

“WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE QUITTING!”

A SERMON BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOK OF HABAKKUK (3) AND PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2020---(THE FIFTH AND FINAL MESSAGE IN A SERMON SERIES TITLED STRONG FAITH FOR CONFUSING TIMES)

MOST OF US RECOGNIZE THE NAME ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ..... SHE’S THE DAUGHTER OF THE LATE BILLY AND RUTH GRAHAM..... BESIDES BEING A WELL-KNOWN AUTHOR AND SPEAKER, SHE IS ALSO A KEEN OBSERVER OF CONTEMPORARY EVENTS.... IN 2014 SHE CALLED ON AMERICAN CHRISTIANS TO SPEND SEVEN DAYS IN FERVENT PRAYER FOR OUR NATION. THIS IS PART OF WHAT SHE WROTE IN HER CALL TO PRAYER:

"ONE OF THE THINGS HE HAS IMPRESSED ON ME IS THAT WE ARE LIVING AT THE END OF HUMAN HISTORY AS WE KNOW IT. IN LIGHT OF THIS, HE HAS GIVEN ME SOME PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENTS. ONE WAS TO BE THE HONORARY CHAIR FOR THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER 2014 THIS PAST MAY. HE GAVE ME THE MESSAGE I WAS TO DELIVER, WHICH WAS FROM JOEL 1...THE DAY OF THE LORD IS AT HAND. IT WAS A MESSAGE WARNING THAT JUDGMENT IS COMING."

THEN SHE ADDED THESE WORDS:

"PLEASE BE ASSURED THERE IS NO OTHER AGENDA IN THIS INITIATIVE. THIS IS NOT ABOUT PROMOTING ANYTHING OR ANYONE."

**THIS IS ALL ABOUT CALLING GOD'S PEOPLE
TOGETHER TO PRAY, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE,
AND JUDGMENT FALLS ON OUR NATION."**

I AGREE. PERHAPS YOU DO AS WELL.....

AMERICA IS IN TROUBLE.

THERE IS PANDEMIC IN OUR LAND....

THERE IS ANGER AND DIVISION AND SOCIAL

INJUSTICE IN OUR LAND

THERE IS SADNESS AND SORROW IN OUR LAND

ONE PHRASE STOOD OUT TO ME: “BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.” WE MUST PRAY FOR OUR COUNTRY...FOR OUR STATE AND COMMUNITY....FOR OUR SOCIETY AND OUR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS....FOR THIS WORLD OF OURS WHILE WE CAN.

THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT THERE WILL BE A TIME WHEN JUDGMENT COMES..... LIKE IT OR NOT.....BELIEVE IT OR NOT.....WE HAVE MANY PHRASES FOR THIS: WHEN THE CHICKENS COME HOME TO ROOST, WHEN SKELETONS COME OUT OF THE CLOSET, WHEN IT’S TIME TO PAY THE PIPER.

**SOONER OR LATER WE ALL FACE THE
CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHOICES WE HAVE
MADE. THIS IS TRUE FOR NATIONS AND FOR
INDIVIDUALS.**

**YOU CANNOT MOCK GOD FOREVER, YOU
CANNOT IGNORE GOD OR PRETEND GOD ISN'T
THERE, YOU CANNOT DO AS YOU PLEASE
WITHOUT INVITING JUDGMENT....WITHOUT
INVITING REPERCUSSIONS AT SOME POINT
JUST MAYBE ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ IS RIGHT. WE
NEED GOD TO DO SOMETHING “BEFORE IT’S TOO
LATE.”**

THAT SOUNDS A LOT LIKE HABAKKUK..... GOD
HAD TOLD HIM CLEARLY: “JUDGMENT IS
COMING!” NOW AT LAST HABAKKUK
UNDERSTANDS THE MESSAGE..... WHEN WE
COME TO HABAKKUK 3, THE FINAL CHAPTER IN
THIS SHORT BOOK OF PROPHECY.....WE TURN A
CORNER IN OUR STUDY. THE WHOLE TONE OF
THE BOOK CHANGES..... WE MOVE FROM
CONFUSION TO CLARITY AND FROM FEAR TO
FAITH. HERE IS THE KEY OBSERVATION ON
WHICH THE WHOLE BOOK TURNS:

NOTHING HAS CHANGED ON THE OUTSIDE.

