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C1215 – May 2, 2012 – Habakkuk 1:1-4
Unanswered Prayer

Let's start tonight by turning to Luke 24:44. As you do I want to thank Mark for teaching Titus. That freed me up to work on several things that have been on the backburner; I was able to write ten children's books that, Lord willing will be illustrated and published sometime in the near future. It allowed me to study the Constitution through a course offered at Hillsdale College. This was necessary as your pastor because I have to be informed as to the issues so I can communicate to you with biblical analysis. We're at a critical juncture in our country and it's crucial to understand the founding and the original intent of the founders over and against progressivism. Our country is about to face a major issue, that is, whether to ditch the original constitution and write a new one or stay with the original. I'm afraid it's too late, we're too far gone overall, but nonetheless, it's important to understand the founding and what they envisioned over and against what the progressives envision. Lastly it allowed me to do some advanced training in Logos, the Bible software I use. So I didn't just sit on my thumbs and Mark certainly didn't. Didn't he do a good job? He taught Philemon before but this was the first really large section of Scripture he's worked with and taught and it was a big help to me. I hope it was a benefit to you as well. But now you're stuck with me and so I'm back under the gun working to prepare three hot meals a week for you.

Tonight we come to Habakkuk. Habakkuk is in the OT prophets. There are three basic divisions of the OT. The modern church has five arbitrary divisions placed on the OT by Gentiles that no Jew ever recognized. And this is a Jewish book. Rom 3:2, "the oracles of God" were entrusted to whom? The Jews. So it's their book and they recognized three divisions not five. Jesus mentions the three in Luke 24:44, He says, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written

about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Jesus says the OT is Messianic, all three sections, Law, Prophets and Psalms are unified by the fact that they point to Me. So I proceed in teaching the OT on the basis of these divisions and the reason I am so insistent on these divisions is because each division was recognized by the Jews to have an overall theme or emphasis.

So let's look at them, first of all the Law or Torah, the first five books of the OT. What's the emphasis? Obviously it's law, legal literature. That's why they call it Law. Well what is law all about? Standards. What are the standards for judging? You can't judge anything without a standard. So the first five books give us the standard and what's the standard? God himself is the standard. God himself defines what is good because He is good. God defines what love is because He is love. And by extrapolation that tells us who we are since we fall short of the standard of God. So law is fundamental to the gospel! People don't think about it but it's fact. So Torah teaches us first about God, who is the standard, and secondly about man, who failed to meet the standard. Now the corruption of Torah is embodied in Plato, the Greek philosopher. Plato said goodness is goodness, love is love and beauty is beauty. Things are intrinsically good or loving or beautiful, so that goodness, love and beauty are actually abstract principles emanating from the mind of man. So now who is the standard? Man is the standard. Man defines. Plato's view of God is that God is the mind of man, man's mind is the divine. So Plato is opposite of Torah. Plato is the opposite of Scripture, the exact polar opposite and there can be no good news there. So then we have a war of ideas. Who defines the standard? God or man. The first five books, Torah, set forth clearly that God is the standard not man, man has failed to reach the standard.

Then we come to the Prophets or the Nabiim, and you see the books starting with Joshua on down through the Twelve. The prophets, what do they emphasize? History. Who controls history? What is the driving force of history? Now the prophet may be analyzing history, analyzing what has already happened and interpreting it, or they may be predicting history, which is prophecy, writing in advance. But history is history whether it's already happened or it's going to happen. The prophet is interested in both. So the dominant characteristic of the prophet is he's an historian. The important thing about these historians is they write from outside of the flow

