

Main Idea: In Habakkuk 1:12-2:20, we see a godly person who struggled to make sense of God’s ways. We also see what God said to him that helped him tremendously.

- I. Consider Habakkuk’s problem (1:12-2:1).
 - A. We see denial (12).
 - B. We see disagreement (13).
 - C. We see debate (1:14-2:1).
 1. Habakkuk reminded God of what the Babylonians were doing (14-16).
 2. Habakkuk challenged God to do something about it (17).
 3. Habakkuk waited for God to answer (2:1).
- II. Consider God’s answer (2:2-20).

Three timeless truths to remember...

 - A. God’s people are to live by faith, even though they don’t have all the answers (2-5).
 - B. God will judge the wicked (6-19).
 1. Here is the doom of the embezzler (6-8).
 2. Here is the doom of the exploiter (9-11).
 3. Here is the doom of the evil person (12-14).
 4. Here is the doom of the sensual person (15-17).
 5. Here is the doom of the idolater (18-19).
 - C. God expects all people to respond to His holiness (20).
 1. We need to hush up.
 2. We need to humble ourselves.

Make It Personal: We need to let God be God in our lives.

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:32-39

There are times when life simply doesn’t make sense to us. Take that a step further. There are also times when *God* simply doesn’t make sense to us.

That may happen when we see people around us ignoring or even mocking God, and we wonder why God doesn’t do something about it. You may be a parent struggling with a child who shows no spiritual interest. Or a child concerned about apathetic parents. And many of us are burdened by the downward, moral spiral of our nation.

Why doesn’t God do something?

That’s what Habakkuk wondered. Habakkuk was a man of God, a prophet in Judah in the seventh century B.C. That was a volatile time in the history of God’s people. There had been a revival under the leadership of King Josiah that brought spiritual and economic reform. But the changes were short-lived. Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Neco, his son Jehoahaz, was taken captive, and Jehoiakim was placed on the throne.

But Jehoiakim was an apostate. Not only did he not believe in the Lord, but he did everything in his power to lead the people away from the Lord, including burning God’s Word in his fireplace. The morals of the nation deteriorated. Stress and anxiety became commonplace, automatic by-products of rejecting God’s authority.

Habakkuk saw all this take place in his lifetime, and it grieved him heavily. And he told the Lord so. The book of Habakkuk is the record of his conversation with God.

“How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?” he began (1:2).

“Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong?” he continued in verse 3. In other words, “God, why don’t you do something about the wickedness in our country? Don’t you see it?”

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For an earlier development of this text, see the Habakkuk series at WBC in 2002.

To which God answered, as we saw last time in verses 5-11, “Yes, I see it. And I’m going to do something. And if I had told you a head of time you wouldn’t have believed Me. I’m going to bring the Babylonians to town to judge My wicked people.”

When Habakkuk heard those words, it was if a Mack truck had hit him. If God’s ways didn’t make sense to him before, they really floored him now. He was no isolationist. He knew all about the powerful Babylonians, the powerful, *wicked* Babylonians.

That announcement by God prompted Habakkuk to voice a second complaint, the one recorded in the text we’ll be considering this morning. In Habakkuk 1:12-2:20, we see a godly person who struggled to make sense of God’s ways. We also see what God said to him that helped him tremendously. No, God didn’t make sense to Habakkuk. But Habakkuk learned how to live with this tension in a God-honoring way. We’re going to learn from his testimony.

I. Consider Habakkuk’s problem (1:12-2:1).

The situation again was this. It was somewhere between the years 616 and 606 B.C. Habakkuk saw his nation going downhill and brought this complaint to God, “Why don’t You do something about Your people?” God’s answer was, “I am going to. I’m going to chastise my people at the hands of the Babylonians.”

How would you have reacted if you had been in Habakkuk’s sandals? Those were tough words to hear. Like us, he loved his country. Let’s look at what Habakkuk did. This man of God demonstrated three responses to God’s announcement about using the Babylonians.

A. We see denial (12). “O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish.”

Habakkuk is perplexed, so he prays. Not a bad thing to do when you’re perplexed! In his prayer he affirms the unchanging nature of God and rehearses His attributes. The Lord is *everlasting*. He is the *holy One*. He is the *ordainer* of all things.