HABAKKUK HAS CHANGED ON THE INSIDE.

WE FIND A LOT OF BAD NEWS IN HABAKKUK 1-2.

BUT HABAKKUK 3 IS FULL OF GOOD NEWS.

THE BOOK ENDS ON A NOTE OF HOPE AND

PRAISE.

**HOW DID THE PROPHET MOVE FROM HIS INITIAL
WORRY AND FEAR TO A PLACE OF CONFIDENCE,**

JOY AND PRAISE? HOW DID HE GET THERE

WHEN NOTHING AROUND HIM HAS CHANGED?

THE PEOPLE ARE STILL MOCKING GOD,

VIOLENCE STILL FILLS THE STREETS, AND THE

BABYLONIANS ARE STILL COMING TO

JERUSALEM..... OUTWARDLY EVERYTHING IS

JUST AS MESSED UP AS IT WAS IN THE

BEGINNING.

NOTHING HAS CHANGED ON THE OUTSIDE

**YET HABAKKUK THE MAN HAS CHANGED ON THE
INSIDE.**

HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

THIS CHAPTER GIVES US THE ANSWER.

**THE OUTLINE IS VERY SIMPLE. HABAKKUK 3
CONTAINS 3 THINGS:**

A PRAYER.

A VISION.

A TESTIMONY.

**LET'S TAKE THEM ONE AT A TIME AND SEE
WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE PROPHET'S
SPIRITUAL JOURNEY.**

1. PRAYER

“LORD, I HAVE HEARD OF YOUR FAME; I STAND IN AWE OF YOUR DEEDS, LORD” (1).

“REPEAT THEM IN OUR DAY, IN OUR TIME MAKE THEM KNOWN. IN WRATH REMEMBER MERCY” (2).

IN THE FACE OF IMPENDING CALAMITY, THE PROPHET PRAYS FOR A FULL MANIFESTATION OF GOD’S POWER AND FOR MERCY IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT. IT’S AS IF HE IS SAYING, “LORD, I KNOW BAD TIMES ARE COMING. I ACCEPT THAT. I’M NOT FIGHTING AGAINST YOUR PLAN.

**BUT OH LORD, IF HARD TIMES MUST COME,
DON'T LET THE BABYLONIANS WIPE US OUT.
REMEMBER MERCY OR WE WILL PERISH!"**

THAT'S A PERFECTLY BIBLICAL PRAYER.

IT'S HONEST.

IT'S DESPERATE.

IT'S THE KIND OF PRAYER GOD WILL ANSWER.

**NOTICE THAT HE ASKS GOD TO DO AGAIN IN HIS
DAY WHAT HE HAS DONE IN THE PAST. TWICE HE
SAYS, "DO IT NOW, LORD, IN OUR DAY, IN OUR
TIME." THIS OUGHT TO BE THE PRAYER OF
EVERY THOUGHTFUL CHRISTIAN AT THIS
CRITICAL MOMENT OF HISTORY.**

**THESE ARE PERILOUS TIMES-----THESE ARE
DANGEROUS TIMES----THESE ARE CONFUSING
TIMES ---- THESE ARE FEARFUL TIMES----THERE
IS MUCH TO PRAY FOR ----EVERYDAY-----PRAY
EVERYDAY AND EVERYNIGHT OFTEN IN
BETWEEN**

**SOME PEOPLE SAY WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF A
GREAT REVIVAL. PERHAPS THAT IS TRUE. I
CERTAINLY HOPE SO. BUT I'M NOT SURE ABOUT
THE TIMING. WHEN I READ ABOUT THE FIRST
GREAT AWAKENING, THE SECOND GREAT
AWAKENING, AND OTHER REVIVALS LED BY
PEOPLE SUCH AS BILLY SUNDAY OR BILLY**

GRAHAM THAT SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD, IT FEELS LIKE STORIES FROM ANOTHER PLANET.