of history, they are lifted up, so to speak, into the divine counsels and given a divine analysis of history. The corruption of this, and there's always a corruption, is because Satan is active. There's a corruption of Torah embodied in Greek philosophy, that's the enthronement of the human mind as divine, we call that rationalism. Now we come to the corruption of the prophets, and this also comes from the Greeks. Thucydides, for example writes history from the military point of view and he is still studied in the great war colleges. So what does Thucydides say is the driving force of history? What controls where history is going? War. Why did he say that? Because he observed evidence, he was an empiricist, he looked at the evidence and interpreted. So again the ultimate reference point for interpreting history is man, man's analysis of history. The problem is that all these men must write from within the flow of history, they look and interpret from within the flow. Over and against this the prophets say by a special work of God they were lifted out of the flow of history and given an analysis of history from the outside, from the counsels of God. And they argue that history is driven by God's providence, God is personally marching history forward. It may include wars, fine, but it is God's providence behind the wars. So always remember when you discuss the driving force of history that there are ultimately only two kinds of histories, those that derive from human ideas about history over and against those driven by God. Man cannot tolerate the God of history and the philosophy of history Habakkuk reveals is utterly abhorred and mocked on the university campus, that of a personal God running the affairs of man.

Finally we have what Jesus called the Psalms which was the lead book in the third category, the Writings or Kethubim. And you see some guys you normally think of as prophets; Daniel. What's he doing over here? He's doing the same thing everybody else is doing; emphasizing how to live. How should I live my life? How can I live life skillfully? That's the emphasis. And Daniel was seen as having skill in political administration. He imported Hebrew wisdom into three Babylonian administrations and survived to administer in Medo-Persia, a remarkable example of skillful political administration. So these books give us wisdom on how to live skillfully, how to navigate life successfully. The counter to this is what again? Man tells us how to live, man by experience or collective experience can tell us how to live. So the counter again, as always, is that man is the ultimate reference point, whether it's defining the nature of being or existence, ontology, the how we know what we

know of things, epistemology and how we should then live, axiology. These are all linked and Jesus Christ says in Luke 24:44, all the Scriptures spoke of Me. I am the definer of the nature of being and existence, I define, I define how you know what you know, I drive history and you need my revelation through the prophets to know what is really going on and finally I tell you how to live, I am wisdom, the whole OT points to Jesus Christ as ultimate. He is the authority.

Now the prophet Habakkuk is giving an analysis of history. His interest is what is going on in history. Here I am in the stream of history and I do not get it God. What is going on? You are going to see in this book a very perplexed man, a man that, as he looks at things purely from within the flow of history, doesn't get it, doesn't see what is going on, and he doesn't see why God is allowing certain things to go on. And don't kid yourself, you have the same problem Habakkuk had don't you? 90% of the time you're saying, why God, why is this happening in my life? I don't understand. And I pray about it and pray about and where are you? What is going on? Are you even there? Do you even care? That's you and that's me and that's Habakkuk. So this is an intensely practical book. It gets into the nitty gritty of our most fundamental problem. And what is our most fundamental problem? Trusting God.

You know and I know that every day of your life this is where the struggle is. Can I trust that God knows what He's doing? Because I look at my life and I can't see what He's doing. It makes no sense to me. How could this be good? I don't get it God. And God, if you'll just show me what you are doing here, show me a road map of where this is leading, then maybe I'll give you my stamp of approval and trust you. But you're going to have to show me the whole picture first, only then will I trust you. And if that is you God saying to you tonight, shut up, I have shown you time and time again in history that I know exactly what I'm doing, I have been faithful over and over, it's all in this book, so what is wrong with you, why aren't you trusting Me? Well, that gets to the root of the problem. To trust someone you have to know them, you have to know their track record. So if we really knew Him we would trust Him because He's always faithful, He has demonstrated His faithfulness over and over and over. And still we don't trust Him. So the problem is we must not really know Him that well. Now the solution to that problem is laid down very ably in a passage written by the apostle Paul. What did he say? How do we get our faith to increase? Study the word of God. Faith cometh by hearing

and hearing by the word of God. That's where you find God's track record. You need to see God's track record of faithfulness over and over and over, day after day after day. Your experience is not enough, that's why we have the Scriptures, where God faithfully recorded His faithfulness in history so you would have content to believe, content, content, content. I need content to believe because when I can't see why God is allowing this to happen or that to come in my life I go back to that content and conclude, logically, this is not a mystical thing, faith is not mystical, faith is saying I cannot see what God is up to but I do know He is up to something because I know Him and I know that great is His faithfulness.