But notice those words tucked away in his prayer. “My God, my Holy One, *we will not die*.” You can take that a couple of ways. On the one hand he may be saying, “Okay Lord, even if You bring the Babylonians to town, we won’t die out as a nation. You’ll preserve a remnant as You always have.” And that’s true. But I get the sense Habakkuk has something else in mind. “I must have misunderstood You, Lord. We won’t die. We *can’t* die. We’re Your chosen people!”

But God said the Babylonians were coming, and they weren’t coming as tourists. They were going to do to Judah what they had done to nation after nation to this point, as God already spelled out in verse 6, “I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own.”

“We will not die,” Habakkuk said. But God said they would. The first response is denial.

B. We see disagreement (13). “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?”

Notice the questions. A friend once asked Isidor Rabi, a Nobel prize winner in science, how he became a scientist. Rabi replied that every day after school his mother would talk to him about his school day. She wasn’t so much interested in what he had

learned that day, but she always inquired, "Did you ask a good question today?" "Asking good questions," Rabi said, "made me become a scientist."²

Habakkuk asked God some good questions in this book, not to challenge God but to make sense of God's purpose. In his first complaint (verses 1-4) Habakkuk asked God why He tolerated the wrong of the Israelites? After hearing God say He was going to use the Babylonians to judge the Israelites Habakkuk responds, "Why then do you tolerate the treacherous [i.e. the Babylonians]? Why are you silent while the wicked [i.e. the Babylonians] swallow up those more righteous than themselves [i.e. the Israelites]?"

Notice how Habakkuk's tune changed. A minute ago he referred to his people as "wicked" (4). Now he says they are "more righteous" than the WICKED Babylonians!

In essence Habakkuk disagrees with God. God said, "I'm going to do this." But Habakkuk said, "No, You can't do *that*." Habakkuk argued his case on two grounds.

1. *God is too good to use the Babylonians.* And...

2. *The Babylonians are too bad to be used by God.* "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil," he told the Lord. You can't use the Babylonians, Lord! They're evil! Habakkuk felt that God was contradicting Himself.

Was He? No. Habakkuk here is doing something we're all tempted to do. We're prone to take a truth from God's Word and make it say something God never intended. For instance, here's a truth. *God is holy and cannot look on evil.* Is that true? Yes, it is. But notice the implication Habakkuk draws from this truth. *God can't use evil people to accomplish His purposes.* Is that true? No, it isn't.

Does God always frustrate the attempts of evil people? Does He intervene and cause them to fail in every endeavor? No, He doesn't, at least not right away. Sometimes He allows evil people to prosper, for a time. But even then, He uses their prosperity to bring about the fulfillment of His plan to eliminate evil and establish His kingdom. In a sense, he lets them make the very rope He will use to hang them.

Know this, beloved. God always acts in a way that is consistent with His holy nature. Always. But what He chooses to do will often be beyond our ability to comprehend. God said in Isaiah 55:9, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

First, Habakkuk responded with denial, then disagreement. Thirdly...

C. We see debate (1:14-2:1). In this section Habakkuk tries to straighten out God by means of debate tactics. Notice three...

1. *Habakkuk reminded God of what the Babylonians were doing (14-16).* While continuing his prayer Habakkuk uses an illustration to make his point clear with God. It's a fishing illustration (14-16):

"You have made men like fish in the sea, like sea creatures that have no ruler. ¹⁵ The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. ¹⁶ Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food."

Habakkuk says that his fellow countrymen are like fish in the sea. They're swimming about haphazardly, with no sense of direction, for that's the way God appears to have made them. "They have no ruler," he says in verse 14.

The Babylonian king is like the captain of a fishing boat (15). With hooks and nets he hauls the helpless fish aboard and rejoices in his catch. His fishing net is not only his livelihood, but it actually becomes his god.

² Unknown source

That's what the Babylonians are like, Habakkuk reminded God. They're bad! They treat people like a fisherman treats his catch of fish. They worship themselves and their might. They live in luxury at the expense of others. God, are You going to use *that* nation to judge us? Tactic #2 follows...

