

Nuggets in Habakkuk Part 1 - God's Mysterious Ways

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Date: 05 May 2024

- [0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 93. Let's sing Psalm's version, Psalm 93. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm, verse 1 to 5.
- The tune is St. Magnus. The Lord is King, His throne endures, majestic in His height. The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might. We'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise.
- The Lord is King, His throne endures, majestic in His height.
- The Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength and might.
- The world is founded firm and sure, removed it cannot be.
- [1 : 08] Your throne is strong and you are God from all eternity.
- The seas, O Lord, have lifted up, they lifted up their voice.
- The seas, O Lord, have lifted up their waves and made a mighty noise.
- The Lord in whom, whom are strong, more powerful is He.
- than thunder of the ocean's waves, or breakers of the sea.
- [2 : 18] Your royal structures. Your royal statues, Lori's thongle, unchanging is Your word.
- and holiness adores you us for endless days, O Lord.
- We unite our hearts in a short word of prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we do rejoice in your goodness to us, that you are a God who blesses us so abundantly and help us to be thankful each day for all that is ours, for all that we enjoy from your hand, the food that we have, the homes, the families, the church that we enjoy coming to here and learning more about you and experiencing you and being encouraged then to share the good news of the gospel with others.
- And we thank you, Lord, that you have blessed us with the promise of your Son, the Savior, Jesus Christ. And in all that we do, we want to know more of him, that we might love him with all our hearts and experience him with us all the days of our lives.
- We thank you that that is your promise as we put our trust in you, that you will not leave us at any time, but that you will be our constant companion. So may you bless us, each one here today.
- [4 : 02] Bless our young people as we thank you for them. We pray that you will be with them in school and nursery and in the Sunday school and Crescent tweenies here. May you watch over each one, O Lord, as we commit them to your care.
- And we ask that you will hear all our prayers at this time and throughout this day as we worship you. Lord, may we rejoice in you and be glad in you and give thanks to you for all that is ours in you and in your son as we ask it with the forgiveness of our sins.
- In Jesus' name. Amen. It's a good thing to come together and worship God. It's a real blessing and encouragement to see everyone who comes in through these doors today and everyone chins in online as well, that we have that desire to worship God and to enjoy Him.

Now what about this week? How have you enjoyed this past week? What about the weather? What a transformation in the weather this week. The sun being out and it being so warm.

We went from, I think it was hailstoning the week before to the sun cream coming out this week and everybody just seems so happy. Everybody just seems to be enjoying themselves so much when the sun is out and the weather is good.

[5 : 25] You may have got the trampoline out this week in the hope that now the gales are past that you can put the trampoline up and enjoy that again being out in the good weather.

You may have got a paddling pool out this week or something to enjoy because it was so warm. Maybe you bought ice cream to enjoy because that helps to cool you down.

But it's amazing the difference the good weather makes. And this week, a couple of times I was out in the castle grounds and you meet a lot of different people out in the castle grounds but this week in particular everybody just seemed so happy.

Nobody's head was down into the rain. They were all up all saying good morning or good afternoon. Hello, how are you? Everybody was just so happy. I even bumped into two of our elders in the church here and they were smiling and happy.

I know it's hard to believe but yes, they were smiling enjoying themselves out in the sun. It just makes such a difference to people. And then you begin to forget about the winter and the gales and the rain but then they'll come again at some point.

[6 : 32] But it's good to enjoy the good weather and to have something that makes us happy in these days. But it's a reminder too that it's not just about the weather to make us happy, is it?

When we think of what the Bible teaches to us, it reminds us that it's not just about great days of sunshine that we are to be happy but that whatever we experience in life we can be happy in Jesus.

That he is the one who gives us through joy and through delight. In John chapter 15, there Jesus is talking to his disciples and talking to us and he's saying to abide in him and to abide in him for a reason.

He says in verse 11 of that chapter, these things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.

And he's saying that it's not just for sunny days that we are to be full of joy but even the days when it's raining and cold and snowing, we can still know the joy of the Lord and joy to the full.

[7 : 44] You see, when you know Jesus, that means that you have his joy, his joy in your heart, a joy that passes all understanding as the Bible says, a joy that is inexpressible.

We just almost don't know how to show it but it just comes through in us. The sun brings joy out of us but Jesus brings all joy to us and out of us.

So may we enjoy him today and every day and may we shine with his joy and his beauty to all around us.

