

Sermon #3 — Habakkuk Series

Title:            **THE SIGHT OF SIN**

Text:            Habakkuk 1:3

Subject:        *Lessons from Sin*

Date:            Tuesday Evening — August 3, 2010

Tape #          *Habakkuk #3*

Readings:     *Curtis Hall and David Burge*

Introduction:

Let's go back to Habakkuk chapter 1 tonight. We will begin reading in verse 1. — "**The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.**" — The prophet's heart was heavy. He carried the burden of the Word of the Lord. He carried in his heart the heavy, heavy weight of God's Word, God's message to his people. He knew he was insufficient for the work to which God had called him, but he could not abandon his calling.

Verse 2 — "**O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! [even] cry out unto thee [of] violence, and thou wilt not save!**" — Habakkuk saw violence and cruelty everywhere. He begged God to intervene, crying day and night for him to arise and shine forth in saving power. But the Lord God would

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not hear. He would not deliver his people. Now, watch verse 3...

“Why 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.” (Habakkuk 1:3)

“**Why dost thou shew me iniquity?**” — That is the question that is on my mind. Oh, how heavily that questions lays on my mind! — “**Why dost thou shew me iniquity?**” I want to talk to you tonight about **THE SIGHT OF SIN**. Has the Lord God ever shown you your sin? Do you see your sin? I am compelled to cry out with David of old, “**I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me**” (Psalm 51:3).

“Physician of my sin-sick soul,  
To Thee I bring my case;  
My raging malady control,  
And heal me by Thy grace.

Pity the anguish I endure,

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See how I mourn and pine;  
For never can I hope a cure  
From any hand but Thine.

I would disclose my whole complaint,  
But where shall I begin?  
No words of mine can fully paint  
That worst distemper, sin.

It lies not in a single part,  
But through my frame is spread;  
A burning fever in my heart,  
A palsy in my head.

It makes me deaf, and dumb, and blind,  
And impotent and lame;  
And overclouds, and fills my mind,  
With folly, fear, and shame.

A thousand evil thoughts intrude  
Tumultuous in my breast;  
Which indispose me for my food,  
And rob me of my rest.

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Lord I am sick, regard my cry,  
And set my spirit free;  
Say, canst Thou let a sinner die,  
Who longs to live to Thee?"

——*John Newton*

**PERSONAL SIN**

First let me talk about the sin we see in ourselves. Then, I will talk to you about the evil we see around us. Why does the Lord God cause us to behold iniquity, transgression, and sin? Why does he force us to see and know the depravity of our own hearts? Why does God the Holy Spirit first convince chosen sinners of their sin? Why does he continually convince us of our sin?

It is a well known fact, bitterly experienced in our souls, that **God the Holy Spirit continually discovers to his people the evil of their own hearts.** He takes us into the darkest chambers of our souls, and there reveals to us evils which, perhaps we had never suspected. He lays bare the loathsomeness of

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our hearts, and forces us look at our deformity and depravity. God the Holy Spirit takes us to **the rock whence we were hewn**, and to **the hole of the pit whence we were digged**, and forces us look with horror upon what we are!

- What we are in our natural, fallen state!
- What we are now by nature, forcing us to see and acknowledge the awful and hideous corruption that still remains in our hearts, even though we have been regenerated by his grace!

**Why does he do so? What is his purpose?** If the Lord will enable me to do so, I want to show you several answers to these questions. I want you to see why the Lord makes us look on iniquity, especially in ourselves.

## **CONVERSION**

*First*, the Lord God shows us our sin that he might show us his Son and make us want him (John 16:7-11).

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the

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Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” (John 16:7-11)

He makes us mourn, that he might comfort us. He wounds that he might heal. He empties so he can fill. He abases that he might exalt. He strips that he might clothe. He slays that he might make alive (Matthew 5:3-6).

“Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed [are] they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed [are] the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed [are] they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:3-6)

**CONFIRM**

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*Second*, after we are converted, the Lord God still causes us to behold the iniquity of our hearts, that he might constantly confirm in our souls the doctrine of the Gospel, that he might make his Son, his grace, and his salvation more and more precious to our hearts.

