

Sermon #12 — Habakkuk Series

Title:            **WATCH, WRITE, WAIT,**  
                         **BELIEVE**

Text:            Habakkuk 2:1-4

Subject:        *Trusting God in the Midst of Confusion*

Date:            Sunday Evening — November 7, 2010

Tape #          *Habakkuk #12*

Readings:      *Rex Bartley and James Jordan*

Introduction:

How often we are perplexed and confused by our circumstances. Confusing circumstances are troubling. Fretful and fearful, we cry out to God; but he seems not to hear. And the Lord's silence makes us all the more fretful and fearful. Our minds are full of questions, questions for which we can find no answers. Darkness increases, the things that trouble us seem to get bigger and more out of control, and we are yet more fretful and fearful.

As we read the Word of God, we frequently find people pressed with trouble, sometimes it appears that they are pressed to the very edge of sanity, — Believing men and women pressed to the very edge of sanity. **Listen to God's servant Job, as he cries out of his great trouble to the Lord his God.**

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(Job 7:5) “My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.”

(Job 7:11) “Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”

(Job 7:14-15) “Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: 15 So that my soul chooseth strangling, [and] death rather than my life.”

(Job 10:8-10) “Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. 9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? 10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?”

After being ridiculed by Israel’s priests, derided by the prophets of the land, denounced by his family,

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and laughed to scorn, God's servant **Jeremiah** cried...

(Jeremiah 20:14-18) “**Cursed [be] the day wherein I was born**: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. 15 Cursed [be] the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. 16 And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide; 17 Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb [to be] always great [with me]. 18 **Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?**”

When **the disciples** were in the midst of a storm that seemed to threaten their lives, they cried out to the Lord Jesus, “**Master, carest thou not that we perish?**” All these questions arose in the midst of trouble, troubles that were especially aggravating because of unfulfilled promises and that which

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appeared to be personal tragedies. Though we may not speak the words audibly, you and I sometimes ask with the Psalmist, — “Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?” (Psalm 77:8). — Do we not?

**HABAKKUK’S QUESTIONS**

That is exactly the position Habakkuk was in. Habakkuk’s prophecy is different from every other writing prophet in the history of Israel. What makes the book of Habakkuk different is the fact that he never says a word to another person. The only person addressed by Habakkuk is the Lord God himself. He was very troubled, so troubled that he comes to the Lord God with painful questions, questions of an honest, but trouble, believing but perplexed heart.

**The prophecy opens with questions of obvious pain and frustration** (1:2-4).

(Habakkuk 1:2-4) “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! [even] cry out unto thee [of] violence, and thou wilt not save! 3 Why

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dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause [me] to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence [are] before me: and there are [that] raise up strife and contention. 4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”

God’s prophet looked around the nation and saw nothing but cruelty, injustice, pain, and sin. He asked God why he did nothing about it. Added to that, the Lord God raised up the Chaldeans (Babylonians, Iraqis), a reprobate, idolatrous, ungodly people to chastise his chosen. When Habakkuk thought on that, he said to the Lord, — “**Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth?**” (1:13).

After raising these questions, Habakkuk seems to have put his hand over his mouth, as if he was astonished to hear himself speak so plainly to the Lord his God.

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**What are we to do when we are faced with things that trouble us and cause us fear**, when we are fretful and perplexed by the things we see and experience in this world? Open your Bible to Habakkuk chapter 2 and I will show you. — **We are to watch God’s work, wait upon God’s promise, and believe our God**. The title of my message is **WATCH, WRITE, WAIT, BELIEVE**. Our text will be Habakkuk 2:1-4.

(Habakkuk 2:1-4) “I will stand upon my **watch**, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d. 2 And the LORD answered me, and said, **Write** the vision, and make [it] plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3 For the vision [is] yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, **wait** for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4 Behold, his soul [which] is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his **faith**.”

**WATCH**

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The Lord God did not immediately answer Habakkuk; but that should not surprise us. God rarely answers our prayers, let alone our complaints and grumblings immediately. When the Lord did not answer him, Habakkuk seems to have reproved himself for the way he had spoken, for the things he had thought, for his misgivings with regard to God's providence. And he resolved to stand still, as a sentinel on a watch-tower, looking for God's answer.