2. *Habakkuk challenged God to do something about it (17)*. He asks God a question about this 'fisherman.' "Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?" Lord, You can't use the Babylonians to judge us. You need to do something with the Babylonians!

Habakkuk struggled with the same thing we do. He had a theological system. He had a view of how he thought God ought to act. But what God told him didn't fit that system.

If you notice carefully you'll see a subtle change has occurred in Habakkuk's thinking. At the beginning of the chapter he felt his people were wicked and violent. Now at the end he suggests to God that they are like helpless fish. One more tactic...

3. *Habakkuk waited for God to answer (2:1)*. He said, "I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint."

Basically, Habakkuk said what he had to say to God, then punted the ball, and decided to wait. It's Your move now, Lord. I'm just going to watch and wait.

We're a lot like Habakkuk, aren't we? Aren't there times when we, too, pray, "Lord, do something!?" And when He does we say, "Don't do *that!*" For instance:

"Lord, help me to know You better. That's what I want You to do." And so God sends trials into our lives so we'll experience His fullness. And we cry out, "Don't do *that*, Lord!"

Or we pray, "Lord, use me to reach lost people." But the unspoken qualifier is, "But don't let the really bad ones move into my neighborhood. I'd rather reach them across town."

Or, "Lord, get a hold of my wayward child. Do whatever it takes." But what we mean is, "Do whatever it takes as long as it doesn't embarrass me or hurt my child."

All of us would agree, I think, that America is going downhill morally like a child on a slippery slide. I think most would also acknowledge that God's standard is being mocked, and that something needs to happen. All agree?

But what if that something is the following? Suppose God said to you [this is purely hypothetical], "I'm fed up with America. I've blessed her as I've done with few other nations. But she's taken the blessings for granted and forgotten the Giver of the blessings. So I'm going to take action. I'm going to allow China to knock ungrateful America off its throne. I'm going to use China to humble this wayward nation."

How would you respond? "God, You can't do that! China isn't even on the 'most-favored-nation' status at the U.N. They violate humanitarian rights. They don't even believe in You. They're atheistic! No, You can't do that!"

That's how Habakkuk felt.

By the way, I hope you love your country. Support its leaders and pray for it. Be good citizens. But put your ultimate trust in the Living God, not in America.

I'll be frank. America is in trouble. Our country is already collapsing from within, just like the Roman Empire did. We have mocked God's holy standard and chucked it. And God is giving us what we've asked for. We've removed Him from government under the banner of "separation of church and state." We removed Him from school with the ban on prayer. Right now some want to take the very mention of Him out of the Pledge of Allegiance. And those are merely external manifestations of internal decisions by millions and millions of us. We do not want to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We want to call the shots. And so we choose luxury over purity, and personal freedom

over holiness. How else can we explain the murder of forty million unborn babies in our country in the past thirty years? The cause of this blight isn't a law in Washington. It's an attitude that runs from California to Maine, and is alive and well in Wheelersburg. "I'm in charge of my life, and I've got a right to do whatever I want with it."

My friend, God has judged every other nation that's mocked Him. Why would we think He would spare us? Is there hope? Yes, if we as individuals will repent, cast ourselves on His mercy, and submit to His Lordship, He may spare us. But He surely will not condone sin. Just ask Habakkuk.

II. Consider God's answer (2:2-20).

When God answered Habakkuk He challenged the prophet (and us) with three timeless truths. Don't miss them.

A. Timeless Truth #1: God's people are to live by faith, even though they don't have all the answers (2-5).

Listen to verses 2-3, "Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. ³ For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."

God told Habakkuk to write down this message on tablets so it could be delivered to others. Then He made it clear that the following prophecy would certainly come to pass. The prophecy had to do with the outcome of the Babylonians. Habakkuk misunderstood God's use of the Babylonians to judge the Israelites to mean that God condoned the Babylonians. He didn't. And in this prophecy that follows He spells out exactly what He intended to do in future days with the Babylonians.

God continues to speak in verses 4-5, "See, he [a reference to the Babylonian king] is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous will live by his faith— ⁵ indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest. Because he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied, he gathers to himself all the nations and takes captive all the peoples."