So may God bless these thoughts to us. We're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

[8 : 46] And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise now in Psalm 90 this time in the Scottish Psalter version.

Psalm 90 page 349 of the Psalm books. And the tune is Arlington. Psalm 90 at verse 1 we sing down to verse 4.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in generations all, before thou ever hadst brought forth the mountains great or small. We'll sing to God's praise verse 1 to verse 4.

Amen. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place and generations all, before thou ever hast gone forth, before thou ever hadst brought forth the mountains great or small.

earth and all the world and all the world abroad in life from everlasting amazement that all.

[10 : 39] In thy earth for everlasting worth. wurde, the rest of world to everlasting God.

And unto them thou sittest again, His sons of men return.

Because a thousand years appeared, No more before thy sight.

Than yesterday when it is past, Than yesterday when it is past, For thou art now watch by night.

And we're going to turn to reading God's word in the Old Testament, And near the end of the Old Testament in the book of Habakkuk.

[12 : 31] The book of Habakkuk. You'll find this around page 948 in the Bibles. Habakkuk.

We're going to read chapter 1 and just into chapter 2, verse 1. Habakkuk chapter 1.

The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, And you will not hear, Or cry to you violence, And you will not save?

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, So the law is paralyzed, And justice never goes forth, For the wicked surround the righteous, So justice goes forth perverted.

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. For 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.

[13 : 51] They are dreaded and fearsome, Their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. 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. They all come for violence, All their faces forward.

They gather captives like sand, At kings they scoff, And at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, For they pile up earth and take it. Then they sweep by like the wind, And go on, Guilty men, Whose own might is their God.

Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, My Holy One? We shall not die, O Lord. You have ordained them as judgment, And you, O Rock, Have established them for reproof.

You are of purer eyes than to see evil, And cannot look at wrong. Why do you idly look at traitors, And are silent when the wicked swallows up, The man more righteous than he?

[15 : 03] You make mankind like the fish of the sea, Like crawling things that have no ruler. He brings all of them up with a hook, He drags them out with his net, He gathers them in his dragnet, So he rejoices and is glad.

Therefore he sacrifices to his net, And makes offerings to his dragnet, For by them he lives in luxury, And his food is rich. Is he then to keep on emptying his net, And mercilessly killing nations forever?

I will take my stand at my watchpost, And station myself on the tower, And look out to see what he will say to me, And what I will answer concerning my complaint.

So may God bless that reading from his word. We'll again just unite our hearts in prayer. Let us pray. Lord our gracious God, May you help us as we open up your word this day, As we read it together, And as we share from it, That your word would minister to our hearts, That you will help us to understand these words, That we are reading and sharing together, That you will help us to apply them to our lives, And to our walk with you, And to our witness to those around us.

For we realize that there are many parts in scripture, That may leave us with a sense of wondering, What you are saying to us. Wondering maybe what you were saying to Habakkuk, In his day, And how that might apply to ourselves today.

[16 : 38] And so help us in our understanding, Lord, To see that you have purposes for all your people down through every generation, And that your way of salvation is always being worked out according to your will, Even when your will goes against what we might pray for or be looking for.

We know that you know better, And we pray to have faith in you, To have that trust in you. You have been reminded in the psalm that we sung there, Psalm 90, That a thousand years is like a day with you.

It reminds us that, Although we want to see things change immediately and now, That your plans and purposes so often take time to be worked out, But that you have your picture in hand, That you have all things under your control, And that you will work all things according to your purpose.

And so, Lord, We pray for your comfort, For your strength, For your help on a daily basis, That we would know your love towards us, That we would know that you have remembered us, And are remembering us constantly, That not a day passes, Lord, When you are not aware of all our different needs.

Not a day passes when you are not aware of all that is going on around us. And so, Lord, We come humbly before you. We come acknowledging our own sin and our own frailties, And praying to you, Lord, That you might come and draw near to us, Give us your assurance, Give us your comfort, And give us your peace.

[18 : 22] We pray that for us all here gathered, Tuning in online, And all around us, Lord, Who need you in particular ways. We pray for those who mourn and grieve. We commit them to your care, And to your keeping, Each one.

We know, Lord, That, As we've been reminded in this past week, That change comes upon us so quickly. We are always reminded of it, Lord, Day by day. And yet, Help us to take heed.

Help us to see how you speak to us in all of these ways. And your word ministers to us in the midst of it all, Calling us to yourself, To make our calling and election sure.