Well, Habakkuk is one of those men like you and I that said, God, do you know what you're about? Because I'm looking at this mess down here and it stinks. Are you even there? Do you even care? And some commentators say Habakkuk borders on disrespect here, but I hope to show you that you can get upset with God in a way. There's a way to come to Him that sounds wrong but it's out of genuine frustration and desire for God to save. So the theme basically is something like this, *How can I trust God when I'm perplexed about what He's doing? How can I trust God when I don't see the total picture?* So we're going to grow in our faith with Habakkuk. Because he starts off perplexed and unable to trust, but as God reveals more and more Habakkuk begins to trust more and more and by the end he's praising God. Notice 2:4, this is the most famous verse in Habakkuk and perhaps in the whole Bible. "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him;" that's arrogance, the arrogant man doesn't walk by faith, "But the righteous will live by his faith." And that's humility, humility and faith go together. And where is that quoted in the NT? If you don't know take a look in your margin. There should be a reference there to Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11 and Heb 10:38. Paul picks this up in Romans to prove justification by faith. We'd have to go to Romans for that. But originally that came from Habakkuk. Paul is using it in a certain way and we'll get into that when we get here. The point is that Habakkuk starts off a very confused man but he transitions to a man of faith.

And we want to transition with him so we can grow to walk by faith in the midst of perplexities. As far as we are concerned, just looking at things from the human perspective it doesn't make sense, but Habakkuk is lifted up into the divine counsels and shown that it does make sense. And this little book is recorded for us so our ability to walk by faith is increased. That's the goal of

the book, to increase our faith till we are praising God. Because if you think about it, we're really not trusting God unless we're able to praise Him. And so with that said I've structured the outline to reflect that.

- I. Superscription
(1:1)
- II. The Puzzled Prophet
(1:2-2:20)
 - A. Puzzle 1: Why don't you save your people from their evil ways? (1:2-4)
 - B. Solution 1: Because I am planning to discipline them! (1:5-11)
 - C. Puzzle 2: Why are you disciplining them with those less righteous? (1:12-2:1)
 - D. Solution 2: To set them for judgment! (2:2-20)
- III. The Praying Prophet
(3:1-19)

Notice Roman numeral I, the Superscription, 1:1, that just introduces Habakkuk. Roman numeral II, we meet the Puzzled Prophet, he's got questions, things that puzzle him, Puzzle 1: Why don't you save your people from their evil ways? I'm praying here! Why do I have to watch wickedness go on in Judah? Are you even there God? Why do I have to watch this stuff? That's 1:2-4. Then we have God's response, Solution 1: I am planning to discipline them! He says I'm raising up the Chaldeans to discipline them. That's 1:5-11. But that prompts another puzzle in Hezekiah's mind; this is all a dialogue between Hezekiah and God, they go back and forth. Puzzle 2 in his mind is this, alright; I got answer one but that produces another problem Lord; why are you disciplining them with those less righteous? The Chaldeans are terrible, wicked people; they're even more wicked than the Judeans. So why are you judging those more righteous by those less righteous? How do explain that God? That question is found in 1:12-2:1. Then God graciously gives Solution 2, namely, I'm doing it to set them for judgment. I'm planning to judge them too but they have to build up their sin to the point that My patience runs out and then I'll judge them. That's 2:2-20. Finally with that Habakkuk is satisfied and we come to Roman numeral III, the result is a prayer of praise. At that point the prophet has transitioned

from perplexity to faith and he goes to the Lord in a tremendous prayer of praise, it's a Psalm, chapter 3 is actually a Psalm written for the Levitical choir, so I'll introduce the Psalms when we get to chapter 3 because it's just like a Psalm in the Book of Psalms but it's located here at the end of Habakkuk. But the main theme is the transition of a man deeply confused over events in history and how he learns to trust the Lord and express his trust by writing a Psalm of praise.

