



# How Long God?

Part 2: I've Got Good News and Bad News

Habakkuk 1:5-11

Tim Badal | July 23, 2017



A couple weeks ago we started our series in this very often neglected and obscure minor prophet at the back of the Old Testament—Habakkuk. If you don't know where Habakkuk is, God in His infinite wisdom created what we call the Table of Contents. You can find that in the front of your Bible. And if one of you ladies is pregnant right now, it would really excite your pastor if you named your son Habakkuk. If you don't like the name Habakkuk, you could call him Habby or Hab. We'd be okay with that. That would be a strong name to help us remember our time in this great book.

Two weeks ago we began looking at this lamenting prophet. He lived during a day when the world he knew—his country, his people, the people of faith around him—was really struggling. The people were trying to understand God's place in their lives. They had turned away from worshipping the God of the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, only 200 years after the time of King David and King Solomon.

After Solomon's reign, the nation of Israel had been divided into two kingdoms. A civil war had broken out, and instead of perpetually fighting one another, they decided that ten of the tribes would take the northern territory and they retained the name Israel. The two tribes that stayed in the south were called the nation of Judah. Habakkuk is prophesying to these two southern tribes some two centuries after the nation was divided.

During that time the ten northern tribes had turned to the pagan gods of their neighbors, having been ruled by one bad king after another. Judah, on the other hand, had had a few good kings in between the bad ones. It was rather like here in America. We've had some good years and some bad years, depending on the political climate and leadership in Washington. During the time of Habakkuk, the good times had been very short-lived as the majority of Judah's years were lived under godless kings. As a result of this up and down pattern, Habakkuk was very concerned to know where God was with His people. As part of a faithful remnant who still followed God, Habakkuk asked Him, "How long are You going to allow the people of God to disobey You? How long are You going to allow treachery and destruction to rule the day? How long will You allow sin to go unpunished?"

We learned a couple weeks ago that those are cries of our own hearts, as we see the evil mounting against us in our time. We watch the good and holy people being marginalized and knocked down, while evil seems to prosper day after day. This helps us understand the heart of this prophet as he cries out to the Lord.

I'm going to start with some review of what we covered a few weeks ago, and then we're going to slingshot into Habakkuk 1:5–11. My first point will focus on what we've learned in verses one through four—remembering the troubles both in Habakkuk's day and our own—and then we'll look at God's seeming answer to Habakkuk's prayer. For the sake of context, I'll begin reading in verse one. Verses one through four are Habakkuk's complaint—his petition to God. Then 1:5–11 gives God's response to the prophet. Let's listen to what God has to say from His Word:

The oracle [the burden] that Habakkuk the prophet saw. <sup>2</sup> O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? <sup>3</sup> Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. <sup>4</sup> So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

The Lord's answer begins in verse five:

<sup>5</sup> "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. <sup>6</sup> For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. <sup>7</sup> They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. <sup>8</sup> Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. <sup>9</sup> They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. <sup>10</sup> At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. <sup>11</sup> Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!"

A man went to the doctor's office because he wasn't feeling right. So the doctor ran a set of tests and after the results were in, the doctor called him back into the office. He told the man, "From the results of these tests, I can tell you I have good news, and I've got bad news. Which do you want first? Being an optimist, the man said, "Give me the good news. That will allow the bad news to go down more easily." He was amazed to hear what the good news was. The doctor said, "Well, the good news is you've got 24 hours to live." The man gasped, "My goodness! If that's the good news, what in the world could possibly be the bad news?" Upon which the doctor said, "I forgot to tell you the good news yesterday."

Some of you don't get that. Maybe in the parking lot you will. But have you ever been part of a good news/bad news conversation? I remember one time I got a test back in high school with a big bold red-letter **F** on it. Then there was a little note written on the test, and I couldn't imagine what my teacher was going to say to me. I wish I had taken a picture of it, as it would have been a great illustration about now. The note said, "You obviously studied for the test...but I assume it was the wrong test." Good news/bad news.