Remember, Habakkuk tried to lecture God on how bad the Babylonians were. Here God makes it clear He knew better than Habakkuk how bad they were. By the way, don't miss the characteristics of the kind of nation that God hates and judges: arrogant ("he is puffed up"), greedy ("is never satisfied"), and interested only on personal gain.

Yet right in the middle of this condemnation of the Babylonians we find the key phrase of the book, a phrase the New Testament quotes as being the essence of true religion. Verse 4, "But the righteous will live by his faith."³

There are two kinds, and only two kinds of people in this world. There are righteous people and unrighteous people. There are people who are right with God and people who aren't right with God. What's the fundamental difference?

1. *An unrighteous person trusts in himself.* Like the Babylonians he is puffed up.

2. *A righteous person trusts in God.* The just shall live by faith. Righteousness and faith go hand in hand. There are people who live by what they can *see* and figure out, and then there are people who live by what God says—and they believe it.

We're saved by faith. When a person places his faith in Jesus Christ God declares that person to be righteous. But the righteous are also people who *live by faith*.

Habakkuk was facing some things that didn't make sense to him. Perhaps you can relate. And so in the middle of this announcement coming judgment God gave him a little reminder. *The righteous will live by his faith.*

³ Quoted in the NT in Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.

It's a timeless truth, beloved. God's people are to live by faith, even though they don't have all the answers.

B. Timeless Truth #2: God will judge the wicked (6-19). Not *maybe*, but *will*. In verse 4 God told Habakkuk this prophecy awaits an "appointed time." As it turned out, that time was about sixty-six years away, for that's when God overthrew the Babylonians (in 539 B.C.). And decades before it happened the Lord predicted it to Habakkuk.

God announced a series of five *woes* in verses 6-19. Each woe contains three things: a description of the sin, the judgment, and the reasons for the judgment. I urge you to pay careful attention to why God said He judged Babylon. In the five woes He condemns five sins that are an abomination to Him.

1. *Here is the doom of the embezzler (6-8).* "Will not all of them taunt him with ridicule and scorn, saying, "Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?"⁷ Will not your debtors suddenly arise? Will they not wake up and make you tremble? Then you will become their victim."⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, the peoples who are left will plunder you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them."

God compares Babylon to a thieving money-lender. He steals from others. He makes himself wealthy by cheating from others. But the tables will be turned.

Earlier Habakkuk wondered how God could use wicked people like the Babylonians to judge less wicked people like the Israelites. Now he learns there's more to the story.

2. *Here is the doom of the exploiter (9-11).* "Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain to set his nest on high, to escape the clutches of ruin!"¹⁰ You have plotted the ruin of many peoples, shaming your own house and forfeiting your life.¹¹ The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it."

Here Babylon is compared to a person who builds his house in a high place. He thinks he's secure. And to build his house he used dishonest gain. He exploited people. He made himself rich at the loss of others.

The OT prophets had a lot to say about economics—how people got their money and what they did with it. Those aren't secular matters, but very spiritual ones! And know this. God hates it when someone uses someone else for selfish ends. And He will deal with that person severely.

3. *Here is the doom of the evil (particularly, the violent) person (12-14).* "Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by crime!"¹³ Has not the LORD Almighty determined that the people's labor is only fuel for the fire, that the nations exhaust themselves for nothing?¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

The Babylonians tried to build their empire with bloodshed. They mowed down anyone or anything that stood in their path. They had a powerful military, unrivaled in the world of their day. But even as they built their empire through a vicious bloodbath, they were sealing their own fate. God will not tolerate self-seeking nations.

What does God want? He tells us in verse 14. God's goal is for the whole earth to be filled with His glory. He is passionate about His glory, and He will deal with those who are not. Verse 14 is a promise, so be encouraged. We know where history is heading. Yes, God will overthrow every nation that rivals Him, but the day is coming when the knowledge of His glory will fill the planet. That will occur when His Son returns to rule.

4. *Here is the doom of the sensual person (15-17).* "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies [note that date-rape is nothing new]."¹⁶ You will be filled with shame instead of glory. Now it is your turn! Drink and be exposed! The cup from the LORD's right hand is coming around to you, and disgrace will cover your glory."¹⁷ The violence

you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them.”

