

I Will Exult in the Lord!

A Journey through the Burden of Habakkuk

2- The Strange and Amazing Providence of God

Church September 26, 2021

Habakkuk 1

1 The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet saw.

2 How long, O Lord, will I call for help, And You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save.

3 Why do You make me see iniquity, And cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises.

4 Therefore the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted.

5 “Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days— You would not believe if you were told.

6 “For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs.

7 “They are dreaded and feared; Their justice and authority originate with themselves.

8 “Their horses are swifter than leopards And keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.

9 “All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand.

10 “They mock at kings And rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress And heap up rubble to capture it.

11 “Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.”

12 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct.

13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

14 Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them?

15 The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16 Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net And burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, And their food is plentiful.

17 Will they therefore empty their net And continually slay nations without sparing?

To the Glory of God

Now the word, “*Providence*” is an old- fashioned word that you don’t hear much anymore. And that is a real shame- because there really isn’t another word that captures the fullness of how God operates throughout His Creation.

The word, “*Providence*” actually comes from the word “*Provide*” which has two parts:

1. “*Pro*” (Latin: “*forward*” or “*on behalf of*”)
2. “*Vide*” (Latin: “*to see*”)

So, on a shallow reading- many people think that “*Provide*” would mean: *to see forward or to foresee*. But “*Pro-vide*” (Latin: *pro-veeday*) actually means: *to supply what is needed; to give sustenance or support*. And so, the noun “*Providence*” means: *the sovereign Act of God in providing for or sustaining and governing the Universe*.

Now there are two reasons for this:

1. Linguistically
2. Theologically

1. **Linguistically**

Linguistically, the word, “*pro*” not only means: *forward-* but it also means: *on behalf of*. So, the word, “*Pro-vide*” actually means: *to see on behalf of*. But what sense does that make? The way this is used linguistically in English is when someone says: “*I’ll see to that.*” And when used this way- the phrase, “*I’ll see to that*” doesn’t have *anything* to do with *physical* vision, per se- it actually means: *to take care of something or to provide for someone or something*. So, when

someone says, “*I’ll see to that*”- they are NOT talking about literally or physically “*seeing*” something with their natural eyes. They mean to say that they will, “*Provide for that*” or they will, “*Take care of that.*”

In other words, they are “*seeing*” a Need or a Problem or a Situation with a specific Plan in mind to “*fix it*”; or “*to solve it*”; or “*to supply it*”. And that “*seeing*” with a Purpose in mind to fix it; or solve it; or to solve it- ALWAYS results in very specific Action being taken. So, “*to provide*” then is to “*make Provision for what you see*”. “*Seeing to*” something then is, “*Acting on behalf of something.*” And that is “*providing.*” Therefore- “*Providence*” is the sovereign Act of God “*seeing to*” the Order, Operation, and Maintenance of the *entire* Universe- so that God’s Will ALWAYS comes to pass- *exactly* as God has willed it.

So, the “*Providence of God*” is the “*working out*” of God’s Will. “*Providence*” is all of the many Acts that God does (seen and unseen)- to *assure* that His Will is accomplished. So, God brings people together; or drives them apart. God raises up people and businesses or even nations; while He casts others down.

The “*Providence of God*” involves many, many separate people and events and things and thoughts and statements and issues- which all seem to be operating independently of each other. But behind the scenes- the Almighty is governing and managing and directing each one of them- in such a way that His Will is accomplished. And of those 10,000 separate people and events and things and statements and issues- we might only see or know about 3 of them.

One of the best examples of this is found in History. In his six volume “*Memoirs of the 2nd World War*”¹- Winston Churchill labeled the fourth book, the “*Hinge of Fate*”- which is the language that worldly or unsaved people use to describe God’s “*Providence.*”

And in that book, Churchill describes the “*Battle of Midway*” in the Pacific Theatre in the summer of 1942.² The Allied forces were outmanned; outmaneuvered; out led; and outgunned. And yet, we won.