In high school one of my friends experienced this good news/bad news deal. He was dating a girl and on Valentine's Day he had all kinds of elaborate stuff to show his love for her. After he had played a mixed tape (which anybody under the age of 35 will have no idea what I'm talking about) and after he had given her flowers and candy and communicated his affection for her, she said to him, "Listen. I've got good news and I've got bad news." This is a true story. Please, teenage girls—don't do this to the guys. It's heartbreaking. She said, "I'm in love." Which made him all excited, until she told him the bad news: "I'm in love with someone else." Oh, man. That was cold as ice.

Good news/bad news. I've heard good news/bad news from mechanics—it's always bad news. They'll say, "I've got good news/bad news, and your response is, "Well, give me the good news." "I've changed the oil in your car." "That's great. What's the bad news?" "The transmission doesn't work anymore." We hear it from doctors, where it is too often all bad news. We hear it from dentists, teachers, employees or employers. What I've come to realize is that when someone uses that expression, they're going to give you two pieces of bad news. There are just degrees of difference. It goes from bad to worse.

Why do I bring that up to lead into our message today? It's because, in essence, God is going to say, "Habakkuk, people of Judah, I've got good news, and I've got bad news." In many ways, both sets of news are bad. Some of you might be wondering where this book is headed. When we approach the Scriptures, we know the stories don't come out of thin air. This is real human history, a moment in time just as there is a moment in time in which we ourselves live.

If you look at an Old Testament timeline, you'll see it starts with creation, then moves to the call of Abraham in Genesis 10–15. Next is the period of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Joseph, whom we've recently studied, is part of that era. This is followed by the time of Moses and the Exodus. The children of Israel leave Egypt and head into the wilderness for 40 years.

The book of Joshua follows the first five books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. During the time of Joshua, the nation of Israel conquers the land God had promised them. Following Joshua, the people are living in the Promised Land, but they have no king. God is their king, and the land is led by a series of judges—people like Samson, Deborah, and others. At the end of this season, the Israelites ask God to give them a king so they could be like the other nations.

So the final judge, Samuel, who was also a priest and a prophet, went before God to say the people wanted to be led by a king. The first king God chose for them was Saul. Following Saul were King David and his son, King Solomon. After Solomon the kingdom began to be divided, in part as a consequence of David's sin, his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and the family dynamics that created.

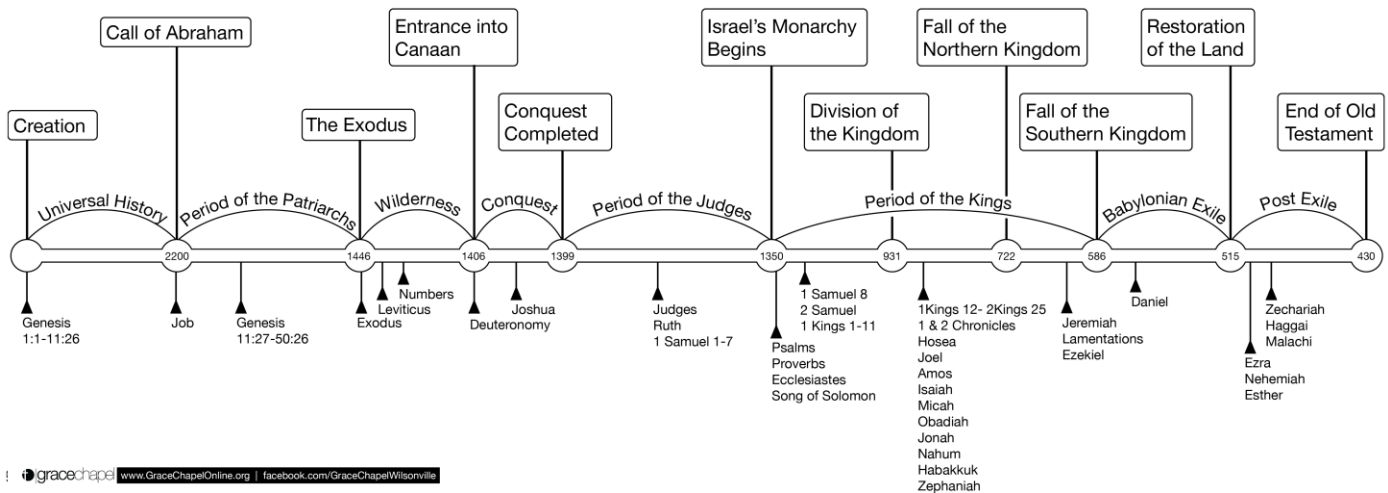
A number of the Old Testament books, including the book of Habakkuk, were written in this season after the nations were divided. Habakkuk was written before these nations fell to outside invaders. In his book he prophesies that the nation in the land we now know as Iraq would come and take the people captive. This took place in what is known as the Babylonian Exile, in 586–515 B.C.