ARE SUCH THINGS POSSIBLE IN OUR DAY?

IT'S EASY TO GIVE IN TO DOUBT WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE GRAVITY OF THE WORLD SITUATION.....WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE FALL AND DECLINE OF THE PRACTICE OF ORGANIZED RELIGION....MOST PARTICULARLY CHRISTIANITYIN THE UNITED STATES AND IN MUCH OF THE WORLD.....THE CHALLENGING OF THE DOCTRINES AND CREEDS AND BELIEFS AND THE CORNERSTONES OF OUR FAITH BY MANY IN OUR

SECULAR WORLD....THE DIMINISHED ROLE OF THE CHURCH

**BUT MAYBE THAT MAY ACTUALLY BE A GOOD
SIGN BECAUSE REVIVALS USUALLY COME IN
DESPERATE TIMES. YOU GENERALLY DON'T
RECEIVE A MIRACLE UNTIL YOU DESPERATELY
NEED ONE. IT SEEMS THAT GOD OFTEN WILL
NOT MOVE IN POWER UNTIL THINGS HAVE
FALLEN INTO DIRE STRAITS.**

**IF THAT IS TRUE, THEN I WOULD SAY WE ARE IN
A GOOD PLACE FOR A MIGHTY MOVE OF GOD. I
UNDERSTAND THAT REVIVAL IS A SOVEREIGN
WORK OF GOD.**

**GOD'S PLAN....GOD'S TIMING.....NOT OURS.....I
GET IT....BUT I PRAY AND I WONDER WHAT GOD
HAS IN MIND.....WHAT IS NEXT?**

**AS WE CONSIDER THIS ELUSIVE TOPIC OF
REVIVAL....I COME BACK TO AN OLD CHINESE
PRAYER THAT GOES LIKE THIS: "O LORD,
CHANGE THE WORLD. BEGIN, I PRAY THEE, WITH
ME." -----OR IN THE WORDS OF THE OLD
SPIRITUAL,**

**“IT’S ME, IT’S ME, O LORD, STANDING IN THE
NEED OF PRAYER.**

**NOT MY BROTHER, NOT MY SISTER, BUT IT’S ME,
O LORD,**

STANDING IN THE NEED OF PRAYER.”

**MY GREATEST CHALLENGE IS THE MAN IN THE
MIRROR. THAT’S WHERE REVIVAL MUST BEGIN.**

2. VISION

**AFTER HIS PRAYER HABAKKUK HAS A VISION OF
GOD. THEOLOGIANS CALL THIS A THEOPHANY.
THAT’S A FANCY TERM FOR AN APPEARANCE OF
GOD ON THE EARTH.**

IN THIS CASE, GOD REVEALED HIMSELF TO HABAKKUK IN SOMETHING LIKE A DREAM OR A VISION. THE PROPHET RECORDED HIS EXPERIENCE IN VERSES 3-15. THESE VERSES ARE HIGHLY POETIC, WHICH IS WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT WHEN A MAN HAS A VISION OF GOD. BUT THE POINT IS VERY CLEAR. KNOWING THAT HIS NATION FACES IMMINENT JUDGMENT, HABAKKUK PRAYS, “LORD, DO SOMETHING!” THIS VISION IS GOD’S ANSWER. IT’S AS IF GOD SAYS, “HABAKKUK, YOU’VE FORGOTTEN WHO I AM. YOU’RE TALKING AS IF I CAN’T HEAR YOU. AS IF I DON’T HAVE ANY POWER.

LET ME SHOW YOU WHO I AM BECAUSE IF YOU UNDERSTAND WHO I AM, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SLEEP AT NIGHT.”