Now up until the Battle of Midway- the Allied forces had lost every single Engagement with the Axes Powers. But with the Victory at the Battle of Midway- the Allies won every single Engagement until the end of the War. And Churchill pondered why that was. It had NOTHING to do with armament; or firepower; or manpower; or military intelligence. Both the Japanese and the Germans had *better* equipment; *better* trained soldiers; *better* military leaders; and *better* strategy. And they had decisively won every single Engagement up until the summer of 1942. After that- the Axes Powers lost and lost badly. Why? Churchill called it, the

¹ I highly recommend everyone to read this. <https://www.ebay.com/itm/334130593824?chn=ps&norover=1&mkevt=1&mkrid=711-213727-13078-0&...>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Midway

“*Hinge of Fate*”. Christians call it, “*Providence*”. God Personally *intervened* to raise up and cast down- so that His Will would come to pass.

Now it doesn’t have to be as dramatic as a World War- but every time God moves- it is important. So, God’s Providence involves why you got your job; or how you met your spouse; or why your child died; or how you were saved. The Holy Bible teaches that for everything that is needed in order that God’s Will is carried out- God Almighty will “*see to that*”.

2. Theologically

Now when we move into Theology- there is also a reason to understand that “*seeing to*” something means “*providing for*” it. For example, when Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac- before they went up the mountain- young Isaac asked his father in **Genesis 22:7b**,

... where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

Now hearing his son ask him this had to slice right through Abraham’s heart because God had already told him to sacrifice his son. Yet, in **Genesis 22:8b**, Abraham replied in faith:

... God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.

Now Abraham had nothing to base his Faith on except two things:

1. In **Genesis 22:2** God had called Isaac, Abraham’s “*only son*”- even though Ishmael was born *before* Isaac.
2. God had promised that Abraham would have a son through Sarah- even though she was past her child-bearing years. Isaac was that son.

... yet that was enough for him to believe that God would somehow move; and Abraham would NOT have to sacrifice his son. And not long after Abraham made that statement- God proved His Faithfulness and showed Abraham a ram caught in the thorns (**Genesis 22:14**).

Now in **Genesis 22:14b**- Moses was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write down Abraham’s Response to God’s Faithfulness. And it’s a fairly complicated and strange Response- so much so- that many people just pass right by it. But I want to illustrate this Response in several different English translations- in order to get the full impact:

... Abraham called the name of that place **Jehovah** (Yahweh) -**jireh**: as it is said to this day, **In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.** (KJV)

Genesis 22:14b

... Abraham called the name of that place **The Lord** (Yahweh) **Will Provide**, as it is said to this day, **"In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."** (NASB)

Genesis 22:14b

... Abraham called the name of that place, **"The Lord** (Yahweh) **will provide"**; as it is said to this day, **"On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."**(ESV)

Now the Names, "**Jehovah**" and "**the Lord**" that the various English translations use in this verse is actually the Covenant Name of God that is used 6,825 times throughout the Old Testament. This Name was *transliterated* into English as "*Jehovah*" many years ago by Bible scholars who had insufficient tools and data.

The Jews considered this Name of God to be so holy- that they only used the letters "YHWH" (ho*hy+) the *Tetragrammaton*). The corresponding English letter "J" was used to replace the Hebrew "Y" in the earlier English translations of the Bible and the English letter "V" replaced the Hebrew "W" thus "YHWH" became "JHVH".

This alteration of the Hebrew *Tetragrammaton* was pronounced "*Jehovah*" in English. A more accurate transliteration of "YHWH" would have been to keep both Hebrew letters, "Y" and "W" and to pronounce God's Covenant Name as "*Yahweh*" in English- which today, is almost *universally* recognized by Biblical scholars as the closest English understanding of the Tetragrammaton.

But the Hebrew word, "*jireh*" (**ha#r=y**) used in this verse is a proper noun which, when added to "YHWH", literally means: *the Lord will see to it.*³ So, when Abraham replied to his son in **Genesis 22:8b**, the literal Hebrew is,

"God will see for Himself the lamb."

Now why does God's "*seeing*" in Hebrew mean that He will "*provide*"? We find the Answer in another Characteristic of God- God's *Omniscience*. This Divine Attribute allows for God to know everything about everything- Past, Present, and Future. So, it is true to say that the God of the Bible "sees" and He "understands" the Future *fully*- before it happens.

But we can't stop with this- even though most people do. It is very common for people to say things like, "*God knew about that before it happened.*" And

³ The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament Copyright © 2003 by AMG Publishers.

that's true- God absolutely DID know about that before it happened. God is totally Omniscient. But that's not all God is. God is also totally "*Effectual*".