We then read about the life of Daniel—Daniel in the lion’s den, Daniel’s friends Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—that’s when these stories take place.

But Jeremiah told them that their time in exile would only last 70 years, after which the people of Israel would be allowed to leave Iraq and Babylon to return to their home. Other books speak of what it would be like to be back in the Promised Land, including Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. In some ways it was a call to return to their first love, God Himself.

Then the Old Testament ends about 400 years before Christ enters history in bodily form. Now, having come through 2,000 years of human history, we should just close our time with a word of prayer. But hopefully this helps to orient you. As we see, Habakkuk has reasons not to be pleased with what he sees in his day—and he knows God is not pleased either. That’s why he opens his book with a complaint, a lament.

## OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE



God responds by saying, “I’ve heard your prayers, and I’m going to answer them.” In verse five God says, “*Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.*” This is the sort of verse we might put on a coffee mug or over our mantel. As so often happens, people take these great verses out of context—verses like Jeremiah 29:11: “*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*” We see that verse everywhere. And we look at Habakkuk 1:5 and think, “Isn’t that a great verse? God is going to amaze us. He’s going to astound us.” But never do I see above the fireplace, “Be amazed and astounded, because I’m bringing your enemies to hunt you down.” That would be kind of cool over a fireplace. I never see a Monet water portrait that has that verse next to it, “...with an invading Chaldean army with spears in their hands, ready to take over anybody who stands in their way.”

Listen, verses need to be read in their context. We must be careful. So often we pull a verse out of context and give it a completely different meaning from what God intended. God says, “Be amazed and astounded—bad trouble is on the horizon.” As Creedence Clearwater Revival sang, “The bad moon arising.” This isn’t going to be good. Trouble and turmoil and tribulation are on their way. God says, “You’re going to be amazed. You wouldn’t believe it if I told you, but I’m going to answer your prayer. Good news/bad news—I’m not going to answer it the way you want it to be answered.” What a great application for us. We pray and we pray and we pray, and then God answers our prayer.

I wonder in that moment if Habakkuk was thinking, “You heard me. You answered the phone. I’ve been calling and You answered!!” And God says, “Listen, I’m going to do something awesome.” Picture with me Habakkuk getting this on his cell phone. “Yeah?? Astounding? I’m with you! Oh, the good ol’ days are coming back. I love You, God. The Chaldeans...who?? The Chaldeans?! You’re raising them up? Isn’t that where Abraham came from, to become the father of Israel? Those Chaldeans are nasty and ruthless and hideous people. God, You’ve got the wrong number.

“Why would You, a good God Who has given the nation of Israel Your precious promises and covenants, now be raising up one of our chief enemies to discipline us? I just told You, God, how frustrated I am about the violence, how disappointed I am in the disobedience, the treachery, the sabotage and sin. I told You how disappointed I am that the law has become perverted. God, You need to do a revival in our land. You need to change us. You need to make us more like You. And how are You going to do that by bringing in a more treacherous, more sinful, more ungodly people to exercise Your discipline on us? That makes zero sense.”

Christian, remember that sometimes God answers your prayer in exactly the opposite way from what you thought He would. In that moment, we have a choice to make. Either we obey Him and worship Him or say, “That’s not my kind of God.” We do that a lot, don’t we? “If that’s what God is like, I want nothing to do with Him.” Or we make God and His words into a god of our own making, after our own desires. Here’s where we have to be people of the Word. This is God speaking, and this is God’s answer to His prophet: “I’m going to do something that’s going to amaze and astound you—and it’s going to be the exact opposite of what you’re looking for.”

