds to Habakkuk with commands *that he hasn’t seen enough yet*….

God says HABAKKUK I KNOW YOU ARE SEEING BUT YOU HAVEN’t SEEN ENOUGH YET

GET YOUR EYES UP AND OUTWARD…. “LOOK **AMONG THE NATIONS**…OBSERVE!!! BE ASTONISHED WONDER! BECAUSE I AM DOING SOMETHING IN YOUR DAYS THAT YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE IF YOU WERE TOLD

God was indeed working…He had not been silent or inactive…

Habakkuk did not see however the ominous work of God that was coming on the Horizon

His focus had been limited to simply what was happening in Judea

His view of the situation was woefully limited to what his eyes, his ears, his senses, could sense at his point in history and at his specific geographical location

1. **Our perspective on situations are always so LIMITED**
2. **We need GOD’s UNLIMITED perspective to begin to understand**
3. **Starts with lifting our sights off of present distress**

[LOOK AROUND]

[illustrations and applications to be developed]

Secondly God’s Sovereignty ….

1. **Is not always comforting – Look down**

Now, What kind of response from God do you think Habakkuk wanted?

Do we have any indication in the text of what HE THOUGHT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE?

Sure we do…What was he complaining about—wickedness, lack of deliverance from God

WE complain about the things we don’t want or like….we want the opposite

Also we know he lived under the reforms of the good King Josiah before he died

He was wanting most likely a return to a Kingdom that was characterized by righteousness, Justice, and peace

Very naturally, He had lived under that kind of reign, now he is not.

And very naturally he was longing for a return to the good old days.

So he was wanting God to give him a comforting message like

“The People will repent and I will restore a righteous Kingdom to Judah”

Or a message from God like in Isaiah 40:1 “Comfort, Comfort my people”

CAN I ASK YOU, “DOES ‘BE ASTONISHED” YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE IT IF YOU WERE TOLD COMMUNICATE SOOTHING REASSURANCE?”

The Hebrew Word “ASTONISH” has the connotation of “RECOIL with Fear” and that fits well in this context which I will show in a moment

The message that Habakkuk had to face was not going to be comforting…..

Not comforting is an understatement—Recoiling in fear, Breathless, gasping

His face would recoil from the events that were about to take place---He would see but he would want to look away and look down.

BUT GOD COMMANDS –“LOOK AT THIS HABAKKUK….!”

Now, at this point let me ask you a couple of questions….

Question #1: DO YOU REALLY WANT A GOD WHO IS SOVEREIGN

God’s sovereignty is one of the most comforting attributes about God that we can rely on

For example…why would you pray to a God who is not sovereign..If he is not in control why would you pray to him what could he do…maybe he could empathize with you and feel your pain..but he could not do anything about it..

Or, the hope of good coming in life…If God is not sovereign, then he can not promise you will be delivered or comforted or have an abundant life ever…

But…

Question #2: ARE YOU READY TO EMBRACE THAT DOUBLE EDGE SWORD

 God is not only able to bring about goodness and answers to prayer but

 His sovereignty allows him to bring about something terrifying that

 Habakkuk and the people needed to experience….

Do you want that kind of God?

Do you need that kind of God?

What is the answer to that—“Yes”-- we need that kind of God who on occasion wants us to behold some terrifying events for various reasons –

What is so terrible to Habakkuk that is coming that he had not fully understood….

Read verse 6-11 again…

[Explain key words Justice/violence—HAMAS]

Habakkuk wanted repentance of his people at this point in time—that is a great thing to desire and want

He wanted peace

He was tired of looking at violence and wickedness

But what does God cause him to look at even more….MORE VIOLENCE AND WICKEDNESS

Babylon was the new world power on the scene and Lady Babylon was hungry—devouring nations

Bablon—who could tell them what to do, who could bring them to court. They are a law unto themselves. Their own strength was their god and they were on the move

Picture an army of terrorists swarming the land

WHAT WAS GOD DOING??

HAMAS in the Kingdom of Judah would be met with even GREATER HAMAS by the Babylonians

Notice v 4…Law is ignored and Justice is never upheld Justice comes out perverted

Now notice v. 7 They are dreaded and feared, Their justice and authority originate with themselves

Judah had rejected God’s Justice and Law now they will face Babylonians justice and law

What was God doing….?