Now we've already breached the setting by mentioning the Chaldeans, also known as the Babylonians, I'll use those terms interchangeably. The Babylonians took the Judeans into Exile in a series of three deportations. Since this is a prophecy about the Exile then it was written before the Exile. And since we have excellent dates on the Babylonian invasions we can date this book pretty concisely. The first invasion occurred in 605BC, that's when Daniel was taken; it took two more invasions to finish them off, one in 597 and the other in 588-586, the final siege on Jerusalem that lasted three years. But none of those had occurred yet. So it must have been written before 605BC. That's the latest it could have been written. The other hints come from vv 5-7 so let's take a look at them, the Babylonians were rising. God says, "Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days—You would not believe if you were told. 6For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans," So God was in the process of raising up the Chaldeans when this was written. He calls them "That fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs. 7They are dreaded and feared..." The key is the Chaldeans were already rising on the world stage. So if we can find out when they were rising to power that will give us the earliest date the book could have been written. And if we go back before the Chaldeans who was the world power? The Assyrians, they had defeated Israel in 721BC and had grown and expanded their kingdom, by the 650's the kingdom was weakening, that's when Nahum came along and prophesied the defeat of Nineveh in very graphic terms, Nineveh was their capital city and his prophecy was fulfilled in 612BC. Who defeated Assyria at Nineveh? Babylon. So the rise of the Chaldeans, while it started a few years earlier, the key victory was the capital city of Nineveh, that occurred in 612BC. Then they pursued them to Haran and defeated them again in 610. Finally the Assyrians launched a counter-attack in 609 but it failed. So we're fairly

certain the date of Habakkuk is within the 611-605BC time frame. And this would place it during the reign of Jehoiakim.

So we're getting a divine assessment of coming history in the 611-605BC timeframe, Jehoiakim is the king of Judah, the Babylonians are on the rise, the king at the time was Nabopolassar, he's going to die before the first invasion on Judah, his son Nebuchadnezzar is going to lead that attack.

So let's look at verse 1. Here we find, **The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw. Habakkuk** or *chabaquuk* in the Hebrew, his name means "to embrace, to bind together" like a hug. And some have said the significance is that God is hugging Habakkuk here in a way by giving him answers, consoling him. We don't know for sure, we don't know much about this man at all though there's lots of tradition about him. First of all he's mentioned in the tradition of Bel and the Dragon (31-39). If you've heard of the Apocrypha, those are some books from the intertestamental times written by Jews; they're not inspired but the Roman Catholic Church declared them inspired at the Council of Trent in 1546-1563 because they needed them to support some of their strange doctrines. For the Jews these were history mixed with tradition and lore. This one, Bel and the Dragon was an addendum to the book of Daniel. And there's a section that tells a story of Daniel being thrown in the lion's den a second time and this time he's in there for six days and Habakkuk was taking some food out to the workers in the field when the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, go to Babylon and take some food to Daniel. Habakkuk said I don't know where he is and so the angel just takes him there and Habakkuk drops off lunch. But that's tradition, it's in the same time frame possibly but just tradition. Another tradition is that Habakkuk was the son of the Shunammite woman who used to house Elisha the prophet. In that story Elisha promises her a son, she has a son, years later the son dies and he goes and lays on him and restores him to life. Some have said that son of the Shunammite woman was Habakkuk. But it's just tradition. Closer to having textual support is the idea that Habakkuk is the watchman mentioned in Isa 21 because in Habakkuk 2:1 he says, "I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me." But just because he uses similar words as those in Isa 21 does not mean identity. Finally, the most textual support comes from 3:1 and 19, Habakkuk may have been in the Levitical choir. Notice 3:1, "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to

Shigionoth.” Shigionoth was a kind of Psalm that was very emotional, very irregular in beat. So he was a musician of some sort. Come down to verse 19 to the last words, “For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.” So he was a musician, he wrote music, he was familiar with stringed instruments and since this was written for the choir director he probably was a member of the Levitical choir. And if that’s the case he may have also been a Levitical priest. So we have these things we can say about Habakkuk. The last thing we can say is back in verse 1, and that is he is a **prophet**, a *nabi*, and he carried an **oracle**, a *massa*, usually a heavy message, something burdensome, but not always, sometimes it’s carrying good news too. In this case he’s carrying a message and it should probably be translated as **The message which Habakkuk the prophet saw**. And as a **prophet** his interest was in history; in his case, prophecy, what was coming from the divine perspective. From here he saw that God was providentially aware of what was going on in Judah and that He was working to raise up the Chaldeans to discipline them, subsequently He was planning to judge the Chaldeans. So Habakkuk fits nicely in the Prophets.

