

**Knowing something and applying it are two different matters.** Clark Clifford, who was White House counsel during the Truman Administration, was at a White House banquet one night when one of the guests turned to the woman next to him. “Did I get your name correctly?” he asked. “Is your name Post?” “Yes, it is,” the woman said. “Is it Emily Post?” “Yes,” she replied. “Are you the world-renowned authority on manners?” the man asked. “Yes,” Mrs. Post said. “Why do you ask?” “Because,” the man said, “you have just eaten my salad.”

**Knowing something and applying it are two different matters.** It is possible to be an expert on manners and yet eat the wrong salad! It is possible to be an expert on the Bible and yet fail to apply that knowledge in your daily life. It’s possible to know how vile that our holy God considers sin and still not take it seriously.

I can hardly think of a time in my nearly three decades of ministry when I have seen someone weep genuine tears of repentance over their sin. One was a man who had gone over some moral lines with his fiancé before they were married. Tragically, in our decadent society, even we in the church have grown so accustomed to sin that it doesn't shock us anymore.

C. H. Spurgeon warned his fellow pastors of the danger of dealing with sin and sinners professionally, so that we lose our dread of evil. What at first shocked us becomes commonplace and routine. As Alexander Pope perceptively observed:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

Because we are so desensitized toward sin, we fail to have the proper response toward it, whether it’s our own sin, or sin in others. We minimize it, justify it, or ignore it and go on our way unaffected by it. But that’s not all, if we see someone reacting in a godly way toward sin; we often think that he/she is a bit carried away or extreme, perhaps even judgmental or intolerant. How dare they cast stones at others! Do they somehow think that they are without sin? And so, by casting our stones at them, we justify our own sins and go back to business as usual, wondering why God doesn't bless our lives more than He does.

Edwin Yamauchi observed, *“Rare is the soul who is so shocked at disobedience that he is appalled.”* The great English preacher, R. W. Dale, said, *“It is partly because sin does not provoke our own wrath, that we do not believe that sin provokes the wrath of God.”* The contemporary Church has a laissez-faire, casual attitude toward sin. I know that I do. I have become desensitized.

It's Sunday morning, so let's be honest. When was the last time that you finished watching the evening news with all the violence and injustice in the world and in frustration asked: *Why isn't God doing something? Why do the wicked and the dishonest people prosper? Why do evil people seem to get away with it?* The truth is that we have frequently stopped asking because we have become anesthetized to evil. But while for the contemporary Christian those are rare feelings, that's the response, those are the precise feelings that a prophet named Habakkuk felt back in 620 B.C. and he wrote a book about it.

Today we're beginning a new series: ***Habakkuk: From Frustration to Faith***. During this series we'll trace the spiritual journey of this obscure prophet. It's my prayer that as we study this short little book, we'll get a bigger view of God, His holiness and sovereignty; that we'll take sin more seriously and realize more deeply our own need for His grace.

You see, "*put on a happy face Christianity*" is so much a part of the American Church that we've forgotten that there are some things that we shouldn't be happy about, that instead we should be heartbroken and grieved. We've skewed things so badly in contemporary Christianity that one pastor actually encouraged his congregation to look at Good Friday positively and see the crucifixion, as he said through "Easter eyes." I'm not questioning his intentions; there are though times to grieve, to reflect on the deep cost and ramifications of sin. We though in American Christianity are too often part of a subculture that doesn't know when, how, or even why to grieve. For us, Christianity is only about victory, about feeling good and feeling better about ourselves. It's upbeat, inspiring, short and peppy.

Can I suggest that there is **A Fatal Flaw in Pep Rally Worship?** It causes us to be haphazard about sin, both in our lives, in the Church and in the world. It sanitizes the Cross and turns what was cursed and horrible into little more than a cute religious icon.

Our series on Habakkuk is not going to be a downer. You won't need to wear black each week or get a scrip for Prozac. It is though going to rattle our worlds and hopefully shake us out of spiritual complacency. The fact is that every true worship service should probably give us some sense of unease, like it did Isaiah in Isaiah 6, as we see the holiness of God and our own sinful condition before Him.