IN THESE VERSES HABAKKUK RECOUNTS GOD'S ACTIVITY IN THE PAST. HE ESPECIALLY FOCUSES ON THE EXODUS, THE TIME IN THE WILDERNESS, AND THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN RIVER. THAT WAS A PERIOD IN WHICH GOD REPEATEDLY WORKED SPECTACULAR MIRACLES. BY RECOUNTING ALL OF THIS, GOD IS SAYING, “HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT I DID FOR YOU IN THE PAST?”

IF GOD DID IT BEFORE, GOD CAN DO IT AGAIN.

**SOMETIMES WE READ THE BIBLE AND SECRETLY
WONDER IF GOD CAN DO IT AGAIN IN THE 21ST-
CENTURY. HERE IS THE ANSWER. HE'S GOD!
(AND WE ARE NOT!)----AND GOD CAN INTERVENE
ANY TIME AND IN ANY WAY THAT GOD WANTS.
WE CAN GET A FLAVOR OF THIS THEOPHANY IN
VERSES 13-15 WHICH FOCUS ON THE DEFEAT OF
PHARAOH AT THE RED SEA:**

YOU CAME OUT TO DELIVER YOUR PEOPLE,

TO SAVE YOUR ANOINTED ONE.

***YOU CRUSHED THE LEADER OF THE LAND OF
WICKEDNESS,***

YOU STRIPPED HIM FROM HEAD TO FOOT.

WITH HIS OWN SPEAR YOU PIERCED HIS HEAD

***WHEN HIS WARRIORS STORMED OUT TO
SCATTER US, GLOATING AS THOUGH ABOUT TO
DEVOUR THE WRETCHED WHO WERE IN HIDING.
YOU TRAMPLED THE SEA WITH YOUR HORSES,
CHURNING THE GREAT WATERS.***

**LOOK AT THE VERBS: YOU CAME OUT . . . YOU
CRUSHED . . . YOU STRIPPED . . . YOU PIERCED . .
. YOU TRAMPLED. THIS IS WHAT GOD DID. GOD
GETS ALL THE CREDIT.**

WE NEED A BIG GOD!

***WHY IS THIS HERE? BECAUSE MANY PEOPLE
HAVE NOT FOUND A GOD BIG ENOUGH FOR
MODERN PROBLEMS.***

***IF YOU HAD A BIGGER GOD, YOU WOULDN'T
WORRY AS MUCH.***

**IF YOU HAD A BIGGER GOD, YOU WOULD BE
STRONGER IN THE MOMENT OF CRISIS.**

**IF YOU HAD A BIGGER GOD, YOU WOULD BE
LESS TEMPTED TO COMPROMISE.**

**NOW WE COME TO THE END OF THE BOOK. FIRST
THERE IS ACCEPTANCE:**

**“I WILL WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE DAY OF
CALAMITY TO COME ON THE NATION INVADING
US” (V. 16).**

THIS IS HABAKKUK'S WAY OF SAYING, "I GET IT, LORD. THE BABYLONIANS WILL ATTACK US AND THEN YOU WILL JUDGE THEM. I WILL WAIT FOR THAT DAY TO COME." AS IT TURNS OUT, HABAKKUK MOST LIKELY DIDN'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH BECAUSE BABYLON WOULD NOT FALL FOR ALMOST 70 YEARS. IT DOESN'T MATTER. HABAKKUK'S WORDS MEAN, "MESSAGE RECEIVED."

"I GET IT, LORD!"

SECOND, THERE IS COMMITMENT. VERSES 17-18 SHOW US WHAT FAITH LOOKS LIKE WHEN LIFE TUMBLES IN AROUND US:

THOUGH THE FIG TREE DOES NOT BUD

AND THERE ARE NO GRAPES ON THE VINES,

THOUGH THE OLIVE CROP FAILS

AND THE FIELDS PRODUCE NO FOOD,

THOUGH THERE ARE NO SHEEP IN THE PEN

AND NO CATTLE IN THE STALLS.