## 1. Our text reminds us that life is filled with anguish and pain.

Why is Habakkuk crying out to God? Why is he complaining? We touched on this last time. The bad news we see in our text is that life is filled with anguish and pain. In the first four verses, Habakkuk is crying out to God, “Violence, destruction, treachery marks our culture.” But where does this come from?

### This lifelong struggle involves man’s troubles and emergencies.

Can I remind you that we don’t cry out for help when there are thousands of dollars in our bank account? We cry when there’s zero—or negative amounts. We don’t cry for help when the cars are running great. We cry for help when we’re stranded on the side of a road. We don’t cry when we’re current on the mortgage. We cry for help when we’re behind on the mortgage. We don’t cry when the marriage is good. We cry when the marriage is falling apart. We don’t cry when we have a job. We cry when we don’t have a job. We don’t cry when our nation is in order and law is overseeing the day. We cry when civil war breaks out. We don’t cry for help when we’re healthy. We cry when a plague like Ebola comes and ravages our land.

### This lifelong struggle involves the triumphing of evil.

Habakkuk is crying because his life is filled with troubles and emergencies. He’s crying to God because he recognizes that he can’t fix this problem. It’s way too big for him. And secondly, he is crying because evil is triumphing. Even though he’s being obedient, he’s still falling farther and farther behind. The faithful remnant is outnumbered. Verse four says, “*The wicked surround the righteous.*” Literally, that means the righteous are outnumbered by the pagans.

Tomorrow morning, how many of you will go to a workplace where you, as a Christian, are outnumbered? Where treachery and sabotage rule the day? Where dog-eat-dog is the name of the game? Though you share a common office space, you have adversaries vying for that account or that promotion. And because of this, the law of God doesn’t rule the day, but social Darwinism does. Only the powerful will survive.

### This lifelong struggle involves God’s tepid engagement.

So in the face of all this turmoil, Habakkuk cries out to the Lord. Why is he crying out to God? The reason is what I would call a tepid response from God. Tepid is a great word! That should be a 500 word score, right? Tepid means lackluster. It’s not happening. God doesn’t seem to be engaged. . . It’s as though God is absent, off His throne, not worried about life’s circumstances, not caring. Habakkuk is crying, “Where are You, God? You seem so distant. I feel so isolated. I’m turning to You, but all I hear is crickets. Hear me, God. How long will You allow this injustice and iniquity? How can You sit idly by, disconnected from our sin. You call Yourself a holy God. How can You see this sin and not do something?”

That’s where we left off two weeks ago. So we need to think a little more about the question: what are we to do in these circumstances when evil is triumphing? When the wicked are prospering while the obedient fall farther and farther behind? It seems that God is far off.

## During this struggle, don't accuse God.

The first thing we should remember is to not accuse God. Even in the struggle, we should never shake our fists at God, saying, "God, are You dumb? Are you missing it? Don't You care?" We should never speak against His character. But Habakkuk is clearly complaining.

Two of you came to me a couple weeks ago and said, "I thought the Bible teaches that we're not to complain." That's a good, biblically savvy point. It's always good when people use the Bible to confound the pastor. They said, "Aren't we supposed to do all things without grumbling or complaining?"

But here in the Bible we see Habakkuk complaining to God. Even the heading in my Bible says, "Habakkuk's Complaint." So what are we to do with that? I want you to understand that this coin has two sides. One side is a righteous and godly one. The other is a sinful one. We must be careful. When we don't understand what God is doing, or when He seems distant, we should never accuse God by complaining. Rather, we need to lament. Lament is a biblical word that is somewhat like complaining, but it comes out of a different heart.

Ann Voskamp explains it this way: "A lament is a cry of belief in a good God; a God Who has an ear to our hearts; a God Who transforms the ugly into beauty." This is what Habakkuk is doing. He's crying out with honesty. His belief isn't that God is bad, but rather that God is good. "God, I know You're concerned about these things. I know You can't look at evil and allow it to continue. So I want to join You in the struggle and Your heart cry against evil, because I know You're a God Who transforms ugly and wicked things into righteous things." That's lament.