So turn with me to Habakkuk 1:1-4 (p. 662). The prophet Habakkuk's initial words are what is called a prayer of lament concerning injustice in his country, Judah, and its capital city, Jerusalem. He questions God's lack of response to evil. Please note this – Habakkuk does something very unusual, he does not complain about God – he goes right to the Source – **he complains to God about God**. He's confronted with the question of (bear with me as I use the theological term for it) *theodicy*, which is the seeming lethargy of God in the light of present evil. It's the question of: *Why is God silent when there is so much evil and suffering?*

Let me give you peek though at the conclusion of this book. Habakkuk begins on a sober note with grief and sadness, exasperation and frustration – he ends though with trust and a deeper faith and a bigger, more accurate view of God. In fact, the book of Habakkuk ends with the most significant affirmation of faith of any religious book.

This morning we're going to take a little bit of time to do some necessary spade work on the background of this book that will help us throughout this series. Then, we'll work our way through Habakkuk's first complaint against God found in these first four verses. If you're taking notes then...

**1. An unknown prophet has a timely message for the contemporary Church.** To understand Habakkuk we need a historical context. For example, can you imagine someone a hundred years from today reading a history book without a historical context? The war in Afghanistan wouldn't make any sense if you did not also know about 9/11.

**a. What was the historical context?** The book of Habakkuk was written some time after 600 BC. The nation of Israel had suffered civil war after the reign of King Solomon and had been divided into two countries for nearly three centuries. The nation to the north retained the name Israel; to the south, the nation was called Judah. The northern kingdom, Israel, was debauched, so in the year 722 BC God had them bludgeoned out of existence by the war machine of the Assyrians. Only Judah remained but it was a small, weak, vassal state which was a "football" in the hands of more powerful empires. There were three competing empires: Egypt to the south; Assyria to the north; to the northeast a new empire was gaining strength called Babylon. Judah served as a buffer between these world empires and Egypt was also very eager to preserve and protect her interests in Judah.

One of Judah's most wicked kings, Manasseh, was followed on the throne by a godly king, Josiah. The nation had a brief revival until his untimely death. But the reign of Josiah was nonetheless a bright spot in the history of the nation of Judah. After his death his son, Jehoahaz, ascended the throne but his reign was short-lived. Just three months later, Egypt, eager to protect her interests, marched into Jerusalem. With the death of King Josiah, Egypt was concerned about the future of Judah, so she deposed Jehoahaz, placing upon Judah's throne instead his brother Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was a wicked king and he immediately began to reverse the reformation that Judah had undergone under the reign of his father, Josiah. Soon, under Jehoiakim's leadership, his debauchery begins to filter down throughout the people of the nation, particularly among those who were merely superficially influenced by the revival in Josiah's day. It's a time of great moral crisis in Judah. It's also a time of political crisis internationally. These three major world empires were in flux. During this time of moral and national crisis, and political upheavals, the prophet, Habakkuk, cries out in lament to God!

The parallels are obvious. America too is in the midst of a crisis. We're in a seemingly endless war with terrorism. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. For the fourth year in a row, more countries experienced declines in political freedom than

advances. Just eighty-nine countries, home to about half of the world's people, are classified as "free." The rest, even those nations that hold democratic elections, govern their populations with varying levels of repression. Nearly seven of every 10 people live in countries that significantly restrict religious faith and practice. Our nation's economy is on the rocks with talk of replacing the dollar as the world's standard by some new currency. It's likely that today's children will have less and live at a lower standard of living than their parents. Heterosexual monogamous marriage is under attack with marriage being redefined to mean nearly anything and everything. It recently came to light that the Census Bureau is actively encouraging homosexual couples to declare themselves as "married" on their forms even if they do not have a marriage license. It's a violation of federal law, encourages lying and will result in an inflated number. Just last week U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb ruled that the National Day of Prayer was unconstitutional.

No wonder one writer described today's setting with these words: *"While the stage is set for global holocaust, an unsuspecting home audience fiddles a happy tune. The nation's moral fiber is being eaten away by a playboy philosophy that makes personal pleasure the supreme rule of life. Hedonism catches fire while homes crumble; crime soars while the church sours. Drugs, divorce, and debauchery prevail, and decency dies. Frivolity dances in the streets. Faith is buried. In God we trust has become a meaningless slogan stamped on corroding coins."* America today is very similar to Habakkuk's Judah. Thus, his message speaks with a clarity and relevance that rivals and exceeds the relevance of the morning newspaper.

