

The Minor Profits

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[0 : 00] Get my morning frogs out of the way. We are going to undertake what I anticipate will be our final study in the prophet Habakkuk.

And I guess we could say as much as anything, it is wrapped up with answers. Answers. The man is looking for answers.

Phil Yancey wrote a popular little book not too long ago. And it is called The Question That Will Not Go Away. And the question is, why?

Why does God allow this? Why does God allow that? Why doesn't God do something? And where is God when you need Him? And really this is the plaintive cry of Habakkuk as he opens his prophecy.

Because he has been informed that God is going to use, of all people, the heathen neighbors, the Babylonians, to come against the Jews and defeat them and imprison them and carry them off into captivity.

[1 : 05] And the dilemma that Habakkuk is facing is, okay God, I can see you doing that because your people, the nation of Israel, we have it coming.

We have been idolatrous. We have forsaken you. We have left the old paths. We have turned everyone to his own way. But the thing that doesn't make any sense at all that we are looking to you for an explanation is, why in the world are using these ungodly neighbors to whip us and they're worse than we are?

That doesn't make any sense at all. And who can disagree that there are a lot of things that come into the lives of a believer that at least on the surface just don't make any sense at all?

And why doesn't God do something? Or why has God done this? Or what is the rationale for this? And it is as if we are calling the Almighty on the carpet and asking Him, demanding of Him, that He explain Himself.

Because this just does not compute. And I suspect that in the life of just about every believer, we've all been there.

[2 : 22] And some might be there right now, wondering, where is God when you need Him? And is this any way for God to take care of His friends?

And why doesn't He look out for me in a better, more positive way than this? Why me? Why this? What have I done to deserve this? We've all gone through those things. That's part of the human condition.

We look for rationale and explanations, and we can't find any. And it just doesn't make sense. And we appeal to the Almighty like Habakkuk did. And He says, what's going on anyway?

And perhaps the crisis that is revealed all through this boils down to one single verse that holds the answer.

And it is that verse, well, let's look at it if you will. And it is in Habakkuk. And it is chapter 2 and verse 4. It is, as we mentioned, the verse that God used in the heart and mind of Martin Luther to actually touch off what became known as the Protestant Reformation.

[3 : 35] And He was going through all kinds of religious gyrations and fulfilling all kinds of religious conditions, trying to find peace with God.

And we told you about His climbing up the steps there at the Vatican with bloody knees, praying each step each way up as some kind of penance or self-infliction of punishment, pay for His sins because He could never find any rest for His sins.

And each time His father confessor saw Martin Luther coming, he would try to avoid him because he knew he was going to pin him down and he was going to spend his time confessing every little nitpicking detail that might be an infraction or some kind of an act or even a thought that would be

contrary to God.

So the man had no peace and no rest for his soul at all. But He came upon this verse that changed everything. And of all places, it is found in one of the tiny little minor prophets by the name of Habakkuk.

A lot of people can't even pronounce his name, and there probably isn't one out of ten Christians that can even spell it because it's an unusual kind of name, Habakkuk. And we are told in verse 4 of chapter 2, Behold, as for the proud one, his soul does not write within him.

[5 : 02] But the righteous will live by his faith. And that is perhaps capable of more than one interpretation or application.

It's certainly capable of a lot of applications, but there is but one interpretation. And as we have gone, well, we haven't gone through this here, but in the Christianity Clarified, we spent several sessions, several CDs, with 20 segments on each one, dealing with the subject of hermeneutics, which is the art and science of interpreting the Bible.

And we came to a number of conclusions in going through that, and one of which is lots of passages of Scripture have multiple applications.

You can see similarities in different things that the verse is teaching. But while it may have multiple applications, there is but one interpretation.

And the interpretation is the meaning and the intent that the writer had in his mind when he wrote it. That's what the text means.

[6 : 19] And out of that meaning and interpretation, as I've said, there may be multiple applications, all of which are legitimate, but that doesn't mean that the text is teaching a whole bunch of different things.

It's teaching one thing. That's the interpretation. But you can extract from that applications that are valid and that remind you that are similar and so on.

So that might very well be the case with verse 4, the righteous will live by his faith. And I think that what this is saying is, the way it communicated to Luther is, that the one who is righteous will live on a day-to-day basis and enjoy the faith that he has simply by an ongoing exertion of trust, confidence, reliance in the God of heaven, no matter what's going on in your life.

That's a big order. That's the conclusion. That's the conclusion that Habakkuk is coming to. And he goes through this process of questioning, asking God for explanations, telling God, does it make any sense?

What are you doing? Why are you using them? Are we that bad? And on and on and on. And then Habakkuk comes to the conclusion, and what it boils down to is this.

