

Habakkuk: Marks of Revival

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

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Crossroads Ministries
301 S. 8th Street
Opelika, Alabama 36801

Website: www.fbcopelika.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/jeffmeyers

Well, this morning it is my privilege to encourage you to do something that you may have never done in an environment such as this, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Habakkuk. Yup, that's how you say his name. The book of Habakkuk tucked in the back of your Old Testament in a section that we collectively call the minor prophets. Now I know some of you may have difficulty finding this little short book of the Bible today so I'm gonna give you some help. He's found right between Nahum and Zephaniah. That should help you out a whole lot. No, all seriousness, what we know as the minor prophets and for those of you who have been with us in this season as we walk through the Scriptures over a three year period just a chapter, sometimes two chapters a day, we find ourselves in a section of the Bible where though it may be very strategic as far as the message is concerned, it's very rare not only to read or to study it but oftentimes throughout the weeks I've heard people coming up to me and saying, "That is the very first time I've ever heard a Bible study or a sermon from that book or that section of the Bible." So today is gonna be much the same as we look at the book of Habakkuk.

Now Habakkuk, even though he has kind of an undergirding theme just like the other minor prophets of impending judgment and the consequences of our rebellion and our sin, we're gonna see in just a moment in chapter 3 that there's a little bit of a shift, there's a little bit of a change, a little bit of a turn, in fact, what we're about to see over the course of the rest of the minor prophets is even though there's that undercurrent of judgment and the consequence of our sin, there's going to be this glimmer of hope in the midst thereof. You see, Habakkuk begins in chapter 1, verse 1, by saying the burden of Habakkuk, and he is burdened, he is toiling over how much longer is the Lord gonna put up with what he's been putting up with. Like last week, we talked about Nahum and, you know, enough is enough, and he's crying out to God saying, "Is this really the way it's gonna end up?" Now understand he's within one generation of the Babylonian captivity. He sees it on the horizon and it burdens him and it bothers him. When we get to chapter 3, verse 1, we see whom we know as Habakkuk say something very different, it says the prayer of Habakkuk. What we see is his burden or his cry to God has turned into a prayer and I want you to hear what he prays in verse 2, "O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." Here's what Habakkuk is crying out, "In light of what

you've said," by the way, we're about to read what the Lord said in chapter 2, "God, the only thing that can save us, the only thing that can help us is revival."

You know, when we use that term revival in our context today, oftentimes it brings back memories or flashbacks of prolonged meetings or services or big tents of famous evangelists but the word revival simply means to take that which is no longer living, to take that which is deceased, to take that which is lifeless and for a life to once again enter therein. This is not just a Webster's Dictionary definition, this is a biblical definition. In fact, in Ephesians 5:14 it says, "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead and receive the glorious light of Jesus Christ." When we speak of this need for revival, what we're speaking of today is simply this: the desire for us as individuals, the desire for us as a church, the desire for us as an entire culture to wake from our spiritual death and for the life of Jesus Christ to once again energize us and empower us for living.

You say, "Well, how does that take place? How can we see that?" Now there's been a lot of great books and a lot of great scholars who've spoken on the subject matter of revival but today I just want us to go back in chapter 2 and what we're gonna see is that the Lord lays out for us what revival would and should and can look like in our lives. Now verse 1 of chapter 2 actually begins with Habakkuk making a statement, it says,

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.

Now the Lord responds to his cry, verse 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. 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. 5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: 6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! 7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? 8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. 9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! 10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul. 11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. 12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

13 Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? 14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. 15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! 16 Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD'S right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory. 17 For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. 18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? 19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. 20 But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

Now that's quite a response to a man who says, "O God, how much longer are we gonna put up with this? How much longer are you going to endure?" So now you see why in chapter 3, verse 2, Habakkuk had to say, "Revive us, O God." When you see the list of issues, when you see the concerns, when you see the allegations against the Israelites in chapter 2, you realize this is not gonna be the work of man, this is not gonna be at the labor or the ingenuity of their intelligence, that only God supernaturally by infusing his life and his light into their lives can change that which has become of them both individually and corporately.

So today as we look at chapter 2, I just want to walk through what I call some marks of revival. Now don't panic when you hear that today's message has 10 points, they're gonna be very brief, I promise, but I want to walk through these because what we're gonna see is these are the aspects, if we say, "I truly want revival. I want revival in my own life. I want revival in my home. I want revival in our church, our community, our culture," if you really want revival, then this is what has got to take place.

It begins in verse 1 where whom we know as Habakkuk said that, "I will if presented with the truth, I will be reprov'd." Revival always begins with a confession of sin. You can never have revival apart from it. Anything else is just a false representation. Until the people of God, until humanity declares that they are the problem and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer, you cannot ever experience or walk through a time of revival in your life. It always begins with a confession of sin.