Here God paints the picture of a drunken orgy to describe the Babylonians. They were violent terrorists. But the day was coming when they would be terrorized.

5. *Here is the doom of the idolater (18-19)*. “Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak.¹⁹ Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Come to life!’ Or to lifeless stone, ‘Wake up!’ Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it.”

The Babylonians were guilty of idolatry. Does idolatry exist today? Idolatry is simply the worship of what we make rather than the worship of our Maker.

I remember a conversation I had with my dad a few years ago. We were watching a fast-pitch softball game. The pitcher was a man we both knew, and he was good. My dad made the comment, “If that man lost his right arm, he’d die.” I knew what he meant. Sports had become an idol to that man. If sports were removed, his life would be meaningless.

There are two approaches to life in the world. There are those who live for their Maker, and those who live for something else. And those who live for something else in God’s world will pay a price for it, maybe not today nor tomorrow, but the day will come. Ask the Babylonians.

The *World Tibet Network News* says that China's Communist regime has brought about the deaths of between 40 and 70 million citizens through famine, persecution and political turmoil.⁴ Most of those deaths were instigated by Mao Zedung.

Why didn’t God do something? It seems as if Mao “got away” with his atrocities. But know this. He got away with nothing.

Where is Mao today? He is spending eternity in the same place every person will spend eternity who refuses to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord.

In his powerful book, *Safely Home*, Randy Alcorn tells the story of the persecuted church in China. He does a wonderful job of addressing critical subjects like why does God allow His people to suffer under wicked men like Mao. The book continually reminds us of the biblical truth that there is more to life than this world. As he puts it, “Death is not a wall; it is a doorway. We live on one side of death. There is another side.”⁵

The moment they die, those who know Jesus Christ enter the place He has prepared for His people. *Heaven*. On the other hand, when a person dies without Christ he, too, enters eternity. But he faces the eternal judgment of God in a place called *hell*.

The following description by Randy Alcorn is the best word picture of hell I’ve ever read. He writes from the perspective of Mao Zedung himself. Though lengthy, listen to Mao as he speaks from his eternal “home:”

Where is my palace? Where are my servants? Does no one know who I am?

The vast, cold darkness cut into his face. It felt like intense frostbite, burning his skin.

I was the most powerful man in Zhongguo. I created the People’s Republic. I was the revered father of my country. They worshiped me. I was god! He waited, listening to the silence. Cannot anyone hear me?

⁴ Patrick Baert, *World Tibet Network News*, Saturday, September 25, 1999

⁵ Randy Alcorn, *Safely Home*, p. 327.

His voice disappeared into the great dark void. It did not echo, for there was nothing for it to echo off. It was immediately absorbed into infinite nothingness. His words went no farther than his blistered lips.

A parade of untold millions marched inside his mind's eye. His sentence was to relieve the suffering of each of his victims. He had been here over twenty-five years. Every minute of those years he had relived the sufferings he inflicted on others. Every torture his regime inflicted he now received, one after the next after the next. Eventually, perhaps, they would start over, so the millions he had already endured were but the first installment. The pain was unbearable, yet he had no choice but to bear it. There was no escape into unconsciousness—no drug to take, no sleeping pill, no alcohol. That which he had laid upon others was now laid upon him—endlessly, relentlessly.

He longed to pluck out his eyes, to keep from seeing what he saw, to puncture his eardrums to keep from hearing the wailing misery, to pull out his tongue to keep from tasting the awfulness he had legislated. But he had no ability to destroy himself. He had no control now over his destiny, no power over himself or others. There was no one he could command to fix the situation, no one to prepare him an eight-course meal to assuage the eternal hunger, no one to serve him mao-tai. No one with whom to plot and scheme, no one to do his work, no one to punish for their errors. No one to salute him, cower at his voice, or bow heads in his presence.

Where is everyone?

Misery loves company, and he had long sought the consolation of others. But all others were still on earth, secure in heaven, or confined to their own private hells at distances immeasurable.