To make it a day when we would run to you. A day we would seek to find you as our refuge, As our help. And so, Lord, We pray to you, To you to surround us all, And especially those with broken hearts at this time.

Remember those who are unwell as well, In homes, In hospital, And in their own homes too, Lord. We commit each one to you. Surround them and uphold them, We pray, As only you can.

[19 : 31] Knowing, Oh Lord, That you have them in your hand as well. That our very lives are in your hand. That you care for us in that way and at each time.

So, Lord, Help us so we might take all our cares and our burdens to you. We thank you too, Lord, For the work of the gospel. We thank you for the witness of your church here in our community and far and wide.

And we do pray for your church, Lord, That you will build it up. It does not belong to us. It is not ours of our making in any way. It is your church, Your people, Your people that you have bought with a price.

And help us to put you first in all things. To seek first the kingdom of God and your righteousness. And that then all things will be added to us. And Lord, We do pray for the word to go out with power.

We pray for your spirit to work. In the work and witness of your people, We thank you for all our young people. We commit them to you. We thank you for the youth fellowship, Oh, Lord.

[20 : 37] And as they meet this evening, May your blessing be upon them and upon Thomas Davis as he comes to speak. We pray there will be an encouragement, an encouraging time together.

Remember young people sitting exams just now. As they prepare for them and as they go through them, Lord, That you will give them guidance and help along each step of the way.

Remember the free church seminary as well. And the exams taking place there just now. We pray for all the students. Remember Scott as he is away just now, Lord, And pray for him as he comes to his last exam on Tuesday, that you will be with them and uphold them through that and all others who are taking these exams just now as well.

We pray for those who are coming to the end of their time in the seminary and will be awaiting calls in these coming months. We pray for your guidance to them, your spirit to make clear to them where you would have them to go.

We pray for our presbytery in these days as well. As we look back to our own presbytery meeting this week, we know that Reverend Iamacritchie and Graver has accepted a call to Greyfriars in Inverness.

[21 : 50] And we pray for him in his preparation to leave a congregation and to begin a new ministry. We thank you for his years of ministry in Graver.

And we thank you for all the encouragements and blessings that he has seen. And we do pray for the congregation as they prepare to see him go, that they will remember that you are with them and that it is not any minister's ministry that counts, but the blessing of God.

And so we pray, Lord, that you will surround them and uphold them. We pray for Greyfriars as they prepare for a new ministry as well, Lord, that you will encourage and strengthen them.

And remember our presbyteries throughout our land, O Lord, where there is weakness, where there is vacancy. We pray, Lord, for your encouragement to each congregation and all your people.

Remember our general assembly to take place later on this month as it meets in Edinburgh. We pray for the Reverend Bob Aykroyd as he prepares to come to the end of his time as moderator.

[22 : 53] And we pray for the Reverend Colin McLeod as he prepares to take that role on, that you will bless him and encourage him as he prepares for that and as he goes on, God willing, in this year ahead.

And we see so much around us, Lord, that are so many needs. And we just pray, Lord, for your Spirit's help among us, for you to move among us as a people, Lord, to hear our prayers and to help us, Lord, to always pray with that sense of your will be done.

Teach us your ways, O Lord, and help us to walk by them. And all we ask, we ask with the forgiveness of all our sins, as we confess them anew before you, in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

May glory be his. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise before we turn back to our reading in Habakkuk, this time in Psalm 13, page 14 of the Psalm books.

Psalm 13. We'll sing the whole of this psalm, and you'll see the words, especially there in verse 1, they resonate with what we've read in Habakkuk as well.

[24 : 11] The same question from the psalmist, how long will you forget me, Lord? Will you forget always? How long, Lord, will you hide your face and turn from me your gaze?

But then at verse 5, we see the psalmist saying, but still I trust your constant love. You save and set me free. With joy, I will extol the Lord, who has been good to me.

Let's sing the whole of this psalm, the tune of St. Kilda. We sing to God's praise. Amen. How long will you forget me, Lord?

Will you forget always? How long, Lord, will you hide your face and turn from me your gaze?

How long must I be sad each day in the perplexity?

[25 : 28] How long will my opponent stand in triumph over me?

O Lord, my God, consider me and give me your reply.

Light up my eyes, Lord, I will see the sick of those who die.

Then would my enemy give them at last I made them low.

And so my foes would sing for joy to see my overthrow.

[26 : 48] But still, I trust your constant love.