(Habakkuk 2:1) "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."

This does not mean that the prophet actually ascended a physical tower. He simply expresses here his innermost attitude by the symbol of a watchman. **He remained silent and eagerly looked for the reply.** We would be wise to follow Habakkuk's example. — "**Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD!**" More often than not our "**strength is to sit still**" (Isaiah 30:7). Our Redeemer often tells us, as

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Boaz said to Ruth, “**Sit still until thou know how the matter will fall**” (Ruth 3:18).

- **Gospel preachers** here have an example of that which is the most important aspect of gospel preaching, but the most commonly neglected. — We are to stand upon our watch, searching the Scriptures, to see what the Lord God will say to us that we may speak his Word to his people. Would to God that every time I stand to preach to you I could say to you what Paul said to the saints at Corinth, — “**I have received of the Lord that which also I deliver unto you.**”
- **Trouble saints**, set still, humbly bowing before the throne of God, with the Book of God open before you, and “**see what he will say unto**” you.

“Keep silence all created things,  
And wait your Maker’s nod;  
My soul stands trembling while she sings  
The honors of her God.  
Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown;  
Hang on His firm decree;

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He sits on no precarious throne,  
Nor borrows leave to be.

Chained to His throne a volume lies  
With all the fates of men,  
With every angel's form and size  
Drawn by th' eternal pen.  
His providence unfolds the book,  
And makes His counsels shine;  
Each opening leaf, and every stroke  
Fulfills some bright design.

Here He exalts neglected worms  
To scepters and a crown;  
Anon the following page He turns,  
And treads the monarch down.  
Not Gabriel asks the reason why,  
Nor God the reason gives;  
Nor dares the favorite angel pry  
Between the folded leaves.

My God, I would not long to see  
My fate with curious eyes,  
What gloomy lines are writ for me,

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Or what bright scenes may rise.  
In Thy fair book of life and grace  
    May I but find my name,  
Recorded in some humble place  
    Beneath my Lord the Lamb!”

**How often we are reproved and ridiculed by men and mocked of the devil**, who tempts us to unbelief and murmurings against our God, when we suffer trials and adversities and the wicked prosper. Let us stand upon our watch and see what the Lord will say. He will put the words in our mouth, in his own time, by which to answer those who would reprove us.

**WRITE**

First, Habakkuk watched. Next the Lord God told him to write the vision and to write it out so plainly that all who read it might run by its direction.

(Habakkuk 2:2) “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.”

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The Word is always plain and clear. It is not written in code. It is not the hiding of God, but the Revelation of God. The Book of God is spiritual, but it is not complicated. Without question, it is a sealed Book to those who believe not. But for those who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to believe, the Revelation of God is clear.

The Lord God has written for us the great things of his law (Hosea 8:12), and has done so with plainness, clarity, and simplicity that the lines of Holy Scripture are like the beams of the sun. There is nothing in the Book that is hidden in some kind of code, written in difficult language, or obscured (Psalm 19:9; 119:105; Proverbs 6:23; 2 Peter 1:19).

(Psalms 19:9) “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.”

(Psalms 119:105) “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

(Proverbs 6:23) “For the commandment is a

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lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:”

(2 Peter 1:19) “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:”

**HABAKKUK’S VISION**

Now, look at verse 3, as the Holy Spirit describes the vision God gave Habakkuk.

(Habakkuk 2:3) “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

But what vision did God give Habakkuk? It is not here stated. But the Lord tells us that...

- It is for an appointed time.
- It would speak, that is to say, “**He shall speak clearly.**”

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- Though it may appear to tarry, “**it will not tarry.**”
- At God’s appointed time, the vision will be performed.

God does not tell us here what he revealed to Habakkuk; but he does tell us. He tells us what the vision was so plainly that it cannot be misunderstood except it be wilfully misunderstood. Habakkuk is here talking about the coming of Christ and the revelation of the triune God in and by him in the salvation of his people (Habakkuk 1:5; Acts 13:38-41; Hebrews 10:26-37).