**b. What was a prophet?** In the first verse of his book Habakkuk is called a *prophet*. That's a common term in the Old Testament. It's used about 300 times as a noun and another 300 in a verb form. When we hear the term "prophet" though, we picture someone who utters divinely inspired revelations and someone who foretells future events, a predictor of the future. But that's not what the Bible means by a *prophet*. Moses was called a prophet and never predicted the future. That was basically the case with two of Israel's most famous prophets, Elijah and Elisha.

The message of a prophet primarily involved the society in which they lived. They were fire and brimstone preachers, typically going eyeball to eyeball with the wickedness of their day. In Deuteronomy 18:18, God is speaking and says, *"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him."* This classic text verifies that the duty of the prophet is the proclamation of the Word of God. They called their cultures to repentance and expected their hearers to act on the Word of God. While they preached to the people of their own day, their message is timeless and continues down to present day society. They also represented the people before God.

Habakkuk, though, never addresses his people directly though they overheard his struggles in understanding God's purposes. The traditional role of a prophet was to confront the people for God but Habakkuk confronts God for the people. As God answers his questions, it becomes clearer what he had to learn and who God really is.

His lessons are the ones that we too must apply when we struggle with similar problems today.

**c. Who was Habakkuk?** The name Habakkuk probably means “embracer” or “clasp to the heart” – not in a romantic sense, but in a comforting sense. This is a book of great comfort. Comfort is probably the most distressing problem that human beings face: the great question of why God allows certain horrible things to happen. I do not know any more up-to-date and relevant question than that one.

As we read through Habakkuk, we discover that’s the problem he wrestled with and eventually learned the answer to, thus he becomes a comforter and embracer of God’s people in their distress. He wrestles with the same questions we wrestle with – *Why does a good God allow evil?* As he struggles with these issues, Habakkuk embraced God in prayer. It’s noteworthy that he’s a contemporary of Jeremiah, the weeping prophet.

Habakkuk is a thinker, a philosopher who wrestles with the tough questions that perplex all of us. He’s a student of the Word, a theologian who doesn’t settle for pat answers or sound byte theology. He won’t settle for second hand faith or a spiritual status quo. He’s been dubbed the Job of the prophets in that he struggles with the hard problem of permitted evil.

Unlike other prophets, we don’t know who Habakkuk’s father was, his home town or even the circumstances of his life. The best guess we can offer about any of the details of his life is that he was a Levite, because it seems that he was involved in the worship of the temple. The last verse of the book says, *“For the director of music on my stringed instruments.”*

While normal facts about Habakkuk are missing, they’re really not vital. What’s really important is that God spoke through Habakkuk. We don’t need to know anything else. He reminds us that the normal stuff of this world is pretty trivial: where you were born, who your parents were, what business you were in or what religion you were, or even what letters you have after your name. But what’s really important is that you know God!

Habakkuk knew God. He embraced God. He clung to faith in God. He embraced God in his daily walk and with his family. That’s what’s really important and God embraces those who embrace Him.

**d. What’s his message?** Verse 1 says, *“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received.”* The KJV renders the word *oracle*, “burden.” The Hebrew word means simply something that is heavy. It came to be applied to all forms of prophecy and could simply be translated, a proclamation.

This particular word, with its concept of a burden, or something heavy, was chosen to describe prophetic revelation because of the heavy responsibility or burden of faithfully proclaiming the Word of God. And whether it’s the biblical prophets who revealed the

Word of God, or the church age preachers who explain the Word of God, handling God's Word must never be viewed as a light task.

Teaching God's Word is a heavy responsibility. That thinking should characterize all ministry of the Word of God and all who teach God's Word, not just those who stand behind a pulpit, but anyone who teaches a Sunday school class or Children's Church, or leads a small group, or any kind of ministry of the Word of God should proceed from a conviction on the part of the teacher that he/she has a burden that comes from the Lord. It must never be approached with a frivolous attitude. It's a burden to be discharged faithfully.