You save and set me free. With joy I will extol the Lord, who has been good to me.

Well, let's turn back to a reading in Habakkuk chapter 1. Habakkuk chapter 1. You can read at verse 5.

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.

I want us to begin a study in Habakkuk today. We're going to look at through this book. It seems as you begin to read it that there's a lot of despair and a lot of hopelessness here as you begin to read into Habakkuk's day and all that was going on.

[28 : 10] You see that there's lots going on around him, both in the sense of nationally, just around him, among his own people. There's a lot going on, many problems.

Even internationally, there's a lot going on as well. A lot that leaves him confused. There's corruption and chaos. There's war and there's wrongdoing.

And it's something that you see again and again throughout the Old Testament. You see these times when there are things that are going well for God's people, but so often you then see it's followed by a time where the tide turns, as it were.

And there seems to be nothing good, nothing that gives hope to God's people. And it's maybe something that we see ourselves today as well.

We think the tide has turned against us. And just like Habakkuk has his questions here, how long, O Lord? As the psalmist in Psalm 13 was, which we were just singing, how long, O Lord?

[29 : 12] These are the kind of questions that we can have ourselves as well. But when you read through the Old Testament and when you come to read from the prophets, Habakkuk was a prophet and you've got many other prophets that we read from in the Old Testament, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.

There's many of them that came from God, were sent by God with a message. Into these situations where there seems to be so much despair, God speaks to his people.

And he speaks to them a message that often begins with a rebuke, where they have gone wrong. And there's always a challenge in that, to then show them how they can find hope, how they can reestablish, as it were, their relationship with God and that there is that hope.

Now, often when you read in the prophets, what you find is God has given the prophet a message. The likes of Isaiah, God gave him a message and Isaiah delivered that message to the people around him.

And that's where we learn what God is saying to us. But Habakkuk is slightly different. He's a prophet. He's got a message from God.

[30 : 29] You see that in verse 1, the oracle, that Habakkuk, the prophet, saw. So he's got something to give to the people of his day. He's got something to say to ourselves today, as well as a message from God.

But the message, as it were, comes across in a slightly different way. Instead of God just speaking to Habakkuk, saying, tell my people this, what you see is it's more of a dialogue between Habakkuk and the Lord himself.

And as you're reading through chapter 1 there, you're seeing that there's parts where Habakkuk is speaking and there's parts where the Lord is speaking to him.

And it's through this engagement that they have, this conversation that they have, that we learn and the people in Habakkuk's day learned as well.

In all that is wrong, he is looking for hope and he is looking for help. In the midst of it. And what you find as you go through Habakkuk, the book, and what we want to see in our study is that in the midst of all that is maybe hard for us to read, all that seems so hopeless in so many different ways, that there are gems for us to find.

[31 : 48] There are gems for us to find. Panning for gold has been something that people have done for hundreds of years.

There have been gold rushes in America, in Australia, even here in Scotland. There's been times when people have gone hunting and finding gold, not in huge quantities.

But to this day, people still spend a lot of time taking time to go out and go into streams and digging into the earth, sifting through mud and stones, panning as it is called, using like a sieve to clean the earth, to clean the dirt away in the hope of finding just a little bit of gold.

Why, you ask, would they do that? Why would they spend so much time doing that? Well, it's because gold is precious. Even a small quantity, even an ounce of gold, is worth up to around 2,000 pounds.

So that's why people spend so much time looking for gold. And for ourselves, as we come to God's Word, it's a little like that panning for gold.

[33 : 04] We're going through, for example, this letter of, this book of Habakkuk, and we're looking through all that seems to leave us thinking, what good is there here for us?

But to go through it and sift our way through and see that there are nuggets of gold in here. Nuggets of gold that Habakkuk was given to share with the people then and to share with ourselves.

And there's five nuggets I want us to see as we study through this book. Five different studies we're going to have looking at five different nuggets of gold, as it were.

And the first one we have is verse 5 here in chapter 1. And at first glance, it may seem a little out of the way when we start to look into chapter 1.

How is there gold? How is there something precious in the midst of this? But we'll go through it today and look at it in three different ways. In chapter 1, verse 1 to 12 in particular, we have first a sense of confusion.

[34 : 10] Then secondly, we have a mysterious providence. And then thirdly, we're going to see a warm embrace. And we begin with a sense of confusion.

Verse 5 says to us, 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.

Where does this come from? This has come from God to Habakkuk. And it's come as a result of Habakkuk's complaint as we see in verse 2 to verse 4.