The next mark we see is in the first statement the Lord makes in verse 2, he says, "Write the vision, make it plain upon the tables that he may run that reads it." Now the second mark of revival is what I want to call timely obedience, in other words, and you've heard me say this before, that delayed obedience is disobedience and you're guilty of this, I've been guilty of this, oftentimes we see it at the end of a service such as this where there is

a time for response, what we oftentimes call an invitation, and we know that there's a decision to be made, we know there's something that we need to go before the Lord with and we say, "Well, I'll wait until tomorrow. I'll wait until next week. Or I'm gonna wait until So-and-so is not here because I don't want them to see that I went." In other words, we make these excuses that delaying our obedience is actually beneficial. It's not beneficial to our relationship to the Lord, it is beneficial to our own fleshly desires. But notice what the Lord says, this obedience that comes out of confession, he says, "I've written it plainly." That is why the Bible reading program is so critical to our lives because as we walk through the Scripture, it doesn't matter if it's Habakkuk, Leviticus or Ephesians, that we discover the holiness of God, the purity of God, and much the opposite of ourselves and what we discover is that our obedience to truly bring revival must not be delayed until tomorrow, next week or another stage of life, it must take place when the Lord calls, we immediately respond.

So we're willing to confess, we're willing to obey, the third mark actually takes place in verse 4, it says, "Behold his soul which is lifted up, not upright in him but the just shall live by his faith." Hopefully that last statement sounds very familiar to you, it's actually quoted in the book of Romans 1:17 where the Apostle Paul begins in verse 16 saying that salvation came to the Jews first and then the Gentiles, but that the just shall live by faith. Not utilized in Romans 1, it was the heartbeat of what you and I today call the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther made those declarations that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, through Jesus Christ alone. You understand that he had to put aside every aspect of his pride. Why? Because he was a part of an institution, he was a part of an entity that had become a machine, so to speak, of ecclesiastical or church stuff but was absent from the power and the Spirit of God, and when confronted particularly at what we call the Diet of Worms, when confronted to take back that which he said those very famous words, he said, "I cannot and I will not recant." In other words, he had to relinquish his pride. He had to be willing to say, "God, it doesn't matter if it benefits me or not, it doesn't matter if it's what I want or not." Do you think that Martin Luther wanted to go into hiding? Do you think Martin Luther wanted to run for his life? Do you think he wanted to? No, but he could not recant the truth of God's word.

When it comes to revival in our lives, hear me clearly, we're more interested that God is pleased with us than we experience pleasure in this life. Pride has got to be removed. Now I'm gonna make you a promise and this is the fourth mark: if you're willing to confess sin, if you're willing to timely obey, if you're willing to set aside your pride, the next thing that's seen in verse 5 and 6 in this passage in chapter 2 will happen, you will face opposition. As soon as you get serious about the things of God, I'm gonna warn you that there are gonna be those who come against you and it's not gonna be the heathens, it's not gonna be the pagans, do you know who Jesus' greatest enemies were? The religious personalities of his day: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes. The minor prophet Amos, who did he struggle with the most? The priests and the pastors of his day. Who did Jeremiah struggle with the most? The pastors of his day. And what we discover is this, that if we desire to walk more with the Lord, if we desire to be more fervent for the things of God, the people who oppose us the most might just be the folks that should support us the most and we discover that opposition will take place. Why is revival so

rare in our lives today? Well, all these reasons are critical but it may be that aspect of as soon as our fervency, as soon as our confession takes place, opposition rises up and what we discover is that it is actually more palatable for people that we be lukewarm than we be on fire for the Lord.

As we move to the next what I would call mark in this passage, it's down in verse 7 and it is implied about those that rise up, that if we're gonna experience revival in our lives, we've got to be willing to relinquish control and here's what I mean by that. I'm gonna give you a visual today, particularly for those that are listening by way of the radio. Imagine a hand that is clasped in a fist, that which we have in there cannot get out but nothing else can get in. It's a wonderful picture of control when it comes to the Lord because the opposite of that is holding our hand out palm up saying, "Okay, God, whatever I have I'm willing to allow you to take, but on the other hand, I'm also willing to allow you to put therein that which is greater than I ever had before." How difficult is it, I'm just confessing, is it that we want to control right? We don't just want to control our finances, we don't want to just control our future and our jobs, but our families, our children, whatever they may be.