[7 : 43] More than anything else, God wants you to trust him and believe in him. No matter what's going on in your life and how negative it is.

Does that mean that he just wants you to trust him when you send your beloved mate onto heaven? Does he want you to just trust him when you get that negative test result from the doctor that says it's pretty bad?

These are the kind of situations that are going to come into every life. And it's coming into ours because it is appointed unto man once to die.

And that's true not only of us, but it's true of those in our company, and it's true of those to whom we are married, and it's true of those children that we beget. So in the midst of adversity, when the going gets tough, is God still worthy of your trust and your confidence?

[9 : 08] This is nothing more than the Job principle. You know Job was the poster boy for confidence in God when your world falls apart. When you lose your family, you lose your assets, you lose your wealth, you lose your health, you lose everything.

You even lose your wife's confidence and stability when she tells you, Job, don't you know when you've had enough? Just get over with, curse God and die.

Go on, get out of here. Because she suffered with him, and she couldn't see him in that kind of agony. And that was her remedy. And Job came back with, you speak as a foolish woman.

Ought not we who have received good things from the Lord also receive adversity? The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. That, that is what God wants. That is trust. That is confidence in him.

[10:16] No matter what's going on. He knows what he's doing, and he's never one minute late or one minute early. And God is aware of the way that we take, and he has not promised that we will not go through the valley of the shadow of death.

He hasn't promised that at all. But he has promised that when you do, I'm going with you. You won't be going through it alone. So in the midst of it all, he wants to be trusted.

And this is the lesson that Habakkuk is learning, and it is the lesson that Martin Luther was learning. And he has passed that on to us, and it has come out in various ways and shapes and forms.

Many people have benefited from it. And with that, we want to go to the last chapter of Habakkuk, and then I want to open this, if we may, for some Q&A.; Notice, if you will, in verse 16, last chapter of Habakkuk, in verse 16, I heard, and my inward parts trembled.

What's he talking about? He's talking about the coming invasion. He's talking about the awareness and the knowledge that he has that the Babylonians are coming, and these people are brutal.

[11:40] And God, you are the one who is allowing them to do this. And Habakkuk says, I heard, and my inward parts trembled.

That means, it really got me in my gut. In the very soul of my being, I was agonizing and churning because I knew what was coming upon my people.

and it just drove me to distraction. At the sound, my lips quivered, decay enters my bones, and in my place, I tremble because I must wait quietly for the day of distress.

What is that? That's when they get here. That's when they get here. He described them earlier talking about their bowmen, talking about their horses, the Babylonians, being swifter than leopards.

And what he's admitting is, my poor people, no match for them. They're going to run over us and ruin us and carry us off into captivity and we don't stand a prayer against them.

[12:54] And you, God, you are behind it all. And you're allowing it to happen. Wow. I must wait quietly for the day of distress for the people to arise who will invade us.

Now, how about that? Isn't that something to look forward to? I just have to bide my time churning on the inside with the full knowledge they're coming.

They're coming. And they will not be turned back. And God is allowing them to come. And God is allowing them to take their toll on...

And do you know what these people are called? These are called my people. These are God's chosen people. Is that any way to treat your chosen people?

Your favorite people? And what's the principle there? And we've been through that but I want to remind you the reason God's judgment is going to be poured out upon His own people is because His own people have more culpability, more responsibility, more accountability than anyone else because no one has had the light and revelation of God like the Jewish people.

[14:20] He told us in Amos when we studied Amos chapter 3 and remember verse 2 when God chided His people and He said, You only, you only of all the nations of the earth have I known.

And that meant they had an additional area of responsibility that the pagan, heathen nations didn't have. And when He said Israel was the only nation that He knew, He meant, you were the only nation that I know in an intimate, personal, hands-on kind of way.

The rest of them, they're just a bunch of heathen, a bunch of idolaters, a bunch of pagans, but you have had the knowledge of the one true God. And you have the history of deliverance from Egypt. You have the history of the passing of the Red Sea. You have the history of the manna from heaven. You have the history of the water out of the rock. You have the history of all those miracles on your behalf one after another.

And still, you turn your back on them. And you go a-whoring after other deities that are not deities or gods at all.

[15:29] Having ears they hear not and having eyes they see not. Yet you bow down to these stupid things, make sacrifices to them. What an insult. What an insult to the true God of heaven.

So, they're going to be taken to the woodshed. Do you know something? The descendants of the nation of Israel are still in the woodshed.