YET I WILL REJOICE IN THE LORD,

I WILL BE JOYFUL IN GOD MY SAVIOR.

THE WORD “REJOICE” LITERALLY MEANS TO
JUMP FOR JOY. WE MIGHT EVEN SAY IT MEANS
TO DANCE FOR JOY.

BUT HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

HABAKKUK HAS DESCRIBED A TOTAL ECONOMIC MELTDOWN. ANCIENT ISRAEL WAS AN AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY. IF YOU RAN OUT OF FIGS, OLIVES, GRAPES, GRAIN, SHEEP, AND CATTLE, YOU WERE IN BIG TROUBLE. THIS ISN'T JUST A RANDOM LIST.

WHAT IF YOUR INVESTMENTS DISAPPEARED TOMORROW?

THIS IS A PORTFOLIO!

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU ARE WIPED OUT?

LET ME POSE THE QUESTION THIS WAY:

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF TOMORROW THE
STOCK MARKET IMPLoded? WHAT IF IT
TOTALLY TANKED AND WENT FROM WHEREVER
IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN ON THAT TURBULENT DAY
ALL THE WAY TO ZERO? WHAT WOULD YOU DO
THEN?**

INVESTMENTS GONE.

PENSION DESTROYED.

401(K) WIPED OUT.

WHAT THEN?

HOW DO YOU FACE THAT?

WHAT IF YOUR CHILDREN END UP IN JAIL?

WHAT IF YOU LOSE YOUR JOB?

WHAT IF THE SAFETY NET FAILS?

WHAT IF YOU RUN OUT OF FOOD?

WHAT IF YOU CAN'T PAY YOUR BILLS?

**WHAT IF YOUR LOVED ONES NEVER COME TO
CHRIST?**

WHAT IF THE DOCTOR SAYS, "IT'S TERMINAL"?

**WHAT IF YOUR SPOUSE DIES AND YOU ARE LEFT
ALONE?**

**WHAT IF AMERICA FALLS TO A FOREIGN
POWER?**

**WHAT IF YOU LOSE YOUR JOB BECAUSE YOU
ARE A CHRISTIAN? (THERE ARE PLACES IN THE
WORLD TODAY WHERE THIS IS NOT UNCOMMON)**

WHAT THEN?-----WHAT THEN?

**COULD YOU SAY, "YES, LORD," WHEN THE
DEAREST THING IN LIFE WAS TAKEN FROM YOU?**

COULD YOU STILL SAY, "YES, LORD"?

**TOO MANY CHRISTIANS HAVE A GOD OF THE
GOOD TIMES. THEY SERVE GOD AND LOVE HIM
AND PRAISE HIM WHEN ALL IS GOING WELL. BUT
WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN HARD TIMES COME?**

**IF ALL YOU HAVE IS A GOD OF THE GOOD TIMES,
YOU DON'T HAVE THE GOD OF THE BIBLE.**

SOMETIMES THE FIG TREE DOES NOT BUD.

***SOMETIMES THERE ARE NO GRAPES ON THE
VINE.***

SOMETIMES THE OLIVE CROP FAILS.

SOMETIMES THE FIELDS PRODUCE NO FOOD.

SOMETIMES THERE ARE NO SHEEP IN THE PEN.

**SOMETIMES THERE ARE NO CATTLE IN THE
STALLS.**

**WHAT DO YOU DO THEN? YOU CAN GET ANGRY
WITH GOD OR YOU CAN GIVE UP ON GOD
ALTOGETHER.**

OR YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BELIEVE IN GOD

ANYWAY. OFTEN WE MISTAKE FAITH AND OUR

FEELINGS. FAITH ISN'T ABOUT MY FEELINGS,

MUCH LESS ABOUT MY CIRCUMSTANCES. FAITH

CHOOSES TO BELIEVE WHEN IT WOULD BE

EASIER TO STOP BELIEVING.