Now if you turn to Exod 6:28 you’ll find the key text that gives the role of the **prophet**. The prophet is a go between. He doesn’t speak on his own authority. He speaks on behalf of another. This is the situation where God says go back to Egypt and talk to Pharaoh but Moses doesn’t want to go back to Egypt. So he goes through his big excuses, notice verse 30, “But Moses said before the LORD, “Behold, I am unskilled I speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?” Actually Moses was a man might in word and deed. That’s what Stephen says in the NT. This is just a big fat excuse, Moses did not have a speech impediment, he just doesn’t want to go back to Egypt and he has to come up with something so he comes up with this lame excuse, “I don’t talk good, I’m not eloquent.” Well, it really doesn’t matter because Moses doesn’t have to come up with what to say, God’s going to tell you what to say. But notice 7:1, “See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet.” So who’s the prophet here? Aaron. Who’s prophet is Aaron? Moses. Aaron is Moses’ prophet and that’s going to cause him problems down the road, Aaron and his sister Miriam cause him problems. But the point is that a prophet is a go-between, his job is simply to repeat what the authority says. Notice verse 2, “You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh.” So then you have the idea that the prophet speaks on behalf of another. And that’s what Habakkuk

was doing, he was speaking on behalf of God, so it's God's message - it comes with God's authority. Now this prophet thing is part of the doctrine of inspiration. It's not only God that authored Scripture, God is the primary author, but God used human instruments, secondary authors, to record what He wanted to say. He even includes elements from the human's background, all the books of Scripture reflect the vocations and personalities of the human authors. It's just that God used them to communicate exactly what He wanted said. Islam does not have that, Islam bypasses, or claims to bypass, any human author, actually the whole thing is totally human, or demonic, but the point is that the god behind the Koran isn't able to use human beings to get what he wants said, he has to dictate it all. Not the God of the Bible, he uses human personality, human vocabulary to communicate and yet it's the very word of God.

Now the prophet **saw** this, he saw this message, it was audio and video, we don't know if it was in vision or dream. What's the difference between a vision and a dream? The bible refers to both. How do they differ? In the vision you're awake, in the dream you're asleep. We're not told what happened here so it was either a vision or a dream. But in that vision or dream there was both audio and video; Habakkuk heard words and he saw things as well. We don't know all the details so I'm just giving a basic description of what it means to see a message. Both audio and video are involved in this revelation.

That's verse 1, lets move into vv 2-4, the first puzzle. And I want you to identify with this man. This man is very confused about what he's seeing in the world. Maybe you're confused about what you're seeing in our world. Maybe you're wondering why in the world God let's stuff go on in His Church that is sheer wickedness. Or maybe you're perplexed by the kind of stuff going on in our country. It's very bothering. Well, that's the case with Habakkuk. He was looking at his country and he probably knew some of what was going on just from living there, but when he was called as a prophet he was lifted into the divine counsels and given a view of all the wickedness that was going on. Verse 3 is very clear in the Hebrew that God made him see this, it's like God is sticking his nose in it. And this is very troubling. If we knew the half of what was going on in our country we'd probably all have a conniption right here on the floor. You think things are bad in our country? If you could see from God's perspective, because He sees everything, every little detail of every little deal that's being pulled in