God’s Sovereignty …

1. **Is orchestrating retributive justice—Look in**
2. **God is not mocked-- you reap what you sow in increasing measure**
3. **According to His Word. Compare Hab 1:8 with Deut 29:49**

**Deuteronomy 28:47-49 (NASB95)**

**47  “Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things;  48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.   49  “The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand,**

**Habakkuk 1:8 (NASB95)**

**8     “Their horses are swifter than leopards**

**And keener than wolves in the evening.**

**Their horsemen come galloping,**

**Their horsemen come from afar;**

**They fly like an eagle swooping *down* to devour.**

God had been patient with His people, He gave them years and years to repent, he had showered then with blessings, when they sinned he would incrementally discipline them…but they continued to harden their heart…finally it was time for the other shoe to drop…IF GOD”S BLESSING AND GOODNESS DOES NOT LEAD YOU TO REPENTANCE THAN MAYBE HIS SEVER DISIPLINE WILL.God’s patience will not endure forever…And he was unleashing the full fury of circumstances under his control against his people.

The violence that Judah had perpetrated would be met with increased violence

The justice that Judah had flaunted would be met with people who had their own justice

And all of this at the right time and right way was according to God’s word…

Habakkuk had to stand and watch all of it transpire….in the midst of the maelstrom

[Explain-Two types of Adversity—one at the Sovereign hand of God that is not caused by our own sinfulness—Job, Joseph.. One that is a direct correspondence to our own sin—like against these individuals]

[Develop illustrations reaping what you sow… I have lived now for 40 year, 10 years of that I have ]

[Develop the fact that that works in reverse as well]

How do we respond to either type—Look in….repent if the adversity is a direct correspondence to our sinful behavior

For Habakkuk—2:4, 3:17-19—Trust the Lord’s plan in that adversity is precisely according to his word and it will not return void.

1. **Will not let His “competition “ thrive for long—Look up**

God’s ending response to Habakukk’s 1st complaint is that Babylon will be judged for its arrogance just as Judah was…

Babylon’s strength is **said to be its god…**Babalyon trusted only in itself not the God fo the universe and as such God will not bless his competition

As with all humans, humans will wither like the grass, and they will pass on like the wind.

Habakkuk was assured that Babylon would not last forever but would certainly be humbeld.

But the question remains, How can God use wickedness like this for his purposes?

Isn’t this using wicked means to justify good ends?

Pastor Viars will answer that next week if he makes it back from Moldova

But for now, it is enough to know that …

Babylon who had been acting like there was no authority except her own… doesn’t even recognize that she is being used by God’s authority in the realm of history to accomplish his purposes.

Babylon’s arrogance and pride would not escape the sowing and reaping principle just like Judah’s did not…

Just like ours will not….

God will not let His “competition” thrive for long…

If you are his competition…acting like you are you own authority…guess what…

I certainly understand this has not been the most encouragement message.

But again, it is good for us to be reminded not only of the pleasant things in the Word of God but also in the temporarily unpleasant things of the word of God.

Things which can sober us in all aspects of that word so that we really take seriously the things of God so that we can enjoy no his discipline but his favor….

Well we come to the end of God’s first response to Habakkuk’s questionings

And we find astounding Answers about God’s Sovereignty

Adversity provides some astounding answers about God’s Sovereignty

God’s Sovereignty

1. Is clarified in the big picture—Look around
2. Is not always comforting—Look down
3. Is orchestrating retributive justice—Look in
4. Will not let His competition thrive for long—Look up

Let me close with the biggest picture possible

 The emotional maelstrom that Habakkuk went through was necessary for several reasons only one of which I want to close with now. The deterioration of God’s people and specifically their hopes in the human DAVIDIC dynasty proved that man on his own could not bring in a reign of peace, justice and equity, The people of Habakkuk’s day had to experience the disillusionment of the failure of their kingdom so that they would ultimately look for a King outside of themselves—The God king in the form of the messiah..This event in history begin to stir hopes of a coming righteous king that would reign with peace, justice, and equity—and only God could reign in that fashion with his Messaih who came at the fullness of time –Jesus Christ.

Do you know of this Jesus Christ today who can be your Savior from your rebellion against God or he can be the one orchestrating events of history to bring against you the full calamity of what you have sown…..

Believer who is living life against God’s desires—Please do not mistake God’s patience with his approval…He will not be mocked and He will not always be patient.

Believer who is living righteously and beholding God’s work of discipline all around…..live by faith that he is accomplishing his plan and the fact of the calamity is proof of his continue work and also proof that he can bring good out of the calamity…

Habakukkuk—The righteous will live by faith

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (NASB95)

     17     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,

     18     Yet I will exult in the Lord,

I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

     19     The Lord God is my strength,

And He has made my feet like hinds’ *feet,*

And makes me walk on my high places.