Now I'm quickly approaching my third decade in ministry. Let me share with you a conversation that I've had numerous times. This may be in light of a young man or woman feels called into ministry, this may be someone who feels led to go in a certain trip or take a certain excursion for the sake of the Gospel, when a young man or woman comes across my life and they express this desire to serve the Lord with a reckless abandonment, do you know who the greatest voice of opposition is? Their parents. "Oh man, we want to give to Lottie Moon and pray for missionaries but not my kid. No way!" In other words, what we say is, "They are mine. We were born in Lee County, we were bred in Lee County, and we gonna be dead in Lee County." Not if the Lord says so. What happens, though, is oftentimes we'll open up our hand in revival, maybe it's finances, maybe it's our children, maybe it's our future, and we discover that though it may hurt for a season whatever he does with whatever that is, when our hand is opened up, he can fill it up with so much greater fulfillment thereof. Revival happens when we say, "Okay, God, you're in control, not me."

The next natural stage there, in fact, this is mentioned in verse 9, it talks about the dwelling places and the high cliffs, kind of the picture we have here. If you've ever been to or seen pictures of the Middle East, there in the cliffs of the rocks they build these structures, what we would call homes. Now rather than the Bedouins or the tent-dwellers on the ground, these homes that are carved in the side of the buildings, these are the wealthy people, these are the ones who not only want to protect their wealth but display their wealth for all to see, and it talks about not trusting in the nest of the cliffs. You know, one of the marks of revival is a renunciation or rejection of materialism. Here's what I mean by that, that the things of the next life become more important than the things of this life.

Let me translate that into Baptist lingo: we actually get more excited about giving than acquiring. We're more interested in what we can sponsor and support than what we can

acquire for ourselves. I know it's an old adage and you've heard it before, that you can't pull a U-Haul trailer behind a hearse. I know that, but how many of you say, "You know, I know I can't pull a U-Haul trailer behind my hears but I'm gonna make sure that I leave a big old U-Haul trailer for my family members." What are we doing? We're more interested in that which we leave for the days ahead than that which we've build up treasures in heaven for that which will come next. Revival is always marked by an increase, an incredible desire to be generous.

When you get to verse 10 and 11, it talks about consulting with shame in those who cut people off. One of the next marks of what we know as revival is the lack of or the removal of deceit from our lives. In other words, revival is always marked by a life, a community's life, an individual's life that is marked by honesty and transparency, motives are pure and that which is done is done upfront. Now I've joked about this in the other services and I will in this one as well, but my wife is probably the greatest testimony of this, she will tell you that I cannot lie. All she has to do is look me in the eyes and say, "Jeff," and, "I'm sorry, baby, I'm sorry!" I mean, I just, I spill the beans. I mean, it's there and I don't know if that's just how the Lord works in my life, I don't know if that's just how the Holy Spirit works in my life but I want you to know something about me, I have an absolute disdain for untruth and ill motives. It's just how the Lord has wired me. In fact, I'm gonna give you a phrase, I've said this, you know, kind of privately, I'm gonna give you a phrase. Are you ready? That when you take action without communication, you're actually practicing deception. When you're wanting to do something or participate in something and not let anybody else know about it, what are you doing or saying? You're shameful, you're hiding, and revival takes place when we're just honest with each other. Can we just be honest today? We're all messed up but what do we like to do? I mentioned this in a previous service, I know this is an old Texas phrase so put up with me, we perfume the pig. Have you ever heard that phrase? You get some old nasty, sloppy swine, you slap enough perfume on it, it doesn't smell as bad, but do you know what you've still got? A big old nasty pig is what you've got and so many times we perfume that proverbial pig by claiming this and saying that, sometimes we call it the famous switch-and-bait. Revival will happen when we're honest with God, honest with ourselves, and honest with each other.

Now just when you thought it was all positive, we're about to go a little bit the other side. Verse 15. It says what you think it says, "Woe is him who gives somebody strong drink so they can see somebody's nakedness." That's just what the Bible says. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" Read Leviticus 18 and 19 and it means exactly what you think it means. You want to see revival in our community, you want to see revival in our churches? I've got one for you and I've said this before and every time I say this, somebody gets upset with me so I know you're going to so forgive me in advance but it's the truth: of all the issues that I deal with in people's lives, sometimes it's individuals, sometimes it's a family, a couple, it doesn't matter, I'm here to tell you and this is a rough estimate but it's pretty accurate, that 95% of the problems that people deal with that I'm aware of would be eliminated if people would keep their pants on. I'm serious. People doing the wrong thing with the wrong people at the wrong time, do you know what it creates? A big mess. It says, "Woe." I'm gonna tell you, if all of a sudden in this culture,

if we got pure about our sensuality, and by the way I'm using a word that is kid-friendly there, if all of a sudden we were with the people we were supposed to be at the times we're supposed to be and nothing else, revival would break loose.