And it's in these verses 2 to 4 that we see this sense of confusion that Habakkuk has. Have you ever complained?

I'm sure we've all complained about different things at different times. And especially when it comes to time and to how long something is taking.

[35 : 12] How long until the food will be ready? How long until we get there? How long are you going to take to be ready?

How long is this parcel going to take to arrive? We have all these complaints that we make. Complaints surrounding time. How long?

But have you ever complained to God in that way? How long Lord? Well that is the complaint that we see from Habakkuk.

In verse 2 Oh Lord how long shall I cry for help and you will not hear? Or cry to your violence and you will not save? How long will it take?

Psalms 13 was the same. How long will you forget me Lord? Will you forget me? Always. Habakkuk wasn't directing what God was saying to him straight to the people.

[36 : 14] Habakkuk was engaging with God and he does this first of all with this complaint with this groaning towards God in the midst of all that is happening around him nationally but also internationally as well as we will see as you go on and we see the Chaldeans or the Babylonians as they're known as well a people who were surrounding them who would be their enemies for a time as he's got all of these things going on he cries out asking God are you going to ignore this?

How long Lord will I cry for help and you will not hear? What's happening? What's happening here in Habakkuk's day?

Well a writer put it like this Habakkuk the society around Habakkuk is tearing itself apart and when you read through verse 2 to 4 there you see just how it is tearing itself apart I cry to you violence and you will not save violence there means chaos and just people willfully damaging and taking other people's property and livelihoods there's all this chaos all around verse 3 he says to him why do you make me see iniquity?

Why am I living in a day where I'm seeing so much that is against your cause? so much that is morally wrong so much that we see people calling right wrong and wrong right his complaint is saying to God why don't you care?

Are you not concerned with all that is happening around us? Why do you look he says in verse 3 there and look idly at wrong?

[38 : 22] Why are you looking and not doing anything about this? This is the complaint that Habakkuk has and is that a complaint that we might have against God today?

Do you feel like that towards God today? Like we are in a day as never before when we look around us and see all that is wrong? When we are confused by everything that's taking place in life whether it's in our own lives lives of our community around us life in our nation life in the world when there is so much wrong we see it again and again we see tragedy we see murder we see political and society chaos we see confusion confusion in gender confusion in marriage we see greed we see poverty and they're next door to each other we see all of these things we see it on a daily basis that's the same as Habakkuk was seeing as well there are times again and again when we see just like

Habakkuk's day that was repeated again and again as you go into the New Testament as you look down through the generations you see it happening again and again and the cry of God's people can be the same why how long oh Lord are we going to cry for help and you will not hear we cry as if God is ignoring it all we complain against God and when you look at verse 4 you see what was it the heart of all that was wrong in his day the law is paralyzed and justice never goes forth the law the word of God was paralyzed we need a standard to work from when you think of manufacturing there's always a standard that things have to be made to if they're not they will not be safe things are stamped marked as in they've passed the test they've passed the standard but we find that people try to find a way around that people find a way to cheat these things but it often costs dearly it often costs in so many different ways we try and find a way around things and that's what's happening here the law is paralyzed the standards that they were working to and from are being put away to find another way of life another way of living and when that fails when we move away from God's ideal to our own ideas what comes chaos and clashes ensue look at this week look at the fear of the prospect of our nation having a

Christian first minister you think to yourself how could we come to this point where the immediate reaction is to try and paralyze that to stop that we can't have her she's a Christian she's going to take us backwards we've got to paralyze this we've got to stop this the law is to be paralyzed but what people are saying in that is we will not have God rule over us we will not have God's word as our standard and Christ is pushed out and we go on in chaos blindly continuing in chaos but they'll call it progress and we see it all around us and we can have that same cry how long oh Lord will you not hear us how long will you look and do nothing in these situations is this a cry and a complaint without hope from

Habakkuk well it's not it's a pleading with God his prayer may not have been answered the way he might have expected it or wanted it but he's not turning away he's pleading all the more with God to hear and to come and to act but there's a sense of confusion there's a sense of not understanding just why all this is happening and that can be ours today as well we don't understand many things we will ask how long we will ask why but if we understood everything we wouldn't need faith and what Habakkuk is showing us here is that we still need to be a people of faith even in the midst of the confusion that we can feel in all that leaves us devastated worried and fearful for all that's going on around us so his cry his complaint has a sense of confusion and he's asking how long will this go on