HABAKKUK SAID, "I WILL WAIT PATIENTLY" AND "I WILL REJOICE." HE FOUND NEW STRENGTH IN THE MIDST OF DESOLATION.

THE LAST VERSE OF HABAKKUK IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED:

“THE SOVEREIGN LORD IS MY STRENGTH; HE MAKES MY FEET LIKE THE FEET OF A DEER, HE ENABLES ME TO TREAD ON THE HEIGHTS” (V. 19).

THE PHRASE “MY FEET” SPEAKS OF OUR JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE. IF YOU KNOW THE LORD, HE WILL GIVE YOU STABILITY IN THE SLIPPERY MOMENTS OF LIFE.

**HE WILL GIVE YOU GRACE TO STAND WHEN
OTHERWISE YOU WOULD FALL APART.**

**THAT'S WHERE THE BOOK ENDS, AND THAT'S
WHERE WE WILL END OUR JOURNEY.**

**LET ME REPEAT ONCE AGAIN THE SINGLE MOST
IMPORTANT OBSERVATION FROM HABAKKUK.
AS THE BOOK ENDS, NOTHING HAS CHANGED
ON THE OUTSIDE. THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH HAVE
STILL FORGOTTEN GOD. VIOLENCE STILL
REIGNS IN JERUSALEM. THE WICKED STILL
OPPRESS THE RIGHTEOUS.**

**AND THE BABYLONIANS ARE STILL GOD'S
APPOINTED INSTRUMENT FOR JUDGMENT. HARD
TIMES ARE COMING AND THERE IS NOTHING
ANYONE CAN DO ABOUT IT.**

NOTHING HAS CHANGED!

EXCEPT THIS.

HABAKKUK HAS CHANGED ON THE INSIDE.

WE ALL COME FROM DIFFERENT SITUATIONS.

SOME ARE HAPPY, SOME ARE SAD.

SOME ARE HEALTHY, SOME ARE SICK.

SOME ARE EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE, SOME

FACE DARK CLOUDS OF UNCERTAINTY.

BUT IF WE KNOW THE LORD, IF GOD IS OUR SAVIOR, WE CAN STILL HAVE FEET TO TREAD ON THE HEIGHTS IN THE WORST MOMENTS OF LIFE. WE CAN STAND WHEN OTHERS FALL AROUND US.

WHEN THE LATE V. RAYMOND EDMAN WAS PRESIDENT OF WHEATON COLLEGE, HE USED TO TELL THE STUDENTS, “IT’S ALWAYS TOO SOON TO QUIT.” THAT’S A GOOD MOTTO FOR US AS WE WRAP UP OUR STUDY OF HABAKKUK. I TOLD YOU IN THE FIRST MESSAGE THAT HABAKKUK IS “STRONG FAITH FOR CONFUSING TIMES.”

**ALL OF US....ALL OF US!-----ARE IN ONE OF
THREE PLACES:**

YOU'RE COMING OUT OF CONFUSING TIMES.

YOU'RE IN CONFUSING TIMES.

OR YOU'RE ABOUT TO GO INTO CONFUSING

TIMES AND YOU JUST DON'T KNOW IT YET.

**SO TAKE THIS SERIES AND PUT IT IN YOUR BACK
POCKET. IF YOU DON'T NEED IT TODAY, YOU'LL
NEED IT TOMORROW OR THE DAY AFTER
TOMORROW.**

I LEAVE YOU WITH ONE FINAL THOUGHT.

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW THAT JESUS IS ALL YOU

NEED UNTIL JESUS IS ALL YOU HAVE.

AND WHEN JESUS IS YOU HAVE, THEN AND ONLY

THEN WILL YOU DISCOVER THAT JESUS IS ALL

YOU NEED.

THAT'S THE REAL MESSAGE OF THE LITTLE

BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND

FOR ME.....AMEN.....