So, while it is true that God *knows* everything about everything- it is ALSO true that God doesn't simply passively understand what will happen in the Future. God's "*Effectualness*" means that God also Orders; Controls; and Governs ALL of the Thoughts; and ALL of the Actions; and ALL of the Decisions; of ALL the people in the earth- Past, Present, and Future. And God does this- to such an extent- that He *guarantees* that His Perfect Will is ALWAYS accomplished. And this "Ordering" and "Controlling" and "Governing" of ALL things- is called, God's "*Providence*".

So, because of the *combination* of both God's *Omniscience* and His *Effectualness*- God never simply "*sees*" without "*acting*". God doesn't simply "*know*" on an intellectual level that something will occur at some point in the future- while He sits back passively- allowing Man to struggle to try to obtain God's Will. The Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that God actively *Controls* and *Orders* and *Governs* ALL of the Circumstances; and ALL of the Situations (including ALL of Man's Choices; Actions; and Desires) in such a way that two things will always be true:

- ✓ Mankind will be held completely responsible for all of their Thoughts, Words, Decisions, and Actions and will be judged if they don't do the "Right" thing
- ✓ That which God has determined (from before the foundation of the world) will happen- *exactly* as God has ordained it.

... and *both* of these two things will be carried out in such a way that two *other* things will ALWAYS be accomplished:

1. God will ALWAYS be Glorified
2. The Joy of God's people will be FULL

... so, God *always* and *in all cases* remains absolutely Sovereign and Human Beings are *always* and *in- all- cases* responsible for what they do.

So, every "Good" or "Righteous"; or "Godly" thing that occurs anywhere on earth; at any time; by anybody- is because God sovereignly and actively *caused* it. And therefore, God receives all the Glory for every single "Good" thing that occurs. And every "Evil" thing occurs anywhere on earth; at any time; by anybody- because God sovereignly and passively *allowed* evil people to do what was already in their hearts anyway- and God *managed* that Evil in one of three ways:

1. God allowed ALL of the Evil that was in their hearts to be done
2. God allowed SOME of the Evil that was in their hearts to be done
3. God allowed NONE of the Evil that was in their hearts to be done- at that time

And the criteria behind why God allowed ALL; SOME; or NONE of the Evil to actually be carried out- is based on whatever will *further* God's Will. And God is the ONLY one, Who could possibly be in charge of this- because God is the ONLY one, Who *sees* the Past, Present, and Future- all at once; and God is the ONLY one, Who is *powerful* enough to *cause* it or *allow* it to happen.

But we must keep in mind that the people, who are allowed by God to carry out the Evil that was in their hearts (to whatever degree they are allowed) are totally responsible for what they WANTED to do; as well as what God ALLOWED them to do.

So, God doesn't FORCE anyone to think or do Evil. The Evil that people think about and then carry out- *originates* from inside their *own* darkened heart. The first Pastor of the Church at Jerusalem was moved by God the Holy Spirit to write this in **James 1:13-15:**

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

James said here in verse 14 that each person is tempted when he is "**carried away and enticed by his own lust**". So, the lust; or the desire- to sin is already present inside each person as a result of the Fall. So, even satan does not force anyone to sin. All that satan does- is to present a person with an *opportunity* (called Temptation) to carry out what they already wanted to do anyway.

Yet the Bible teaches that satan MUST ask Permission from God in order to touch the flesh; or the possessions; or the family; or the life of a genuine child of God. And so, even in Temptation- God remains absolutely Sovereign.

And the Promise from a God, Who CANNOT lie- is that when satan has Divine Permission to touch the flesh; or the possessions; or the family; or the life of a genuine child of God- God is sovereignly WORKING that "Bad" and "Terrible" thing- TOGETHER- with all of the other things God has either

sovereignly caused or allowed to come into that person's life- so that two things are GUARANTEED to happen:

1. God will be glorified
2. Our Joy will be made FULL

... and again, that sovereign "WORKING" of God's Will through all of the variables of this Life (both Good and Bad)- is God's Providence.