[43 : 59] Lord will you not do something well the second thing we see is a mysterious providence in the Lord's answer in verse five onwards Habakkuk's problem was not so much what was happening what people were doing around him it was more what God wasn't doing that God wasn't doing anything but is God inactive in Habakkuk's situation here and we ask ourselves is God inactive in our days he not doing anything in our day at our prayers not being answered well look at the response that God gives to Habakkuk in verse five look he 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 nugget that we're looking for today this is something precious that we're looking at today but it may not seem as a great comfort immediately as we look at it this is the Lord's response to Habakkuk's claim that

God was doing nothing but he says look I am doing a work in your days what work is he doing how are things going to change in Habakkuk's day and you can begin to maybe feel a sense of anticipation for Habakkuk the Lord is saying no I am taking action there's this sense of excitement maybe in Habakkuk building what's he going to do is this going to be the answer as we think of a prayer in the New Testament that the Lord is going to do abundantly more than we ask or imagine when there's this sense of you would not believe it if told what is it that is going to come is the Lord going to change this turmoil into peace is he going to bring prosperity and praise of the Lord once again is he going to bring revival is he going to deal with all the enemies that surround them

Habakkuk and the people will be waiting with a sense of anticipation and excitement what is God going to do well the answer is shocking the answer is in many ways this mysterious providence look at what the Lord says in verse 6 for behold I am raising up the Chaldeans also known as the Babylonians that bitter and hasty nation and as you read down three these verses down to verse 11 you see this is not the answer that Habakkuk would have been expecting or wanting I am doing a work that you would not believe if I told but hold on Lord you're sending the Chaldeans you're sending this Babylonian army this enemy of ours you're sending them whose might is their God as it says in verse 11 you're sending them how can any good come from this how can this be what you want for us well it's because we expect God to work in the ways that we want but sometimes

God works in different ways God works in mysterious ways God works in the ways of providence that we cannot understand God brings times of chaos God brings times of judgment God's goodness is not just seen in days of revival God's goodness is not just seen in days of blessing we can still see God's goodness in the midst of his judgment in the midst of his speaking to us in these powerful ways in the midst of many things that we see going on around us today the tragedies the wars the pandemics the chaos that is always there can we not see that God is still working in the midst of that you see a little of that in verse 12 as Habakkuk replies are you not from everlasting

O Lord my God we shall not die O Lord you have ordained them as a judgment you have brought them upon us for judgment and there are times when God will bring judgment on his people and we don't see it as the answer to prayer and yet God can use even the darkest of days to bring glory to himself William Cooper the hymn writer in the 1700s he wrote many different hymns but so many of them were written in the midst of his own suffering in life he suffered great periods of depression and very dark times and the last hymn that he wrote maybe one you've heard of you're familiar with God moves in mysterious ways and he wrote in that hymn he wrote some of the verses that said this God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform he plants his footsteps in the seas and rides upon the storm judge not the Lord by feeble sense but trust him for his grace behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face his purposes will ripen fast unfolding every hour the bud may have a bitter taste but sweet will be the flower he's reminding us in these words that

[50 : 00] God does work in mysterious ways and that this was a mysterious providence for Habakkuk and the people then the Lord is saying I am working I am going to do a thing in your midst that you would not believe if I told you but it's not what they wanted but God has a purpose God is not silent God is not stationary he is active he is working and that's true for us today as well that God in the midst of all that we see around us can bring good and where do we see this shown to us so much well we see it as we come to the cross we see it as we look to the cross where Christ was crucified when we think of all the chaos all the sin around us we would say there is a way to deal with this and God is just to destroy our enemies destroy the sin of this world but God has said

I am doing a thing in your midst that you would not believe if I told you I am giving my son I am giving my son that he might die on the cross that in the darkness of the cross where all hope seems to be gone where the people feel what is happening here Jesus cries it is finished we don't understand it we don't we don't just comprehend it so much as to what it actually means it's not the way we would have said to God look Lord do this take care of our sins in this way we would never have said give your son to die but that is what God has done for us God's ways are not our ways and that's what we have to remember in the midst of our world and all its chaos that God is doing a work sometimes it'll be through times of blessing and times of revival but other times it'll be through times of chaos but God can still bring a people to himself in the midst of that he can restore a people he can restore a nation through his judgment through his mysterious providence at times

