

Habakkuk 3:17-19 HABAKKUK'S OPTIMISM

PRELIMS. At the beginning of a new year let's be **optimistic** about the **promises** of God! Yes, the promises of God! This sermon is not about stirring up courage for the future, it is about trusting in God's promises. Despite the fact that the wages of sin is death, God has promised great things for all those who trust Him!

The Bible is a Book of **Hope!** God sent it to us to **help** us! Look at these promises: 'No weapon formed against you shall prosper'+ 'You will be the head and not the tail' – 'You will be the lender not the borrower' + 'Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world' + 'You might have meant it for evil, but God meant it for good' + 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'

BACKGROUND

Hab was **born** under **good** King Josiah who reformed the nation spiritually. However, he **lived** under **bad** King Jehoiakim, who **reversed** all the good things Josiah had done!! **APP** Some of **us** in the congregation are old enough to remember God's Word being honoured in our land, but have lived to see these laws removed!

Chap 1 = Hab **complains** "*Destructioun...violence...strife...contention...the law is paralysed and justice never goes forth*"[1:3] and "*How long shall I cry for help?*"[1:1] Sound **familiar?**

God **replies** 'Don't worry, I'm going to punish the leaders of Judah – I am going to send the Chaldeans to punish Judah' "*...behold I am raising up the Chaldeans...to seize dwellings...they all come for violence...guilty men, whose own might is their god*"[1:6-11]

Hab **can't understand** this! How can a holy God use (for righteous purposes), such a wicked, corrupt, perverted nation? How can the Chaldeans be used to punish Your people Judah? "*You are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong*"[1:13]! **APP** It would be like using Islam, Osama bin Laden to punish a Xn nation! But there is a bigger picture, Hab. God has a plan for the whole world, not just Judah! God **does use**

all His creation (including wicked nations) to fulfil His purposes. The Lord “*strengthened Eglon*” the king of Moab to punish Israel [Jud 3:12] and the Lord “*stirred up an adversary against Solomon*”[1 Kin 11:14]! God rules the nations! However confusing **world events** may be, God **is** working out His plan. Whatever 2008 holds out for us, God is faithful and **He rules!**

Chap 2 = Hab **waits** for God’s reply “*I will take my stand at my watchpost...and look out to see what He will say to me*”[2:1]

APP God keeps us waiting very often, but he says “*If it seems slow, wait for it, it will surely come*”[2:3] ‘You just **live by faith**’, “*the righteous shall live by his faith*”[2:4]

God replies: ‘Don’t worry about the proud Chaldeans – I will punish them too, they will eventually be destroyed! Don’t think the Chaldeans are going to ‘get-off’ with their sin!’ “**Woe to him... you will have your fill of shame instead of glory**”[2:16]. “*The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him*” [2:20]! Despite what is happening in the world God rules!

APP You may be concerned that evil-doers ‘get away with murder’! But God is **never** in a hurry to punish evildoers. He is **slow** to wrath! He wants to be merciful. But ultimately unrepentant evil-doers **will** be punished. **Justice** will be done – in the end!

But there is **great optimism!** In the long term, despite this judgment, there will be great blessing, for “*the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*” [2:14]! Hab is **repeating** what Isaiah wrote 100+yrs before in [Isa11:9] He’s repeating a refrain which the prophets often spoke!

As in [Psa 86:9] “*All the nations You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous things*”! + “*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You*”[Psa 22:27]!!

Scripture teaches that the Kingdom of God will grow. It starts as a Mustard seed (smallest of all seeds) and grows to be the largest. It

will grow through the **preaching** of the **gospel** and the work of the **Holy Spirit** in the **hearts** of people of all nationalities! When we look at history, in the long span, over the millennia, not just the centuries, we see how the Word of God has triumphed!

Before X's resurrection, only Israel had truth. Now all continents and many nations have the gospel. When God's people **obey** the **Great Commission** and the **Great Commandment**, nations will turn to the Lord. 'Bottom-up' influence, not 'top-down' control. When the masses turn to the Lord, the populace will choose rulers who will rule according to God's Word, which will in turn, bring its own blessing, because God's Word says "*righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*"[Pro 14:34]

It is **not** like the optimistic philosophy of the Enlightenment, through a **natural evolutionary** process of human betterment. It is **not** achieved through **social institutions**. Rather it is by the **preaching** of the gospel and the **supernatural work** of the Holy Spirit on people's hearts! People will believe the gospel and the teaching of the Word of God. So, the Church must take its commission much more seriously "*Go...make disciples of all nations, baptising them...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*". So, in the short term, trouble for the wicked, in the long term blessing!

Chap 3 = Hab prays! How does he pray? Very **positively!**

"...**Your work, O Lord...revive it**"[3:2] Note Hab's **conviction** that all that is going on in the **world** is **God's work!** God still works in the **world!** Nothing, but nothing, you read in the news is not God's work! Some Xns think that God is not in the world. That He has completely abandoned it and it is merely functioning on its own 'mechanism'! No! God is working **in** the world. He **upholds** the **world**. "*For the LORD...is... a great king over all the earth... God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.*"[Psa 47]

"*In the midst of the years, revive it*", ie, in the midst of the years of **barrenness** and **judgment!** "*in wrath remember mercy*"[3:2c]

Now Hab himself was **living** in a time of spiritual barrenness. He

was **no stranger** to the condition he was addressing. He knew from **experience**, and from **prayer** and **fellowship** with God how to address the situation! Things were **not good** in Hab's day, and things were not **looking good** for the future!

Look at the depressing state of affairs! The **fig tree** was **not** blossoming! And **wasn't likely** to blossom!

*"Though the fig true should **not** blossom – Church is **unattractive**. The Church hasn't a good image! Church is not seen as a solution for the problems of the day. There are more attractive offers!*

*"...**nor fruit** be in the vines" - No converts! In the very place where you would expect **some** fruit, there is none at all!*

*"the **produce** of the olive **fail**" – The little fruit we have doesn't last! Professions of faith have not developed into strong believers!*

*"...the fields yield **no food**" - Despite evangelism, no results! Despite all the different things we have tried, nothing's happened!*

*"the flock be **cut off** from the fold"– even those who are converts have either cut themselves off from the Church, or the Church has cut them off from fellowship!*

*"...**no herd** in the stalls" – Empty pews! Hardly anyone goes to Church. Churches are turned into Bingo halls and Snooker Clubs*

Yes – all these **discouragements** – and what.....

"Yet I will rejoice" [3:18] How's that for **optimism**?

But it is **based** and **founded** on "**the Lord**" there is a tremendous future that God has planned - the whole earth **will be filled** with His glory. Hab is full of faith and confidence about the future! *He only has to **recall history** "*God came from Teman*"[3:3] reference to God delivering Israel at Sinai, and the other deliverances! **APP** So today, amazing 'wonders' in our lifetime. Fall of communism!

So, how does Hab **respond**? He sings on **Cloud 9!** = "*He makes my feet like the deer's, He makes me tread on my high places*" and he gets out His "*stringed instruments*" and sings to the **Lord!**