But that also means that each person is fully cognizant; fully culpable; and fully accountable to God for what they do. And if they obey God- God gets all the Glory; because NOBODY would obey God unless God would empower them and change them. But if they sin- they are fully responsible; and God can judge them. And this is true- even though satan tempts them and even though God is Sovereign- managing it all.

So, even though God *could* have stopped EVERYBODY from doing ALL off the Evil they wanted to do- He chose to allow *some* of them to carry out some or all of the Evil that was already in their hearts.

Yet God is totally Good and Righteous and Holy. And so, the ONLY reason God allowed ANY Evil to be carried out by anybody- is because by allowing that particular "Evil" to be manifested to that degree- a *greater* "Good" was brought about- that would NOT have been done- had God stopped *all* the Evil.

And this is true whether we are talking about the Salvation of unworthy sinners by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone (through the evil Betrayal of Judas Iscariot) or the evil Thoughts; Words; and Actions of unrepentant people.

We must remember as we comprehend all of God's Characteristics- that the one true living God of the Bible is *not* a neutral or passive Observer in the Universe. That concept of God is an ancient Heresy called, "*Deism*" and is neither biblical nor is it Christian. The created Universe can neither exist at all; nor could it continue to function at all- without God actively and continually sustaining and maintaining it. And so, wherever God is "*looking and seeing*"- God is "allowing or causing". If God "perceives"- He "performs"; If He "inspects"- He "effects"; and wherever God "patrols"- He "controls".

In other words, there is a profound; and very wise; and important; and very Good and biblical Reason why "Providence" does NOT merely mean: "*Foreknowledge*". Instead, "Providence means:

**The active and determined Sustenance, Governance, and Management by
God over every area of the Universe-
all the time**

So, every time God “*sees*”, He “*sees to it*”. In other words- God’s “*seeing*” is *ALWAYS* combined with God “*doing*”. And God’s “*doing*” *ALWAYS* has- as its final and supreme Objective- that God’s Will be carried out- *exactly* as God has already determined- so that God is *ALWAYS* glorified; and the Joy of His people is *ALWAYS* made full.

So, when we say that God exercises His Absolute Sovereignty through the ongoing Ordering and Governance of the Universe- we mean to say that *THE* single most important Objective in all of God’s Creation is that His Will is *accomplished*- not merely *desired*. And that is because there is *NOTHING* that could possibly exist anywhere in the Universe- at any time- that could be *better* than God’s Will being done.

And we have to understand that *nothing* else matters to God as much as this one, single Objective. The one, true, and living God of the Bible burns white-hot in His Passion to make sure that *whatever* He has already determined- will be carried out- perfectly! Therefore- God sovereignly Governs and Orders the Universe with this one single Objective *always* at the forefront of His Mind. And that Governing and that Ordering (consisting of God allowing or causing very specific things) is called, “Providence”.

Now because one of the Ways in which God exercises His Absolute Sovereignty over His Creation is through His Providence- the practical implication of this Truth is that genuine Science and Knowledge will reflect that.

1 Timothy 6:20&21

20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge" —

21 which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.

We must realize that everything that goes by the name of “Science” and “Knowledge” is not *true* Science or true Knowledge. There is something called, “**worldly *and* empty chatter *and* the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"** that goes by the name of “Science” and “Knowledge”- but which is really nothing more than political or social Propaganda- *masquerading* as either “Science” or “Knowledge”. Genuine Science/Knowledge is properly defined as:

**An unbiased Search for Objective Propositional Truth
based upon factual Evidence**

... which will *ALWAYS verify* what is true and which will ALWAYS glorify God- Who alone is the Author of ALL Truth. So, ALL Truth is God's Truth. And there is NOTHING that is true that does not glorify God and that does not flow out from God. And so, *whatever* is true- will NEVER promote things which cannot be proven or verified or things that promote and espouse things that are patently false.

Therefore, true Science/Knowledge is simply our human observation of the various Ways and Means by which God Orders and Governs the Universe. In other words, true Science/Knowledge is us observing God making sure that His Will comes to pass. So, true Science/Knowledge is the observation of God's Providence.

True Science/Knowledge will uncover and verify and make known the *provable* and *verifiable* Ways in which an absolutely Sovereign God displays His Own Glory through factual Evidence of His Providence. And that will ALWAYS bring Glory to God. And that means that ANYTHING that *dishonors* or *belittles* God; or ANYTHING that *excludes* God altogether- is NOT genuine Science; nor is it genuine Knowledge. And so, whatever does dishonor or belittle God- is designed to *deceive*- not *enlighten*.