Washington, if we saw all that we'd flip out. We probably have less than 5% of the picture represented in the media. It's like they say in law enforcement, they never catch the real criminals because the real criminals are smart, it's the idiots that make mistakes, they're the ones that get caught. So just think of all the crime going on that we don't even know is going on. Well Habakkuk was given insight into what was really going on in Jerusalem, all the corruption among the government officials whether it was the king or the judges, they were all in it together and Habakkuk is seeing all this and it stimulated prayer, verse 2, **How long, O LORD, will I call for help.** Now this is a man that's been praying a long time about this, meaning he saw all this and started praying and he prayed and prayed and prayed, and it's desperate prayer, these are all *piel* stems in the Hebrew which means intensive prayers, these are cries, he's crying out because he's had to see all this and he's deeply disturbed. It's the kind of thing you get when you have to stare evil in the eyeballs and you've never seen anything like it in cold, living flesh and you're abhorred by it. We have Hollywood, shoot-em ups, bad guys, gangs, they kill people on the streets but the thing is you've conditioned yourself, the human brain is conditioned not to respond to that because it's not real, it's just a movie. But if you ever have to see a real murder you're body will react, it's trying to protect itself and you'll often pass out and sometimes you'll throw up. That's what Habakkuk has been through, why are you forcing me, he says in verse 3, to **see iniquity, why do you cause me to look on wickedness?** It's shocking when you're seeing it in real life. And he says get this out of my face. In fact, that word **violence** in verse 2 and 3 is the word used of the world before the Flood and that was the worst world ever, so it had to be pretty bad. How can you look at this Lord and not fix the situation? **How long, O LORD, will I call for help?** So we have a man who is desperate, he's been confronted head on with extreme wickedness and he's been praying for a long time, why aren't you helping us. And the Lord isn't answering. **How long, will I call for help, And you will not hear?** The word **hear** means "answer." Are you not going to answer me? Are you even listening? Where are you and why aren't you answering my prayer? Now all these sins are in the governmental sphere, all of them, you scan vv 2, 3 and 4 and all the Hebrew words; violence, strife, contention, justice, righteous, they are all words related to government, it's up in the government where all this is going on. And Habakkuk has had to see it all and he's been praying. So we come to the problem of unanswered prayer here. Why doesn't God answer certain prayers? Sometimes you pray and pray and pray and nothing. Have

you ever had that? There are reasons for this so let's spend the rest of our time on biblical reasons for unanswered prayers.