According to Romans, chapter 10, 9, 10, 11, Israel, judicially as a nation, remains set aside under divine discipline that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

The Gentiles is everybody besides Jews. Gentiles is all the rest of the world. And it is the Gentiles sphere now. Israel is not the head.

Israel is the tail now. And the Gentile community, yes, that's all of Europe, that's the United States, that's Russia, that's, they are the Gentiles.

[16 : 43] They are running the world. The time is coming when that's going to be set aside. And Israel, that for the last 2,000 years has been the tail, will be the head.

And that will be when Yeshua Hamashiach returns and establishes that kingdom. And the first casualty of the sword that will proceed out of Christ's mouth, Revelation 19, which is nothing but his spoken word, the first casualty will be the Antichrist.

And all his minions will be decimated and God's kingdom will be set up on earth. This will be, this will be the realization of the prayer that so many have prayed largely out of ignorance for 2,000 years, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

That prayer has never been fulfilled, never been realized, but it will when Christ returns because when the king comes, he'll be bringing the kingdom with him. So Habakkuk has got all of these things to deal with and the primary thing that he is coping with is the same thing that mankind has had to deal with from Genesis 3 on and that is adversity and how we handle it.

because fellas, adversity has become the new norm. From Genesis 3 and the fall onward, adversity is part of living because we live in a fallen world and we are fallen people living in a fallen world for crying out loud, what else can you expect?

[18 : 38] but deprivation and adversity and heartache, that's what this world is all about. We are not where it is going to be said that God will wipe away all the tears and all the problems and all the heartaches and all those things will be gone.

No, this is not heaven. This is the real world we're living in and it's got a lot of pain connected with it. So how do we handle it in the midst of the pain? Roger, what? Down in Good Will in Florida there recently picked up a movie Defiant with Daniel Craig and it was about to get a group of Jews that hid in the Holocaust in the woods and existed in the Germans and one of the survivors in there was a priest or whatever he was called and he was praying because he was starving you know and everything and trying to find food and he said, Lord, if we wished you would have chosen another people.

So it was pretty interesting. It's really, it's based on a true story how loosely based it is but it is a tremendous... Yeah, well you know Israel feels like and I can understand absolutely you can understand Israel sometimes many Jews feeling dejected and by the way I've related this to you in the past and I'm sure you are familiar with it that there are no people no ethnic people on the face of the earth has a higher percentage of atheism among them than the Jewish people.

there are more Jews percentage wise who are atheists than any other group and it is largely because of the adversity that they have suffered as the supposed chosen people and the thing that really drove a lot of them over the edge was the Holocaust.

[20 : 38] You say we're your chosen people and you love us and you let Hitler eliminate six million of your chosen people is that any way to treat your friends?

And many a Jew worldwide has come to the conclusion I don't believe there is a God and even if there is a God who would allow that I don't want anything to do with him and they've written them all.

And that's typical. That is so understandable because that's not the way friendship is supposed to work. That's not the way care and provision is supposed to work.

And they never of course take into provision the kind of world that we're living in. So I want you to look at the last few verses that Habakkuk is concluding and it is a beautiful thing.

Beautiful thing. This is his conclusion after all of his questions doubts and fears accusations and everything. This is what it comes down to beginning in verse 17.

[21 : 39] Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls.

What is that all about? It's all about loss. Loss. Adversity. But look at that next word. Yet.

And you might well translate that little three letter word yet with something like despite all that. despite all that.

Yet. I will exult in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

Fellas. If you are a recipient of the grace of God and you enjoy his salvation you have every reason for exultation no matter your aches and pains or losses or anything else.

[23 : 02] The big thing has been cared for. And everything else is minor compared to that. He who spared not his own son but gave him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.

And among those all things is a coping ability when we just rest relax trust in the Lord. When you are faced with a situation that is dire with dire consequences of course some of these situations are irresolvable.

And that is where God comes in and he says can you trust me in this thing? Can you believe in me? Can you rely upon me? That is what this walking by faith means.

It means having an ongoing confidence and trust in the Lord. And when he is talking about living by faith he is talking about a commitment of trust reliance dependence no matter what is happening.

No matter what is any bird can sing in the sunshine but we are talking about being in the shadows here and being in the shadows is part and parcel of a fallen world.

[24 : 23] Don't expect a good shake from the world. You are not going to get it. The world is not even able to give it because it is fallen. So what he is talking about here justified by faith and living by faith is in a constant trust and rejoicing in the Lord.

I will exalt in the Lord. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength. He has made my feet like hinds feet.

Well now I'll take exception to that. If you're looking for literality, he hasn't made my feet like hinds feet. He's put a horrendous limp in one of them.