It is important to understand that biblical Christianity is *NOT* at odds with true Science or Knowledge. At all. Christianity *welcomes, encourages, and celebrates* any legitimate and honest search for Truth. Christians do not fear the Truth- because Truth is ALWAYS our friend. Genuine Truth is an ally of all genuine believers- because Truth *verifies* and *glorifies* God. Why? Because Truth will verify and confirm that which is true. And nothing is more- true than God Himself; and what God said; and what God does and has done. And so, ALL genuine believers earnestly seek for genuine Truth- in all walks of life.

Regrettably, down through the Centuries, wayward people- both in and out of the Church- have said, done, and taught sinful, ungodly, and unscientific things- all in the name of either "protecting" the Church against the "Evil" of Science and Knowledge; or of supposedly "promoting" Science and Knowledge against the "Ignorance" of Faith and Christianity. But both sides were wrong about this.

What biblical Christianity objects to is "**worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"** or "pseudo-Science"- which is patently "Anti-intellectual"; wholly "Unscientific"; completely biased; and primarily politically driven. And all that is- *regardless* of who initializes it- is an effort to *minimize, hide, alter, or even ignore* the Truth.

There is absolutely no Conflict between biblical Christianity and True Science/Knowledge. And therefore, believers do *not* have to choose between trusting in the Truth claims of the Bible and things like: Astronomy; Geology; Physics; Biology; Mathematics; Technology; Medicine; Music; or Art. All of

these “Sciences” thrive together with the “Queen” of Science/Knowledge- Biblical Theology- when rightly understood.

Now last time- we discovered that there are at least two aspects of God’s Ways- as God moves in the earth:

1. God’s Ways are *Mysterious* to us
2. God’s Ways are *Misunderstood* by us

... and we also found out that the main reason that God’s Ways are both Mysterious to us and Misunderstood by us- is because we forget that God is NOT a Human Being and therefore, God does NOT think; or speak; or act like we do.

Yet God is NOT merely different from us. No, God is BETTER than us. We are fallen and are of the earth- earthy. God is Spirit and is perfect Love and perfect Light and perfect Truth and perfect Wisdom- combined with perfect Power and perfect Majesty- wrapped up in perfect Beauty. God’s Brilliance makes the sun look dark. And the *summation*; the *totality* of all the individual Perfections of God’s Character and Nature- is called, God’s “*Holiness*”.

So, what makes God to be Holy- is NOT merely that He is *different* from us- but that He is a “One- of- a- Kind” Being- with NO equals and NO comparisons. And as God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the son of Amoz, as he ministered 700 years before Jesus was born- during the reign of the Kings of Judah- this golden tongued Prophet said this in

Isaiah 45:5-7:

5 “I am the Lord, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other,

7 The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.

... and again, in **Isaiah 46:9b-11**

9 ...For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;

11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.

Now, please notice two phrases that illustrate God's Providence- one from **Isaiah 45** and the other from Chapter 46-

[I am] The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.

... and ...

... Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.

These phrases illustrate the Reality that God governs and manages seemingly unrelated People, Events, Statements, and Issues together- so that His Will is accomplished. And yet what God is doing- is, many times, *Mysterious to us and is Misunderstood by us.*

For example, *"If God is Good- why all this Evil? What Purpose does God have in me losing my job? Why did God let my child die? Why did God allow my car to break down on the first day of my new job- which resulted in me getting fired? I was led by God to start my new business and now it went bankrupt. Why?"*

These are powerful Questions that tens of thousands of believers for over 6,000 years have asked. And many times- *most of the time-* we simply DON'T have any Good Answers- other than- *"God is moving- just trust Him"*. And, while some have actually been strengthened through God's Providence- for 6,000 years- lots of people have just walked off and completely *abandoned* their Faith because of things like this- because to them- it just doesn't make any sense.

Now as we read History- we can look back on many of those Events with such clarity- that God was moving all the time! God NEVER left them! God NEVER forgot them! God NEVER stopped exercising His Providence! He NEVER stopped raising up and casting down- so that His Will would be accomplished!