The aloneness was stifling. He could hear nothing but his victims' cries, feeling nothing but their pain, see nothing but their blood, taste nothing but their vomit, sense nothing but their torture. He had only himself. He could not enjoy his own company, for he saw himself as he really was. It was an ugly sight, revolting beyond comprehension.

He felt a burning. A fury welled up inside him. Anger and bitterness, unfocused hostility, frustration leading him to lash out. But there was no one to lash out at. No incompetent aid, no dissident, no Christian pastor, no helpless peasant. No one to beat or shoot or hang or starve. No one to cower in fear at the power of the great chairman, architect of the Republic. No one to shine his shoes or rub lotion upon his burning feet...

He had come to death entirely unprepared—and now it was too late to prepare. If the torture was not enough, a sickening feeling of foreboding had gripped him from his first moments here. He had hoped it would subside, that he would get used to it. He hadn't. It only got worse.

He could see now through all his rationalizations. His arguments against belief in a Creator had never been intellectual ones, as he had claimed. By rejecting a Creator he thought he could rid himself of a Judge. But it had not worked. His atheism had been the opiate of his soul and the executioner of uncalculated millions. But now his comforting atheism could no longer exist, even for a fleeting moment, for he had been forever stripped of the power to deny reality.

He had lived his short todays as if there were no long tomorrow. He had believed the lie that all were accountable to him and he was accountable to none. He had believed the lie that death would slip him into eternal unconsciousness. He knew now—how well he knew—the curse of always being awake, ever alert, unable to allay his suffering with a moment's sleep or distraction...

He had said, “I want there to be no God; I want nothing to do with him.” His atheist’s prayer had been answered. The everywhere-present God had chosen to withdraw his presence from this single place, turning it into a cosmic desert. This was a ghetto of massive proportions, yet so small it could slip through a single crack in the tiles of heaven. It was located in some distant and empty place, never to be feared or even stumbled upon by the citizens of Charis. His life, with all his supposed accomplishments, was but a puff of smoke, dissipating into nothingness...

Thirst without water to quench it. Hunger without food to satisfy it. Loneliness without company to alleviate it. There was no God here. He’d gotten his wish. On earth he’d managed to reject God while still enjoying his blessings and provisions. But it was excruciatingly clear now that God was the author of good. Therefore the absence of God meant the absence of good. He could not have it both ways, not here. No God, no good. Forever.”⁶

Yes, God will judge the wicked. One more timeless truth from Habakkuk 2...

C. Timeless Truth #3: God expects all people to respond to His holiness (20).

“But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.” Habakkuk’s first complaint was about Judah—why didn’t God do something about the sin of His people? His second complaint was about the Babylonians—how could God use wicked Babylon to judge less wicked Judah? Now he sees that God doesn’t grade on a curve. A person is either holy or not holy in His sight. You can’t be a little holy.

My friend, verse 20 isn’t a request but a requirement. Since God is holy there are two things we must do.

1. *We need to hush up.* “Let all the earth be silent before Him.” Hush!

2. *We need to humble ourselves.* Where is the Lord? In his *holy* temple. If you want to enter God’s presence you must be holy. And to be holy you must either be absolutely perfect or escorted into God’s presence by someone who is.

That’s why you need Jesus Christ today. He was perfect, 33 years of sinless life. But He voluntarily died on the Cross in the place of sinful people, making their sin, as it were, His own. He paid the penalty sinners deserve to pay. All the way to death.

But He didn’t stay dead. The third day He was in the tomb, He rose again, in essence proclaiming, “Mission accomplished! Salvation obtained. The redemption price paid.”

And what that means is this. When a sinner repents and receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, God declares that sinner to be holy in His sight. Forgiven. Justified.

My friend, what God did to Babylon He will eventually do to every nation and individual who refuses to bow before the One He has appointed King, Jesus the Christ. Today is the day of salvation. If you want to be reconciled to Your Maker, you must, to borrow from Habakkuk, hush up and humble yourself and place your faith in His Son.

Make It Personal: We need to let God be God in our lives.

How have you responded to the holiness of God? Run to Christ today. Do not delay.

⁶ Randy Alcorn, *Safely Home*, pp. 327-30.