What we often do, however, is complain. A complaint is the bitter howl of unbelief in a benevolent God. It represents distrust in His love. God's anger is kindled against us when we complain—especially when the essence of our complaint implies that we doubt His love. We rub our foreheads and shake our heads. "I can't believe this is happening to me. Why would God allow this thing to happen? I don't get it. God says He loves me and that He works out all things for good. Why does my neighbor have it so good, and I have it so hard?" That's complaint—not lament.

Brothers and sisters, some of us want to use Habakkuk to say, "Well, I can complain to God. I can shake my fist at God." But Habakkuk is actually joining God in his lament. We need to be lamenters, not complainers. True lament is the bold faith that trusts God's perfect love enough to authentically cry and feel. It's not about denying our feelings. Habakkuk doesn't do that. But he expresses his feelings in the confidence that our God hears and will act in a perfectly loving way. That's what we need to do in our complaints. "God, You're a good God. I don't understand why You're doing this, but I'm not going to accuse You. I'm going to believe and trust that You do all things well."

## During this struggle, don't act independently of God.

Not only should we not accuse God, we also should not act independently of Him. Habakkuk went directly to God. He didn't start a new ministry on his own. He doesn't start a political action committee. He doesn't find a politician who can rally the troops to his cause. He doesn't raise lots of money to create a community organizing center where he can rally the people to obey him apart from God. In other words, he never acts independently of God, but seeks to stay in step with Him.

How many of us, in our troubles and emergencies, try to address these situations through our bank accounts, through our connections, through our sweet thinking and quick wisdom? How rare is it, when an emergency arises, that we stop and get on our knees: "Lord, what would You have me do? What are You calling me to?" Don't act independently of God.

## During this struggle, don't abandon your faith.

How sad is it that when we come to times of trial and trouble that we run away instead of persevering. Instead of fighting the fight of faith, we choose flight and run. We give up. We give up on God. We give up on the church. We give up on other believers. We say, "Well, I ran into this obstacle here, so I'm going to give up on all of it and walk away." Habakkuk doesn't do that.

This past weekend we saw pictures of our kids at Great America. They were going to be flung at high rates of speed into the air, upside down, left and right. Let me tell you that when I get on those rides—which is very rare—I cry like a little newborn baby. I hate that stuff. That's trouble and emergency in the life of your pastor. I hold on for dear life to the very apparatus that promises

to save me. Then my lunatic 14-year-old son has his arms in the air, "This is great! Whooo!" I'm holding on. "Lord, forgive him, for he knows not what he does."

Listen, when trials and tribulations come, God has purposed for you not to be a fool and have your hands up in the air, risking falling out. What He has called you to do is grab hold of Him. Remember, Habakkuk's name means embracer. Grabber. Hugger of God. So grab hold of Him. Don't abandon your faith.

So when life is filled with the troubles and anguish we face every day, the bad news is it's going to happen. Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble." So God, what's the good news? If that's the bad news, what's the good news?

## 2. God is faithful to answer our prayers.

The good news is this: God is faithful to answer our prayers. So the prophet cries out in honesty and pain, and lo and behold, the Lord speaks. He answers Habakkuk's prayer. It prophetically echoes what the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 4:16: *"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* Habakkuk is in a place of need. He goes to God in confidence and God answers his prayer.

But the answer to Habakkuk's prayer is not exactly what he was hoping to hear. In fact, it's the exact opposite. He was praying for revival. He was praying for mercy. He was praying that the unjust would be punished and the just would be blessed. But God says, "I'm going to bring havoc on the whole nation—both the unfaithful and the faithful." That's the bad news. The bad news is that God's answer is more bad news.

As Christians, we need to know that sometimes God's bad news is that life is hard—and the good news is that life is going to get harder. You ask, "How can that be good news?" The answer is this: God tells us that even in the bad news, He will be with us. Even in bad times, He is faithful. We must recognize that sometimes God's answer of "no" —His hard, bad news answer—is the best news we can get. Why should we believe that? I want to show you four things in these "bad news" verses of Habakkuk 1:5–11.