It goes all the way to the hip. So what's this talking about? Well, in the first place he's using poetry here and he's saying, fellas, it doesn't make any difference.

It doesn't make any difference if you can't physically walk. You can spiritually walk. And this is part of what Paul was talking about when he said, though our outward man, that's our body, is perishing every day.

[25 : 51] Every day we are dying a little bit more. Every day. man, and even though our outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is renewed day by day.

And that's the spiritual. That's this faith thing. That's this confidence, this trust thing. So that Job was able to say, in the final analysis, Job was able to say, though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

Fellas, listen, there is absolutely nothing that honors God more than that. More than anything else, God wants to be believed.

He wants to be trusted. And when the roof is falling in, can you trust him that he is behind it? And when you bury your mate, can you trust him that he is behind it?

When you get that negative medical report, can you trust him that he is behind it? More than anything else, God wants to be trusted. The Lord God is my strength, he has made my feet like Heinz feet, makes me walk on my high places.

[27 : 14] And this is all of course spiritual, not talking about the physical or anything, but it is, this is the essence of life. This is what it means to walk by faith, this is what it means to walk in the spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh.

I have gone on enough about this. Now, have you comments or questions? Okay, Don and then Dan. My last comment here says, to the choir master with string, does that mean that the whole of Habakkuk to be done during music being played?

Yeah, I think so. You know, a lot of these things were set to music. A lot of them were set to music. In fact, the 150 psalms is the Jewish hymnal.

And they set all of those psalms to music. And that, by the way, greatly aids in memorizing them. If you can sing them instead of having to quote them.

So, a lot of this is poetry and it is intended to be put to music and to chants. They would chant sometimes. I remember reading about the occasion of Mount Jeruzim and Mount, what was the name of the other?

[28 : 28] I can't think of the name of it. But anyway, these were two, I don't know if you'd call them mountains, they'd call them hills, I guess, but they were separated by just a little distance maybe.

And there's one here and one there. And there would be a large number of Jews on one mountain and just across, within shouting distance, there would be another group of Jews on this other hill and they would go back and forth and the first one would chant something and across the way the

others would respond to the chant with something else and it was usually taken right out of the Old Testament, right out of Scripture.

And they had occasions like that where they would get together and of course it aided in the memorizing of Scripture and it was an act of worship. They were praising the Lord with that. So, other, Don, you had something, or Dan.

You know, in the Old Testament, there was a fear of God, correct? A respect, I would call it a respect. Respect, okay, because I think the fear of God, fear of God often comes.

And the other thing is, of course, Jesus died on the cross. I mean, we have a reason that they didn't have, or we had information and experience that they didn't have.

[29 : 50] That's true. So, a tremendous amount of faith is required because there was absolutely no, there was no substantiation. It was just complete faith that they were operating on.

That's true. That's true. And we have, we have, we have the ultimate proof, evidence, of God's love and care for us.

in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. How can we prove, how can we be sure that God loves us?

He sent his son to die for you. What else do you want, for crying out loud? God gave the very most he could give, so he could require from us the very least that we could provide to just believe in him and trust him.

Rick? Yeah, I remember hearing somebody talk once about if anyone preaches accepting Christ plus anything, whether it's work, whether it's tithing, whether it's prayer, you cheapen what Christ did for us.

[30 : 56] That's right. There's nothing wrong with any of those, and they should be encouraged to do works, to tithe, to pray, or whatever, but if you add any of those to salvation, what Christ did for us, you actually cheapen what Christ did for us.

Absolutely. Excellent point. Thank you. Excellent point. Excellent point. John? Habakkuk is prophesied a thing that's going to come pretty immediately, but then in chapter 2, verse 14, where he says, for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord and the waters covered the sea.

That's way on in the future. That's millennial. Yeah. Yeah. And that's going to be par for the course when that time comes, but this isn't it. Yeah. Anybody who thinks that this is the kingdom of heaven come to earth, honey, wake up and smell the coffee.

This is not it. This is not it. We are not in the millennium. And Jesus isn't reigning. You know who's reigning on this earth? Who did Jesus say was reigning?

The prince of this world. He called him that in John 12, 14, and 16, Jesus called Satan the prince of this world.

[32 : 11] That's one reason there's so much hell being raised is because he is running amok. And we are told in Peter that we are to be sober because our adversary, the devil, is walking about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

So, he is real, but our God is real also. Roger? Did the prophet survive that attack? Or did he die in it? Habakkuk?

I can't answer that. I really don't know. I know there's going to be a whole lot of Jews who will be casualties of that Babylonian invasion. Sounds like he is looking from the Lord to death if possible. Well, that last bird. Yeah. Well, thank you guys for being here this morning.