Arminianism is the natural religion of us all. I think one of the surest ways in the world to put down all our self-sufficiency, and all our erroneous views of the gospel, is for God the Holy Spirit to show us our own depravity. A man may talk glibly concerning freewill as long as he knows nothing about himself; but when the Lord God has shown him what he is by nature, his mouth is stopped.

**Men and women, conscious of their own sin, their hearts' depravity, their utter corruption by nature, and the filth of their best deeds of "righteousness," rejoice in free grace, and cannot tolerate freewill.**

- Grace chose me.
- Grace redeemed me.

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- Grace called me.
- Grace performed a good work in me.
- Grace will keep me.
- Grace will present me!

From first to last, “**Salvation is of the LORD!**”

The Lord God begins by teaching us this foundation truth of our utter depravity. He burns it into our consciences by bitter experience, and by terrible discoveries of our sinfulness. And the sinner, convinced of his sin, will never object to free grace, sovereign mercy, electing love, sovereign predestination, limited atonement, irresistible grace, sure preservation, and the keeping hand of omnipotent goodness!

- Sinners who need grace rejoice in covenant grace as a rare jewel of heaven.
- Sinners who need atonement are thankful for real atonement.
- Sinners who need saving are delighted to know that “*Salvation is of the LORD!*”

## **OUR PRIDE**

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The old writers used to say, “God gave the peacock black feet to keep them from being proud of their feathers.” So, a *third* reason for the Lord showing us our sin is that he might humble us. **I know this**: With every blessing God gives, he gives with the blessing, a trouble, lest we be exalted above measure. With every revelation of grace and experience of mercy, the Lord gives a revelation of our hearts and a taste of inward bitterness. With everything the Lord gives that might tend to swell our hearts with pride...

- Gifts — Usefulness
- Knowledge — Experience

With everything the Lord God gives us that might tend to swell our hearts and heads with pride, he gives something to break our hearts and humble us before the throne of his majesty.

- Peter must be sifted.
- Paul had to be beaten down (2 Corinthians 12:2-10).

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God

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knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. 6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but [now] I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me [to be], or [that] he heareth of me. 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in

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persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:2-10)

We are all, by nature, as proud as Lucifer. If you imagine that is not true of you, you are in for a very rude awakening! You will soon be stripped. You will be broken; and that is good. — **God only uses broken pieces!**

“Our communion with Christ our progress towards heaven, our increased, knowledge, our good works, all these things have, through the evil heart of our unbelief, a tendency to puff us up, though, in truth, being all given to us by the Spirit, there is no legitimate cause for pride in any of us; and therefore, God, to keep his people in their right place, humbles them with discoveries of their own sinfulness. If their ships had all sail, and no ballast, they would soon be wrecked.” — **C. H. Spurgeon**

**SUBMISSIVE**

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A *fourth* reason for our God dealing with us as he does, showing us our iniquity, transgression, and sin, is to make us submissive in the hour of trial and trouble. — O how we murmur at God's providence when we forget the evil of our hearts!

Murmuring seems to have been bred in the bones of the children of Israel. They murmured incessantly in the wilderness. For forty years they murmured...

- for water when they were thirsty,
- for bread,
- then for meat, loathing the bread of heaven.

They murmured first for one thing, and then for another. They were always at it. They were continually murmuring for forty long years in the wilderness.

And we are all far too apt to imitate them. But the surest way for God to cure us of murmuring is to let us know what we are by showing us our sin!

- To a sinner spared, dry bread is a royal feast!
- To a criminal pardoned, cold water is sweeter than the most costly wines other men drink.

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- To a sinner forgiven, anything less than hell is a great mercy!

**VALUE GRACE**

*Fifth*, the Lord God shows us our sin to make us value his grace and cherish his Son and his salvation all the more. We value our doctors most when we need them most. When we are healthy, make jokes about doctors “practicing medicine.” But when we need them, we can’t get an appointment soon enough. We laugh at them while in health; but we are glad to have them when we are sick.

So it is with the Lord Jesus. We value Christ most when we need him most. You who do not see your own iniquity think lightly of Christ. You have no need for him. Oh, but, if God the Holy Spirit ever shows you your iniquity, transgression, and sin, if ever he discovers to you the deep-seated leprosy of your heart, you will value the great Physician. When you realize your own ruin, you will prize God’s remedy.

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You who think of sin but lightly,  
Nor suppose the evil great,  
Cannot see the Savior rightly,  
Nor His blood appreciate!