### Remember, God is always on the move.

If we look carefully, we'll realize that God is on the move. And isn't that one of the things Habakkuk is asking about? "God, how can You sit idly by and not do something? How can You idly look at wrong?" Habakkuk laments this. God responds, *"I am doing a work"* (verse five). That phrase "doing a work" is in the present tense. It's happening right then. "As I speak, Habakkuk, I am working out My plan. It's moving forward, step by step, moment by moment. My plan is unfolding just as I willed it."

That helps Habakkuk and it helps us realize that even when we think God isn't doing anything, He's actually doing something. And notice that God says He's doing "a work." That word "work" in the Hebrew literally means work. All you Bible scholars—they nailed this one.

Tomorrow you will be doing a work. Here's something crazy that should knock your socks off. You go to your workplace and you have emails to return. You have phone calls to return. You have sales calls to make. You have deals to close. Maybe you're producing something. You're in the process of making something. And at the end of the day, you can say, "I finished my work. It's done." The great thing about work is there's always more for you the next day.

God is working too. But unlike you, He's not returning sales calls or running reports or making sure the new company software is up to snuff. No, God's work is that He's upholding the cosmos. He's raising up empires and bringing other empires down. He's making sure every one of earth's seven billion inhabitants has life and breath. He's making sure the fish in the sea and the birds in the air and the beasts of the field all have what they need. We read in Matthew that God is the One Who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field. God makes sure that the far-flung celestial bodies we haven't yet seen—even with our greatest telescopes—stay exactly in their orbits. This is so important and it's all happening with perfect precision.

It's not like your work, where nothing happens with perfect precision. That's why you have all those calls and emails. Hey, the order didn't come in. This is going to be delayed. God doesn't say, "Oops, sorry. I'm a little late." We don't wake up at 3:00 in the afternoon because God says, "I forgot to raise the sun. Wake up everybody!" We didn't wake up gasping for air. "Oh, I forgot to turn the oxygen on." With perfect precision, God is doing His work.

And He says to Habakkuk, "I am on the move and the way you can know that is to look among the nations." That's very important. When we are struggling with our problem, we might say, "God, You're not moving in my situation." But God says, "Look up. Look

among the nations.” Right now people are more disappointed with our country and its fighting and bickering. We’ve watched the church decline in our nation. But then I attended a banquet last night and heard what our brothers and sisters in Liberia are doing, and I say, “God is on the move. He’s doing some great things.” I may not like what I see here, but if I look to the nations—China, India, Liberia—I will be amazed at what God is doing.

### **Remember, God’s ways can be mysterious.**

While God is always on the move, His ways are mysterious. He says, “I’m going to raise up the Chaldeans.” The Chaldeans were from northern Iraq. They were the kissing cousins of the bald, beautiful and buff Assyrians. [I’m 50% Assyrian. We’re bald, beautiful and buff. Amen?] The Assyrians, Chaldeans and Babylonians are all kissing cousins—kissing empires, if you will. And they were nasty people back in that day.

Sometimes we wonder why God would use these people. Why does He use evil to fix the faithful remnants? Why is He allowing evil in our lives? Wouldn’t it be easier just to win us with honey and sweet things? Why does He bring hard things into our lives? Listen, this issue of a good God in an evil world is what theologians call the problem of theodicy. If you really want to study it, there are many great books that speak to the issue of theodicy. What I would offer you as a Cliff Notes version, I don’t know.

I do know though that my God does all things well. I do know my God says He promises to make all things come together for the good of those whom He loves and who are called according to His purposes. And that’s good enough for me. So when evil comes, with Job I can say, “God gives and God takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). God’s ways are mysterious. Isaiah 55:9 says His ways are higher than our ways. They’re greater than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. God is on a completely different plane than we are. His degrees far advance ours.

### **Remember, God’s plans can be misunderstood.**

God’s ways are mysterious, and as a result, we often misunderstand His plans. Can I just say that God, in this text, seems to revel in how awesome the Chaldeans are? They’re fast. They’re ferocious. They move. They’re smart. They can conquer nations. They laugh at any opposition. It’s like God is saying, “Can you see how great these guys are?”