That was the nature of the message of Habakkuk. It was a burden given to him by God to carry very carefully. ***So what's his burden?***

**2. An untalked about part of the Christian experience is lament.** I tend to be eclectic in my musical preferences. When I'm at the office, I'll listen to praise and worship. When I read, I listen to classical or movie themes. Periodically, I'll listen to Jazz, some Miles Davis. I like the Blues style of a Norah Jones. And there's just something about opening the windows (if I had a convertible, I'd put the top down) on a warm spring day and blowing out the speakers with either the Doobie Brothers, Rare Earth or Lynard Skinnard. Hey, we preachers have our dark sides too!

Most people do not realize that the Bible is composed of various types of literature. There's history, poetry, parabolic, apocalyptic. What we have in this first part of Habakkuk is a type of literature called a *lament*. We have a whole book called Lamentations written by Jeremiah, but lament is not a familiar genre for most of us, particularly in American Evangelicalism.

A lament or lamentation is a song or poem expressing grief, regret or mourning. The first example of this form of poetry is the lament of David over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27). Prophecy sometimes took the form of a lament when it predicted calamity, particularly for the people of God. Sometimes a lament is a complaint to God about injustice. Our culture, even in the Church, wants little to do with grief, much less lament.

That was illustrated again not too long ago. As I heard the news report that they'd discovered the bodies of the last two West Virginia coal miners, I listened carefully for that all too typical phraseology. Sure enough, as soon as the news of the discovered bodies was confirmed, the West Virginia Governor said, "*We did not receive the miracle that we prayed for. So this journey has ended and now the healing will start.*" They'd just discovered the bodies and he's already talking about healing. Those miners' families, coworkers, that state had barely started the grieving process and he makes some trite statement about healing. I know what he's trying to say but when you pull 29 bodies out of a mine, let's take a little time to work through the grief before we jump to the healing process.

Too often we're like the lady who called up American Airlines and asked the reservation clerk, "How long does it take to get from Dallas-Fort Worth to Frankfurt, Germany?" The clerk had to wait a moment for the information to come up on her computer screen, so she said, "Just a minute." The caller responded, "Thanks very much," and hung up!

Most of the things that really matter in life do not happen in "just a minute." They come for those who learn to take some time and wait upon the Lord. I wonder if we took time to grieve over our sin and the sin around us, if God might intervene and bring revival to His Church.

Habakkuk laments the evil around him. Every believer, when we see the wickedness around us, like Habakkuk should have some distress in our souls. But Habakkuk does not talk about or complain about God's seemingly inactivity...he complains directly to God. Most prophets spoke to the people for God. Habakkuk speaks to God for the people. While he doesn't accuse God, he's very candid about the perplexity in his soul of the seemingly ignored evil around him. His theological understanding of God as just and righteous is not matched by his own experience of God. So he brings his doubts and distress to God Himself.

Have you ever had those times when you see something so evil, you just can't wrap your brain around it? That's Habakkuk. He doesn't pray some fake, flowery prayer. He's honest with God. He brings to God three laments, three burdens that he just can't figure out why God is allowing them. So he asks...

***a. God, why do You let your servants feel frustrated when it seems as if their prayers are unheard?*** Can you hear the pain, the frustration in verse 2, "*How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen?*"

Apparently, Habakkuk waited for the Lord's answer for some time. The tension of unanswered prayer sets the tone for the entire book. He wrestles with the dilemma which has confronted faithful people through the ages—frustration of seemingly unanswered prayer for God's intervention, for the healing of society. Habakkuk is one with all of those believers who fervently pray for peace in our world and yet only experience war; who pray for God's good to come to this earth and yet only find human evil. He's a kindred spirit for those who have prayed for healing by a hospital bed, only to be confronted by death; the childless couple who pray for a child yet face infertility; with every spouse who has prayed for love to come into their marriage and home and yet only find hatred and anger; with every person who has prayed for serenity but then been further disturbed and agitated.

Not *hearing*, in Habakkuk's mind, is equivalent to not *helping*, so he accuses God of being indifferent. Sometimes we cry out to God and we wonder why God doesn't say something, why He doesn't do something? I know I have. Because of the silence of God, Habakkuk does not know if the prayer has been denied or just delayed. Like Habakkuk, when God seemingly does not even hear our prayer, we feel frustrated.

***b. God, why do You let your servants feel frustrated when they see unanswered wickedness around them?*** What we have next is a bit like that old saying, “*Cheer up things could get worse, and sure enough I cheered up, and things got worse.*”

Habakkuk continues his lament, “*Or cry out to you, ‘Violence!’ but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds*” (vss. 2b-3). His theological understanding of God does not match up with his experience of God.