We have times of darkness. Don't we? Sometimes we cannot tell our right hand from our left in spiritual matters. Sin seems to rage within as a mighty man; and faith seems to slink away to a corner like a terrified mouse. The fire of life is still within; but it is hidden under a pile of ashes! Like the Shulamite, I see in myself, "**As it were the company of two armies!**" (Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 7:14-25)

(Galatians 5:16-17) "[This] I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

(Romans 7:14-25) "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would,

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that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that [it is] good. 17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not. 19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. 21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Romans 7:14-25)

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The Lord God shows us that we are vile, that he might make Christ the more precious to our souls. He shows us our sin to make us cherish his salvation.

**Oh, how I thank God for...**

- Effectual, sin-atoning blood!
- Complete, perpetual forgiveness!
- Perfect, unassailable righteousness!
- Pure, free, indestructible grace!

## **PUBLIC SIN**

I have been taking to you about us seeing our own personal sin, because that is where the emphasis is in Holy Scripture. We must first and foremost be concerned with and acknowledge our own sin. But in our text, the Prophet Habakkuk is talking about public sin. He is talking about seeing sin all around him.

“Why 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.” (Habakkuk 1:3)

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Why does the Lord cause us to behold iniquity in others?

**First, it is not that we might scorn them, as a people beneath us.** The world is full of proud, strutting, self-righteous Pharisees. And we are all proud, strutting, self-righteous Pharisees by nature. — God save us from that horrid evil!

You have probably heard the story of **John Bradford** a hundred times. He used to see people going past his window, on the way to Tyburn, to be hanged. When he did, Bradford would often say, “There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God; if it had not been for the grace of God, John Bradford too would have been hanged.” — We would be wise to remember that.

**There, but for the grace of God, is Don Fortner!**  
You can apply that to any man you see whom you are tempted to scorn as something less than yourself. —  
**There, but for the grace of God, is Don Fortner!**

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**Second, the Lord God shows us the evil of the world around us that we might learn to admire the sovereignty of his grace.** — He who passed by those multitudes rushing madly to hell plucked us as brands from the burning! What can I say to that, except, — **“Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight!”** — **“He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth!”** — *“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”* (Romans 9:16).

Not only is that so but this to: — **The God of all grace keeps us in the midst of great evil,** working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Others are taken in by the evil around them. God keeps his own.

- Lot in Sodom
- Daniel in Babylon

**Third, the Lord shows us the evil, the iniquity, the violence, the spoiling, the strife, the contention of the poor wretches of the world around us, to stir our hearts with greater earnestness to carry the**

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**Gospel of Christ to the four corners of the earth** (2 Corinthians 5:1-6:2).

“For we know that if our earthly house of [this] tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in [this] tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing [is] God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6 Therefore [we are] always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat

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of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”

“12 ¶ For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to [answer] them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13 For whether we be beside ourselves, [it is] to God: or whether we be sober, [it is] for your cause. 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And [that] he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

“16 ¶ Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know

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we [him] no more. 17 Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [you] by us: we pray [you] in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

“6:1 ¶ We then, [as] workers together [with him], beseech [you] also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. 2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of

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salvation.)” (2 Corinthians 5:1-6:2)

O Holy Spirit of God, give me grace to do what I can to preach Christ to this generation for the salvation of your elect, for the increase of your kingdom, for the glory of your name. Let us, with earnestness, seek the salvation of Christ’s sheep, for the glory of Christ!

Many, many years ago, when Robert Murray M’Cheyne was pastor of Christ’s Church in Dundee, Scotland, while he was away from his pulpit for a long, long time, he asked a preacher by the name of Burns to supply the pulpit for him. One day, someone saw Mr. Burns standing on a street corner in Glasgow, with tears streaming down his cheeks. When he was asked why he was crying, what was bothering him, he answered — “The thud of Christless feet on the road to hell is breaking my heart.” — May God give me such a heart!

**When I ask, with Habakkuk**, — “Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?” I think I hear the Savior say, — “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every

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creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

Spirit of God, show me and keep before me the evil of my own heart with such power and efficacy that I may be forced to cling to Christ. — Show me and keep before me the iniquity of this crooked and perverse generation with such power and efficacy that I may be compelled by your grace to preach the gospel to poor lost sinners everywhere.

Amen.