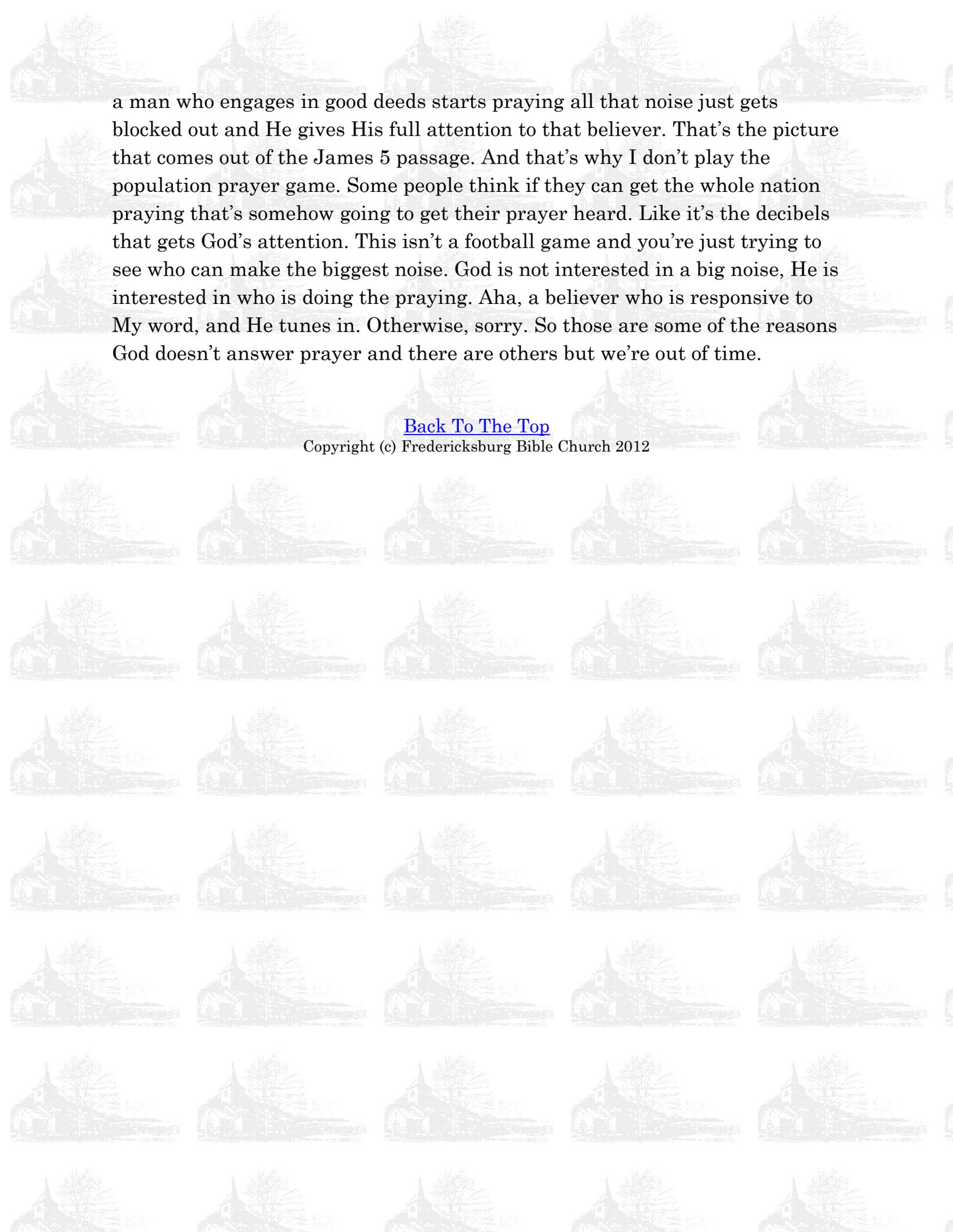
Let's start with this one, Habakkuk's unanswered prayer. Turn to 1 Sam 8:18. Why didn't God answer Habakkuk's prayer. Obviously he's a man of God, he was a prophet. But there are reasons that can even block that and there is an explicit reason his prayer is not being answered. Something happened centuries before. Now 1 Sam 8 is the key political chapter in the Bible. If you want to know the political philosophy of the Bible 1 Sam 8 is central to the discussion. This is the chapter where the people at the end of the judges period had become so frustrated, it was chaos, everything was falling into shambles, they wanted law and order. Samuel was old and his boys were corrupt, notice verse 3, "His sons did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice." So they had corruption in the leadership; all the elders come together, hey, we don't like this system of judges. So verse 5 they come with a solution, "and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." Now wait a minute, was Israel supposed to be like all the other nations? No, they were supposed to be distinct from all the other nations. But they want to be like the pagan nations. What did they like about the pagan nations? Well they had a king that would judge their cases, they had a king that would go out and fight their battles. So they say, oh, we want a king like all the other nations, appoint us a king. What did Samuel say, Samuel took it personally, like most of us do, oh, poor me, they're rejecting me. No they're not, said the Lord, get over yourself. verse 7, "The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them." God was already the King so to request a king like all the other nations was to reject God. That's the context and God is very reticent to give them a king. This isn't a good trade. What's a human king going to do for you? Are they some super beings or are they corrupt just like Samuel's boys. So God says, alright Samuel, warn them what they will be getting.