The Hebrew word for “*violence*” is the word “*hamas*,” a word that has recently become all too familiar as the name of a Palestinian terrorist organization. In Scripture it denotes situations of civil, as well as military oppression. It describes malicious action intended to injure someone else or their property. Habakkuk uses this word six times in these three short chapters. He’s so overwhelmed by the violence around him that he does not just call out for help. He doesn’t even, as the NIV translates it, “cry” for help. The word used here means “*scream*.” Habakkuk is so distraught at the violence surrounding that he screams out to God about it.

Some of you understand his scream about violence all too well. There’s no feeling more hopeless and helpless than being a child in a home and watching one of your parents physically attack and beat up the other. You’ll notice I did not say, husbands beating up their wives, though that is the most common, but some wives also attack their husbands. Violence is genderless. If you think that it does not happen within the Church, even within our church – my friend, you are sadly, tragically naïve.

Yet violence is so common today that we give it little more than a yawn. We’re virtually unshockable! Just attempt to do a body count during the first five minutes in one of our more violent movies. We continually up the ante with violent but more and more realistic video games. The real problem is that violence is not just fictional or a game. Even in communities like ours, you’d better at least be alert if you go out by yourself at night. Children are sent off to school only to be bullied. You dare not joke about killing someone at school because our schools have far too many who are mentally unbalanced or are sociopaths, so it’s no longer a joke. We have an annual bloody competition in this country. Who’ll be the next Murder Capital of the year?

But it’s not just out there, it’s here...it’s us. Things that we say to our spouses or our children, or that children say to parents, are verbal violence. They cut, brutalize and slash. Even what we say to other Christians is often brutal. Those that we say that we love, care for, that we’re supposed to be spending eternity in Heaven with someday – cruel things are too quickly said that should cause us to shudder in shame. In the words of Salman Rushdie, “*The barbarians were not only at our gates but within our skins.*”

The severity of this evil is indicated in verse 3 with a piling up and pairing off of depraved synonyms: the first pair *injustice* & *wrong*; the second – *destruction* & *violence*; and the third – *strife* & *conflict*.

Rapists and murderers get off on technicalities. Terrorists are misguided criminals. That's **injustice**. Vandalism, gossip, slander – that's **destruction**. We see lives, marriages and homes **destroyed** all around us. **Strife & conflict** – that describes our society: conservatives against liberals, Democrats against Republicans, Whites against Blacks. In the church we have traditionalists against contemporarians, old versus young. There can even be class wars, where those who have treat those who have less, as 2nd class. I visited an evangelical church some years back where it was apparent that those who had money sat on the main floor and those who did not sat in the balcony. **Strife & conflict**. Some of us are so used to fighting, so used to stirring it up – that we can hardly handle true peace.

Can I ask some honest questions? When you get in your car to go home after the worship service, do you say: "Boy, the Lord really spoke to me today...I was so blessed today." Or, are your first words, "Could you believe that?" "Man, was that long...or boring." **Strife & conflict**. I wonder what Habakkuk would say about us?

**c. God, why do You let your servants feel frustrated when righteousness is called wickedness and wickedness is called righteousness?** When Bill Clinton was President, he was asked in one interview about the compatibility of his Christian faith with his acceptance of homosexuality. Clinton openly accepted the authority of the Bible, but disagreed that the Bible condemns homosexual practices as immoral. So for Bill Clinton, accepting homosexuality while professing to accept the authority of God's Word was a matter of interpretation. That's Habakkuk's complaint to God in verse 4, *"Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted."*

When Habakkuk speaks of the Law, he's talking first about the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. He's saying that God's moral law has become passé, irrelevant and appears paralyzed.

Sounds like Western culture, doesn't it? Any reminder of Christianity is being banished from the public square. There's an attempt to eradicate any and all moral absolutes. When that happens justice is twisted. Dismissal of God's Word causes a society to render justice based on other things such as sentimentality, tolerance, diversity, rule of the majority, etc. Because the Law is despised and disregarded, the weak and disenfranchised are defenseless. Ours is a "survival of the fittest" world when babies in the womb are murdered, infants born with disabilities are left to die, the terminally ill or elderly are deemed disposable. Those who oppose perversion are labeled narrow minded and hateful.