And it is all so clear to us now- that is- until we feel abandoned. Or until we think God may have forgotten us. Or until things don't work out the way we thought they would. It is all so very clear- until we are confronted with God's Providence.

And then we talk and act just like they did. *“Why would God do that? Why doesn't God answer me? Where is God when I need Him the most? Why would He tell me to do something and then fight against me when I do? I just don't get it! It just doesn't make any sense!”* Yea, I know.

And 600 years before Jesus was born, Habakkuk said,

2 How long, O Lord, will I call for help, And You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save.

3 Why do You make me see iniquity, And cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises.

4 Therefore the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted.

... and then just about the time that Habakkuk was about to either give up or stop caring- God responded:

5 “Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days— You would not believe if you were told.

6 “For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That fierce and impetuous people Who march throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs.

7 “They are dreaded and feared; Their justice and authority originate with themselves.

8 “Their horses are swifter than leopards And keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour.

9 “All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand.

10 “They mock at kings And rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress And heap up rubble to capture it.

11 “Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god.”

Now the Chaldeans were a very intelligent and warlike people, who lived in what would today be southern Iraq- back in the first millennium B.C. And in the Bible, the Chaldeans are mainly associated with the city of Ur. And when Abraham left Ur with his family, **Genesis 11:31b** says,

... they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan;

Now the term, “*Chaldeans*” was used interchangeably with the “*Babylonians*”. Various Chaldean tribes started to migrate (from exactly where scholars aren't sure)- into the south of Mesopotamia in the ninth century B.C. And they soon began to take over the areas around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Chaldeans were divided into three main tribes:

1. the Bit-Dakkuri
2. the Bit-Amukani
3. the Bit-Jakin

... and they waged war against the Assyrians back in the 9th Century B.C.

In the Bible, the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, was of Chaldean descent. And it was Nebuchadnezzar that invaded Judah to take the Jews captive for 70 years- in fulfillment of what God had spoken here to Habakkuk.

Now the Chaldeans joined in with the Kassites and the Arameans to form the “*Neo-Babylonian Empire*” that ruled that region from 625BC to 538BC- that ended when God raised up Cyrus the Persian to destroy them.

The Chaldeans were known for their viciousness and their cruelty. But after Persia conquered Babylon, the term, *Chaldean* was used more often to refer to a social class of highly educated people than to a particular race or ethnicity. The Chaldeans were well known as being “wise men” and astrologers during the time of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. And during the time of the Prophet Daniel, Babylon was the “Intellectual Center” of all of western Asia. The Chaldeans were renowned for their study and knowledge of both Astrology and Astronomy.⁴ They kept detailed *astronomical Records* for over 360 years, which can help us understand how the “**magi**” (Oriental scientists [who were called, ‘magicians’ back then], who specialized in both Astronomy and Astrology) would have been able to recognize and follow the star that would lead them to the “*King of the Jews*” (**Matthew 2:2**).

So, we see that all during the time that this Prophet thought God wasn't even hearing his cry- God was very busy- moving on the heart of Nebuchadnezzar- to stir him up- ***so he would come and wage war against God's people!*** And this Account (Book) is in the Bible to teach us that there are really *two* Aspects to the Providence of God that, many times, causes us to struggle:

⁴ **Astrology** is the *worship* of the sun, moon, and stars and is sinful. **Astronomy** is the “*study of*” or the “*science of*”; or the “*knowledge of*” the celestial bodies.

1. The appearance that God doesn't care or that He isn't hearing us
2. Many times- the Answer God gives- seems WORSE than the Problem

So, as soon as God relieved Habakkuk of the *initial* Struggle he was going through (because he thought God wasn't hearing him)- the Prophet *immediately* entered into an even *harder* Struggle- because it looked as though the Answer God gave him was infinitely WORSE than the Problem!

And this is historic. God does this- MOST OF THE TIME. So, as we cry to God- it actually seems like things get WORSE! And it at this point that many people fall away from trusting and believing and hoping in God. And to the natural eye- it looks like God is actually fighting AGAINST us; and *purposefully* making things HARDER than they need to be or should be.