So Samuel comes to the people and warns them, verse 11, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place *them* for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. ¹²"He will appoint for himself commanders of

thousands and of fifties, and *some* to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots.” He’s got to form a military. God is no longer going to fight their battles, so he’s got to enlist soldiers. So now we’re going to have a standing army. Government requires assets. Verse 13, watch the government grow, “He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers.” See, we’ve got to have the best in the White House so we’ll take your daughters, that’s the way it will work. Verse 14, “He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give *them* to his servants.” Now we’ve got theft of goods, the government is going to take your stuff because the government requires assets, you provide the assets. Verse 15, that’s not all, “He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants.” We’ve got to raise taxes to support government officials. Some of you didn’t realize how modern the Bible is. This is as relevant today as it was 3,000 years ago. It speaks directly to the political issues of our day. “He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use *them* for his work.” The government always takes the best, the cream of the crop. So you want a king, you want centralized human government, this is the procedure of the king. Verse 18, “Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.” Now, that applies specifically to Saul but it applies to all the kings that follow. Because they said, oh, we want a king like all the other nations, he will solve all our problems, life will be great. Oh really, he’s going to take your sons into his army so they get killed in battle, he’s going to take your daughters to serve in his palace, he’s going to take the assets of the small businessmen, he’s going to tax you till you hardly have enough to survive, all because this big government has to keep taking over every area of life. And then finally one day you’re going to cry out because of the king and what did Samuel say? The Lord isn’t going to answer you in that day. Unanswered prayer. But what did the people say in v 19, “Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel,” these people will do anything to get law and order, “and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us, 20that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.” Alright, fine, God says, I warned them, they didn’t listen, appoint them a king. And so they got one. Now, four centuries later who is crying out because of the procedure of king? Habakkuk. The king is a wreck, the entire government is corrupt. And it’s painful to watch. But is the Lord going to

answer that prayer? No. Sorry, you guys wanted a king, you got him, now deal with it. It's very frustrating but God said centuries before you're going to come crying out to me about the king but I am not going to answer you in that day. You're going to have to live with the consequences.

That's what you're seeing in Hab 1:2, it reaches all the way back to this promise, I will not answer your prayer on that matter. So how long is Habakkuk going to pray and get no answer? No help? No salvation? The answer is forever. God will never answer that prayer. What God is going to do is something else we'll study next week. God is going to crank up the discipline. Now that basically is the text. As far as application is concerned, let's take a look at four reasons God will not answer a prayer. One reason is simply because He's already declared ahead of time He's not going to answer that prayer. For example, don't pray for America to remain continually in a state of blessing. If you pray that you're just wasting your time. God has already declared that we are a part of the Roman Empire and are destined for destruction. So don't get any dreams about that, you can pray about that forever and God will never answer that prayer. The second reason is Jeremiah 11:10-11, if you don't listen to God's word, he won't listen to what you have to say in prayer. It's a very simple idea and yet most Christians when you ask them about their spiritual life say, well, I pray. There's nothing there about the study of the word of God. I can only say, if that is you, you can pray till the cows come home but He's not listening because the way the relationship works is He talks first and you listen, if you have something to say after that, fine, maybe, but if you don't listen to His word, He's not interested in what you have to say. The third reason prayer is not answered is simply because you ask with wrong motives. That's the James 4 passage, you ask for things because you think God is a big Santa Claus in the sky. He's not. So He doesn't answer those kinds of prayers. A fourth reason God doesn't answer prayer is because of unrighteous behavior, a carnal believer. This is James 5 where Elijah is cited as being a righteous man. People misread that passage, they cite the passage to say it's the *kind of prayer* that gets answered, the effective or earnest prayer, but actually the emphasis in the text is not at all on the kind of prayer, the emphasis is on the *kind of believer* who is doing the praying. In other words, when a believer who engages in good deeds starts praying and God is sitting there and He has all these believers praying to Him, thousands and thousands praying at the same time, it's all just a big noise to Him but in the midst of that noise when



a man who engages in good deeds starts praying all that noise just gets blocked out and He gives His full attention to that believer. That's the picture that comes out of the James 5 passage. And that's why I don't play the population prayer game. Some people think if they can get the whole nation praying that's somehow going to get their prayer heard. Like it's the decibels that gets God's attention. This isn't a football game and you're just trying to see who can make the biggest noise. God is not interested in a big noise, He is interested in who is doing the praying. Aha, a believer who is responsive to My word, and He tunes in. Otherwise, sorry. So those are some of the reasons God doesn't answer prayer and there are others but we're out of time.

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