*"The first duty of government is the protection of life, not its destruction. The chief purpose of government is to protect life. Abandon that and you have abandoned all."* It was Thomas Jefferson who said those words. Government's role, according to this revered founding father, was to "secure" the unalienable rights conferred by the Creator on His creatures. Thomas Jefferson, who is often used to defend our culture's distorted

view of separation of church and state, understood the need for society to be built on the foundation of God's moral law.

Please understand, contemporary society wants the *fruits* of the Gospel but not the *roots* that we find in the Law. It's connected. As our culture succumbs to postmodernism and secularism, it becomes increasingly brutal and violent. You cannot have morality or justice without moral absolutes.

**Conclusion:** Habbakuk's world was morally unraveling. So is ours. American culture is in crisis. Habakkuk saw what we see today and he cried out to God, "*How long O Lord?*" As he looked at the increase in evil, the moral deterioration – his faith began to waver.

Can you relate? Do you find yourself, when you look at all the evil around you, wondering – "Where is God?" The message of Habakkuk is a message for us...today! Our days too are dark, much like Habakkuk's, and to us all, under the inspiration of the Spirit, Habakkuk penned this message of encouragement. As we're faced with difficulties, like Habakkuk, we find that our doubts run rampant. And yet, we find that those doubts can be turned into devotion. Confusion can be turned into confidence...if we understand the message of Habakkuk. Frustration is transformed into faith; worry becomes worship; terror becomes trust; our anguish melts away into adoration. *Why?* It's because we understand that we must answer the question "Why?" with truth about **Who...Who** is in control! Courage is found for every crisis only when we understand that our glorious sovereign God is in control and He is still on His throne.

While there is **A Fatal Flaw in Pep Rally Worship**, we must not succumb to hopelessness or despair. What we must learn and what these first four verses teach us – is to do exactly what our friend, Habakkuk does. Habakkuk does not complain about God, he cries out to God. Whether problems face us on the individual level or on a national one, we don't complain to others, we must run to God and take our problems first to Him.

I love the way that Habakkuk does that. He doesn't run to some other prophet and ask for advice. He didn't run off to some conference or seminar. He didn't ask for an appointment with the pastor of the local church. He took his complaints right to the Throne, to the Lord Himself. That's the first place to take all of our complaints.

Is God silent in our society? Is God silent in your home or within our State? Do we really see the evil that abounds within even Burlington? What we witness day by day are the laws of common decency and morality being thrown out and rejected. We're seeing right before our eyes what Habakkuk saw. We're seeing lawlessness and sinfulness, and we are crying to God...and God knows we're crying to Him, but seemingly there's no answer! And we wonder, "Why is there no answer for our burden?"

In the state of Kansas a few years ago, Pastor Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate with prayer. Everyone was expecting the usual PC prayer

with its vanilla generalities. But when Pastor Wright stood up to pray, this is what he prayed:

*"Heavenly Father, we come before You today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and Your guidance. We know Your word says: 'Woe to those that call evil good', but that's exactly what we've done. We've lost our spiritual equilibrium. We have inverted our values. We confess that we have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your word and called it moral pluralism. We have worshipped other gods and called it multiculturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it political savvy. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression; we have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment.*

*Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; try us and see if there be some wicked way in us; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of this state and who have been ordained by You, to govern this great state of Kansas. Grant them your wisdom to rule and may their decisions direct us to the center of Your Will. I ask in the name of your Son, The Living Savior, Jesus Christ."*

The response was immediate. A number of legislators walked out during the prayer in protest. In just a few weeks, the church that Pastor Wright pastored logged more than 5,000 phone calls with only 47 of those calls responding negatively.

This morning let's learn a lesson. I believe that because of the silence of God that burden of Habakkuk's got heavier, **but** Habakkuk went to the right place, or should I say Person with his burden.

Christian friend, when you are overwhelmed by the evil around you, where do you go with yours? When your heart is breaking because of the sinfulness of our world, do you turn to the Lord God Who is still on the throne? When you honestly see the sin in your own heart, do you flee to the Cross, do you run to God in repentance?

Let's learn from Habakkuk. Let's learn to use every burden to cause us to run to King Jesus again and again and again!