Case in point in my own life may serve to help some of you. When I was saved- back in 1971- the very FIRST thing on my heart was the Salvation of my Parents. My Mother and Father were the very FIRST people I witnessed to. My Mother simply brushed it off as me being silly- but my Father was very concerned.

And one night, my Father sat me down in his Study and began to explain to me that God really didn't exist and that the Bible was simply written by a group of religious geniuses- who predicted things that were going to happen anyway. And after about two hours of him very calmly explaining to his freshly converted 16 year-old son that all of this was a myth- I calmly looked him in the eyes and told him he was a "liar" and "of the devil" and I wasn't ever going to allow him to cause me to disbelieve.

Well, he didn't see me as trying to be faithful to the Bible. All he saw was his child being rebellious and a smart-aleck. So, our calm conversation turned into a shouting match and that began a 29 year long separation between us. Now I continued to live with my Parents for another couple of years- and the tension in the home continued to rise. And it broke my heart. The two people I loved the most were literally attacking me on a daily basis- including punishing me and putting me on restriction.

And it all came to head in late 1973- when I was on my knees in my bedroom- praying quietly for my Parents souls. My Mother passed by and saw me on my knees. She got so angry that she went to the kitchen and got a milk jug out of the refrigerator and came and dumped the milk on my head- screaming at me, "*You're not a Prophet!*" It shattered my heart into a thousand pieces. I moved out into a rat- infested trailer with no heat or air condition the next month.

For nearly 30 years- there was tremendous Tension from both my Parents. They didn't approve of me marrying Rhonda- and told me so. And the Persecution extended to her as well. When we had our children- they condemned us for raising

them to love the Lord. They condemned us for homeschooling them and criticized us at every turn. It truly looked like things were getting worse and worse. I was preaching to strangers and people I never knew were being saved. Yet I couldn't reach my own Mother and Father. And every time I read the 5th Commandment or heard it read- I wept- as I knew I was guilty.

On November 9, 1982- our second child, Joy was born with Down's Syndrome. Our little girl had a cloud over her eyes and mind; and we were heartbroken. In September of 1985- our baby was diagnosed with acute, non-lymphocytic Leukemia- the rarest and most deadly form. At about 10pm on September 5, 1985- I wished my Wife a "*Happy Anniversary*" in the waiting room at the University Medical Center in Jackson, MS.

As time went on- we settled into a routine where Rhonda would go up to Jackson during the week and I would relieve her on Friday afternoon- so she could come home. Then she would go back up Sunday afternoon and I came home so I could preach that night.

And early in March of 1987- God blessed me with a huge contract, where I was going to make about \$300/month. And to celebrate, I called Rhonda and told her I was coming home; and I was going to put my jeans on; and mow the yard. As I was on the riding mower- my 3 year-old daughter Beulah came over to me to offer me some cookies she had baked. I didn't see her. And the mower knocked her down and ran over her- slicing her hand in two and cutting off her leg.

We rushed into the car- Rhonda driving 90 miles an hour down Highway 49 while I was trying to put Beulah's leg back on. With every heart-beat- the blood was hitting the door. Rhonda asked me, "*Why, Blair, why?*" and me screaming out to God- for Him to help us. I realized that we couldn't make it to the Hospital before she bled to death- so we stopped in Orange Grove at a small doctor's clinic (Dr. Broussard). With Beulah in my arms- I kicked the front door in- so we could get tourniquets on her leg and call for an Ambulance.

We sat in the waiting room as they performed surgery on Beulah for several hours- me trying to console Rhonda as we wept together. The doctor came out and said that things were not good. They tried to put the leg back on- and if the big toe turned pink- things were good. But if it turned black- they would have to amputate.

That next Lord's Day I preached in the morning. And I preached my heart out about how Good God was and how He NEVER fails. We went to the hospital to see how things were with Beulah and I walked in and saw her toe was black. My heart died as I knew they would have to amputate. I can't even begin to tell you how defeated I felt.

They amputated Beulah's leg and we came home- and began the process of getting her a prosthesis and teaching her how to walk again. So, Rhonda took

Beulah to the Children's Hospital in New Orleans, while I took Joy to Jackson for more chemo- therapy.