I think the reason He does this is that He’s the power behind them. He says, “I am raising up the Chaldeans. I’m empowering them. I’ve giving them the victory. I’m allowing them to take this opportunity. If you want to know how powerful they are—they’re powerful, but they’re nothing without Me.”

Have you ever thought that your enemies are nothing without God? So go to Him; don’t fight them. If you recognize that God is allowing them to do what they do, you’ll see that His ways are mysterious and can be misunderstood.

When Amanda was diagnosed with cancer, I did not understand that. She was 40 years old. She’s a faithful woman. You have a pagan as a pastor, but you have a godly pastor’s wife. I asked God, “Why didn’t You strike me with it? I’m the sinful one. She’s faithful. Never a bad word comes from her. Never a bad thought comes from her. She’s a wonderful woman. Why would You strike her with this? Strike me. I’ve got sin. I’ve got a problem.” But I misunderstood. And I began to wonder, “God, are You angry with me? Are You angry with our family? Have we not done enough?”

### **Remember, God’s ways are always moral.**

We misunderstand the ways of God, because God’s ways are mysterious. But if we stand back a little bit and give Him some time, we’ll see what His ways are. Habakkuk was going to learn, after some years—even some decades—that God’s plans are always moral. No matter what He brings our way, no matter what He allows to befall us, remember that He could have stopped it. You see, one of the things I always struggle with is that I want to disconnect God from evil. We should disconnect them in the sense that God never does evil. But God uses evil. Listen carefully. When you start separating things and say, “Well, God didn’t allow that to happen—it happened on its own,” you are in reality undermining God. You’re saying He isn’t God. You’re saying something took place in His creation that He could not have stopped.

Brothers and sister, not only could He have stopped it, but He gave His stamp of approval to allow it to take place, to exist. There is not one stray molecule in the entire universe that does not get its call from God Himself. Everything goes across His desk. If it doesn’t, then evil is god and God our Father is not. So be careful, because God’s ways are always moral. We may not like them. We may misunderstand them. They may seem mysterious to us.

As we'll see, Habakkuk is going to praise God. You have two choices. Job's wife said, "Job, curse God and die." Or, you can bless the name of the Lord. Habakkuk chose to do the latter.

## Points to ponder when God's answer isn't what we want or expect.

What do we do with this? Knowing that God is faithful to answer our prayers, and seeing how He's doing it, what do we take away from this?

### We need to be in prayer more.

We have just read with our own eyes how a man got on his knees and prayed—and what did God do? He answered. If God answers our prayers, then surely the people of God should pray more. We need to pray, and we need to pray more. If we want to see a change in our church, we need to pray. If we want to see a change in our family, we need to pray. If we want to see change in our country, we need to pray. If we want to see change in the world, we need to pray. And we need to pray more than ever before, because God is faithful. However, we must realize God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we want Him to.

### We need to change our perspective.

We need to stop looking at our circumstances through our own lens. Let me tell you: my lens and your lens are always faulty. Always. We don't get it. We don't understand. We're so involved in the situation we can't distinguish the forest from the trees. So back up, give it enough time, and you'll start to see it. God will reveal it.

In 1990 my older brother was killed in a car accident. I was 14 years old. My goodness, the kid was full of life. He was serving the Lord. He was doing great ministry as a young man. He was changing his public school for Jesus Christ. And in that moment God took him out. That made no sense. I watched my parents cry and wail and weep. It made no sense. My parents served and honored God in all they did. The only problem they had was a bad second-born son. I didn't get it. But now, 27 years later, it's crystal clear. God's ways are always right. Do I miss my brother? Yes. Humanly speaking, would it have been far better for me to have him here? I think so. But I can tell you right now, my family would not be where we are today—serving where we are serving—if God didn't allow that mysterious and misunderstood event to take place.

So back up and give God time to bring you the answer. I would far rather have bad news from God than any amount of good news from men. Can you say that today? "I'd rather get bad news from God than good news from men." Let's take these hard words to heart, these words we sometimes misunderstand, and work through them as sensible people being led by the Holy Spirit.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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