It says, "Woe unto them," which may in fact lead us to the ninth mark here. Notice beginning in verse 16 it says, "Are you filled with shame and for glory? Do you also drink yourself?" What it's implying there is this, that one of the marks of revival is that we're willing to confront sin when it's observed in a part of our sphere of influence. Now let me go ahead and qualify this. If you leave today and you say, "Boy howdy, I want some revival! I'm fixing to go knocking on some doors and make some calls. I'm gonna call everybody out." That's not revival, that's arrogance and narcissism is what that is. Let me tell you what it means, it's like Nathan who called out David, it's like Paul who called out Peter. All throughout the Scriptures when somebody brings a sinful behavior to the attention of someone who's walking intimately with the Lord, I can give you a guide here, if you the one who feel led to confront, shed more tears than the one who was confronted, then you got it. Do you realize that Daniel spent a whole night grieving over the fact that he was gonna share some bad news with Nebuchadnezzar? You see this story, Nathan grieved that he was gonna have to confront David about Bathsheba and yet how many times do we just let it sweep under the rug, say, "Well, it's not that big a deal"? When you go to 1 Corinthians 5, it is a big deal, it says that it festers, it's like leaven that will leaven the whole lump whatever it may be. Revival is not only us confessing our sins, but it is at times, if the Lord calls, dealing with others and theirs as well.

The last mark that we'll share today begins in verse 18. Don't you love the way the Lord words it, "Dumb idols." They can't speak, they can't talk, you can put silver on them, put gold on them, it doesn't matter at all, they're not worth anything, they can't do anything, can't say anything. I know what many of you are thinking, "Well, in our culture today we don't have statues and incense and we don't bow down and do this and do that." You know, 1 John 5 says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Let me define biblically what an idol is. It is anything that gets in the way of you and God. You know that an idol can be a physical statue, it can be ambition, it can be desire. Did you know that an idol can be family, success, finances? I've got one for you, do you know that an idol can be religious expression. If we get the do's and the don'ts and the crossing the t's and the dotting the i's as more important than the Lord himself, then "religious fervor" can get in the way of us seeing the Lord.

You see, all of these things in chapter 2 of Habakkuk build up to this whole idolatry thing and essentially revival happens in our lives when whatever is between us and the Lord, idol, is removed which takes us full circle. How is it removed? By confessing it. By admitting it and obeying the Lord, allowing him to have charge and him to have control of our lives, and we see it just continue and perpetrate itself. Maybe today as we discussed the idols of Israel 2,500 years ago, maybe you say, "Do you know what? There's some things in my life maybe objects, maybe people, maybe ideology, that because of their presence, it's blocking my view of the Lord." Well, today would be a great day to begin the steps of revival in our lives by confessing that and obeying thereof.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. You know, maybe you're that individual today, maybe you find yourself in an environment such as this you've been in the entirety of your life, or maybe today this is the very first time you've been in a setting such as this but the Lord made it clear that in spite of all the issues that we've talked about from the book of Habakkuk, that the main issue is that there's no relationship there, that Jesus isn't a part of the equation and that sin needs to be taken care of. I've got great news for you, you know the Bible says that whoever calls on the name of the Lord should be saved, that's found in Romans 10. Let me unpack that real briefly, that means salvation and forgiveness doesn't come from becoming religious or doing something or stopping something, it comes by the shed blood of Jesus Christ alone. Maybe you're that individual today, maybe you're that person who said, "I need to get that taken care of in my life," can I just encourage you just have a conversation with the Lord. It's not a conversation you have to have out loud, you don't have to repeat the same words that I might say. It's a cry of your heart, that's what Romans 10 says, whoever calls unto the Lord will be saved. But maybe your conversation, maybe your prayer would go a little something like this. "God, today I just want to finally confess and admit that I'm the problem and Jesus Christ is the answer. God, today I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf. God, today I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to live a sinless life on my behalf. God, today I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to pay the price for my sin on his cross. God, I believe that three days later when he rose from the dead, made it possible for my sin to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the problems of life but I do know that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem so the best way I know how, I'm asking you to save me, I'm asking you to forgive me, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord. We'd love to celebrate with you. We'd love to hear your story. In just a moment I'm gonna pray, we're gonna stand and sing and we want to invite you just to step out and step forward so we can celebrate what the Lord is doing in your life. Or maybe that conversation took place days, weeks or years ago and maybe you're like the individuals in our second service who proclaimed through the ordinance of baptism on the outside that which was a reality on the inside. We'd love to talk to you about that. Or maybe you're like those who already today have come and said, "This is our family of faith. This is our church home. This is where we want to get rooted spiritually." Or maybe you just need to be prayed with or prayed for, we just want to celebrate what the Lord is doing in your life today.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, thank you that even in the midst of words from the prophets of old that at times are so difficult to hear, Lord, we recognize that you're a God of mercy, you're a God of grace, you're a God of love and forgiveness. Help us, O God, today to simply obey and respond to that which you've spoken into our lives. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm gonna ask you to stand with me as Jimmy leads us, whatever decision we'll be right here at the front.