God is working but then finally we ask ourselves in the midst of this confusion in the midst of a mysterious providence of God sending a nation of such venom against his people well what hope is there in this well the final thing I want to see here is that there is a warm embrace when you read through this you maybe think well things are just so difficult that all they have to do is just grin and bear it on their own day we think well maybe God's not listening all we have to do is just grin and bear it for a time put up with it but we are reminded here of God's grace and God's love to his people how do we see it here and how do we know it ourselves well we see it in Habakkuk when you look at verse 12 and verse 1 with me in verse 12

Habakkuk says are you not from everlasting O Lord my God my Holy One we see there Habakkuk has confidence he has confidence in God yes he has a complaint he is groaning against him but he has confidence are you not from everlasting O Lord my God so there's confidence in Habakkuk he is taking this to God and then we remind as you go back to verse 1 the oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw that God was using Habakkuk God was using Habakkuk to communicate to his people to speak to them in the midst of this chaos we don't know much about Habakkuk but there's one thing we do know and that is what his name means Habakkuk means embrace a hug a warm embrace that is what his name means and when you look at the prophets and their names you often learn so much from them

Isaiah who was sent by God means salvation is of the Lord Jeremiah who was sent by God means God will raise and so here there's no coincidence that Habakkuk is used by God in the midst of this chaos to remind us that God embraces that God is there for his people when you feel sad when you feel sorrowful and you need encouragement a warm embrace can give so much to us and that is what we have from God here a reminder that in the days of chaos that Habakkuk was in and in our own day and age just now that God is there for us remember he sent his prophets he sent Jeremiah he sent Jeremiah's God will raise he sent Isaiah to say salvation is of the Lord he sent

[55 : 59] Habakkuk to say there is an embrace but above all he sent his son a son who says come come come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest I will give you that embrace and as you go through the Bible as you go through God's working salvation among his people what we see again and again is God moving in his ways God working things out to God and he is moving things for his people he is moving his work of salvation, that we might come to him and find that hope in him. I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if I told. Well, you see, I want us to close with just three verses that remind us of the embrace of God to his people. And it's three verses that show it over a spectrum of time. We go back to Deuteronomy chapter 33, where God is speaking to his people as they go in to the promised land. He's reminding them to always look to him. And he says in verse 27, the eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms.

There is a reminder there of the beginning of God's people. Underneath are the everlasting arms. I will embrace you. I will hold you. There's a reminder for us in the New Testament, as Jesus gave the parable of the prodigal son. In Luke 15, that parable that speaks of the son who went away from his father, who wanted all his money to spend in riotous ways. He went away, but then came to his senses. And he came back to the father, hoping just to be a servant in his father's house. But what did his father do? In Luke 15, verse 20, his father arose and came to him. And while he was a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. That is that reminder that when we have gone far away from God, when we have paralyzed God's word ourselves, we have turned our back on God, that when we come back to him, he will embrace his people. He embraced him and kissed him. And the final one I want us to think about is for our future and for all who trust in the Lord, that ultimately the day will come when he will finally and fully embrace us to himself. In Revelation 21, verse 4, he says,

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. There is that final embrace as he welcomes us to himself for eternity. Wiping away tear, a tear is always an embrace, always a loving embrace. And so Habakkuk reminds us in the chaos that surrounded him of this warm embrace.

And it reminds us today that as we trust in the Lord, he has that embrace for us. We can have times of confusion. We can have times of mysterious providences that we don't understand.

But we can have times to always know the Lord's warmth and love and gracious embrace. May we know it today and all our days. Let us pray.

[60 : 40] Our Father in heaven, may you bless your word to us and remind us of the wonder of your providence, how your ways are above our ways and your thoughts above ours.

But help us to pray your will be done. As we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 35, page 44 of the psalm book.

We'll sing from verse 26 to 28. Psalm 35, page 44. May all who gloat at my distress, no shame and loss of face.

May all who triumph over me be covered with disgrace. I will extol your righteousness, I will praise you with my tongue. I will proclaim your greatness, Lord, and praise you all day long.

We'll sing these three stanzas to the tune of St. Andrew to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. May all who gloat at my distress, no shame and loss of face.

[62 : 00] May all who triumph over me be covered with disgrace.

May those who long to see me clear, shout out with joy and sing.

The Lord be praised, who loves to see the servant prospering.

I will extol your righteousness, I will praise you with my tongue.

I will proclaim your greatness, Lord, and praise you all day long.

[63 : 26] After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen.

A. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.