(Habakkuk 1:5) “Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.”

(Acts 13:38-41) “Be it known unto you therefore, men [and] brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest

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that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 **Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.**”

(Hebrews 10:26-37) “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But **a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.** 28 He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him that hath said, **Vengeance [belongeth] unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.** 31 [It is] a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32 But call to remembrance the

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former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; 33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that **ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.** 35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36 For **ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.** 37 **For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.**”

**The vision God gave Habakkuk, as with most of the Old Testament prophets, encompassed the whole revelation of God’s grace and glory in Christ.**

- His First Advent as the Incarnate God to Accomplish Redemption by the Sacrifice of Himself as Our Substitute (John 1:14; Hebrews 10:1-14). — At the Appointed Time!

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- His Coming in Grace to Save his Redeemed (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). — At the Appointed Time!
- His Coming in Grace to Deliver Us from Our Troubles. — **“I will come unto you!”** — At the Appointed Time!

Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above,  
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.  
Tell me the story simply, as to a little child,  
For I am weak and weary, and helpless and defiled.

Tell me the story slowly, that I may take it in,  
That wonderful redemption, God’s remedy for sin.  
Tell me the story often, for I forget so soon;  
The early dew of morning has passed away at noon.

Tell me the story softly, with earnest tones and grave;  
Remember I’m the sinner whom Jesus came to save.  
Tell me the story always, if you would really be,  
In any time of trouble, a comforter to me.

Tell me the same old story when you have cause to fear  
That this world’s empty glory is costing me too dear.  
Yes, and when that world’s glory is dawning on my soul,  
Tell me the old, old story: “Christ Jesus makes thee whole.”  
Tell me the old, old story, tell me the old, old story,  
Tell me the old, old story, of Jesus and His love.

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- His Glorious Second Advent (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Jude 21). — At the Appointed Time!

(2 Thessalonians 1:6-10) “Seeing [it is] a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”

(Jude 1:21) “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

**WAIT**

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Habakkuk watched. Then, when the Lord gave him something to say, he wrote. Next, the Lord God told his prophet and tells us to wait (v. 3).

(Habakkuk 2:3) “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

(Isaiah 40:31) “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

(Psalms 37:9) “For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.”

(Psalms 123:2) “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until

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that he have mercy upon us.”

(Isaiah 8:17) “And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.”

**BELIEVE**

Now, look at Habakkuk 2:4. Here, the prophet of God tells us to believe God. We wait upon the Lord because we trust him, we believe God, we trust his Word, we believe on the Son of God.

(Habakkuk 2:4) “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”

The proud, the unbelieving, the puffed up, self-righteous Pharisee, the unbelieving rebel, understand nothing and see nothing. Therefore, they jump at this and that and dart one way and another. They cannot wait. — **“But the just shall live by his faith!”** Three times, we are told that our father **“Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness”**

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(Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). **And three times Habakkuk's words in this verse are quoted in the New Testament.**

- In **Romans 1:17** Habakkuk's words are quoted with the emphasis on the word "**just**" because the theme of Romans is the righteousness and justice of God in the salvation of his elect by the sacrifice of Christ (Romans 3:24-26). — **We are justified righteously.**

(Romans 1:16-17) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

(Romans 3:24-26) "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To

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declare, [I say], at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

- In **Galatians 3:11** Habakkuk’s statement is quoted with the emphasis on the word “**faith**” because we live by the of Christ and by faith in Christ, without the works of the law. — **We are justified freely by grace, through faith in Christ.**

(Galatians 3:11-14) “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, [it is] evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree: 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

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- In **Hebrews 10:38** the words of Habakkuk are quoted a third time, with the emphasis on the word “**live**” because all to whom the Lord God graciously gives this gift of faith persevere in faith, being kept and preserved in Christ Jesus unto eternal life. — All who live by faith persevere in faith, and die in faith

(Hebrews 10:37-39) “For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”

(Hebrews 11:13) “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Amen.