In June of 1989, Joy was having a very hard time. The chemo had killed her heart muscle and she was in heart failure- just laying on the floor- whimpering. I took her to Jackson that evening and got to the Hospital around midnight. She finally got a room around 2am. I was able to get a room and I fell over the bed- and slept until around 8 the next morning. I rushed over to the Hospital and as I entered the Children's Wing- I noticed how all the nurses and doctors were acting.

I had seen that look many times. It was the sad look that someone had died. I asked a nurse what was wrong; and she pointed me to my baby's room. I went in and discovered that Joy had suffered a massive stroke. I called Rhonda and she came up. The doctors told us that Joy's brain would swell and it would kill her.

They moved her back to the ER- where we started back in 1985. And the nurse told us to go eat- as Joy could last another hour or even another day. On the way back- Rhonda and I got into an argument. I was talking about putting Joy into Rehab so she could learn how to walk again; and Rhonda said, "*Blair, she's gone. Let her go.*" When we entered the door of the ER, the nurse said, "*I'm so sorry, Joy died five minutes ago.*" I can't even begin to tell you how defeated I felt.

After we buried our baby, we went back home and began life without her. Rhonda buried herself into her other four children and I buried myself into my business. But then something happened; and it reminded me of what God told Habakkuk,

Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days — You would not believe if you were told.

So, to Habakkuk, an invasion by the pagan Chaldeans surely COULD NOT be the Answer! "*I mean, God would NEVER do that, would He? God is Holy and Pure and Righteous- so why would God raise up a vicious, violent, infidel Nation to come and judge His Own children? Why would God do that? How will that cause God's people to repent? What Good could possibly come out of something like that?*"

So, the first thing that Habakkuk could think of to do- was to argue with God about what God said He was going to do! And the Prophet said,

12 Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? We will not die. You, O Lord, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct.

13 Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?

14 Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them?

15 The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16 Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net And burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, And their food is plentiful.

17 Will they therefore empty their net And continually slay nations without sparing?

In other words, Habakkuk was saying, *“Don’t You realize how bad the Chaldeans are? Don’t You realize that they don’t love You; and they sure don’t worship You? At all. As bad as Your Own people are- at least they acknowledge You. So, why would You do this? This simply CAN’T be Your Will! I mean, they are going to come in and tear everything apart. How is that Your Will?”*

Yet God’s Ways are NOT like our Ways. And several months after Joy died- my father came to my Office. And he walked right into my room and shut the door. He pulled a chair over to my desk and sat down and he looked me into my eyes and said, *“Blair, I’ve watched you under every Station of Life. You’ve been through what happened to Beulah and the death of your child and you never change. You didn’t turn to drugs or alcohol; you don’t run around on your wife; and you continue to serve the Lord. You’ve got something I don’t have- and I want it.”*

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. This was my Father’s Way of saying he knew he was Lost and wanted Jesus to save him. Now I was so shocked that I didn’t even know what to say that day. I never even prayed for him. But a few days later- my Father went into the Hospital for surgery and I went into his room. And my Father was born-again right in that Hospital room! And from that moment until he died- he grew in his love for Jesus and Church!

Now did God cause all that Suffering and Pain so that my Father would be saved? I don’t know if you can draw a straight line from one thing to the other. All I know is what happened. Now you need to know that I would have NEVER chosen this Path. We loved Joy and we adore Beulah. We wanted all of our children and we raised all of them to love Jesus.

But what I do know is that God sovereignly *causes* some things; while He sovereignly *allows* others. And one thing that God either causes or allows- *always* leads to another thing. And the finality of it all- is that God's Will is ALWAYS accomplished! But look, I didn't want what happened. I hated every moment of it. I prayed and fought and worked against it with all my heart. I could NOT see ANY Good in it at all.

But in addition to God being Sovereign- God is also Good. And what God does- is the BEST- even if we never see it or understand it. I prayed for 29 years that my Father would be saved. And he was. We wanted Joy and we raised her to love Jesus. She is in Heaven this moment- and the cloud is no longer over her eyes. We couldn't ask for a more loving; and godly daughter than we have in Beulah. And my precious Wife is more beautiful than ever. Rhonda loves Jesus and I so enjoy singing God's praises with her.

So, what do we say to all of this? God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time. And God's Will is ALWAYS accomplished. And God's Ways are not like our Ways. And God is Good. And the "working out" of God's Will in the earth- is the strange and amazing Providence of God.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.