Yesterday I picked up a book called ‘Night’ by Elie Wiesel, which is a very well-known and famous book on the Holocaust. In fact he spent time in Buchenwald and at Auschwitz and experienced the horror of losing his mother, his father and his younger sister. I literally got into this book, and I read it from beginning to end yesterday. And I would encourage you if you get a chance to read it also. The New York Times describes ‘Night’ as a slim volume of terrifying power.

A little bit about Elie is he grew up in the Transylvanian area and he and his family were Jewish. And he had a real interest in Jewish mysticism, or the Kabbalah. He was very prayerful, thought a lot about God, came from a spiritual home, but he was struggling deeply. And once he got to the concentration camps he struggled with the whole idea of God.

What ended up taking place in his life is they were taken and stripped out of their village and they were taken away as a family. They would end up at the camp and he stayed as close as he could to his father, but he was separated from his mother and sister. And he says in the book that would be the last time he ever saw his mother or his younger sister. So there he was at Auschwitz and while he was there someone asked him how old he was. He told them he was fifteen and his father said he was fifty and the man said no, you are eighteen. And he asked him again how old he was and he said fifteen. And the man said again no, you are eighteen. And he told his father to say he was forty. Otherwise the man was telling him that they would be split up. So Elie said he was eighteen instead of fifteen and his father said he was forty and not fifty.

And they hung on to each other so tightly during their time there at Auschwitz. They saw horrific brutalities taking place as the crematory let off the stench of human flesh. He talks about in his book how these militant soldiers were so cruel that they would take infants and they would throw them high in the air and they would use them as target practice with their machine guns. This was the kind of brutality that was taking place. And Elie experienced being beaten on several different occasions. He became totally emaciated.

When I was at the Holocaust Museum in Israel with the team that came with me, I had the opportunity to see Elie Wiesel’s outfit that he wore, his prison garb so to speak. And it was surreal. And here is what I want to say. Elie’s journey was horrifying. Here are some of the things that he said in his book ‘Night’ that I have kind of cut and pasted. He said, ‘Never shall I forget the small faces of the children whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky. Never shall I forget those flames that consumed my faith forever. Never shall I forget those moments that murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to ashes. I had ceased to pray. I concurred with Job. I was not denying His existence, but I doubted His absolute justice.’”
There was an occasion where he heard his father praying, “May His name be celebrated and sanctified.” Elie would listen to the Jews praying in the concentration camps and talking about celebrating God. And this grew very difficult for him to even consider celebrating God in the midst of the horror that he was an eye witness to. And he said, “For the first time I felt anger rising within me after hearing this prayer. Why should I sanctify His name? The almighty, the eternal and terrible master of the universe chose to be silent. What was there to thank Him for?”

Maybe that is you. You kind of feel like you are so struggling in your life and maybe you feel like you have lost everything, your house, your finances, and your spouse. You feel like you have lost loved ones. And you sit in the midst of your emptiness and you wonder is there really anything that you can thank God for? You may feel like all your perspective is lost.

Well, Elie would share how he was transferred from Auschwitz and he made his way to Buchenwald. This was a concentration camp that when I was in Germany I went to see. And then reading about this made it feel extra surreal, seeing the camp through my eyes remembering when I was there. I remember walking down steps into the ‘hook room’ where there were just walls that were covered with hooks. This was where they would take the bodies and just hang them on these hooks. And then they would take these bodies down and would put them on this elevator that I remember seeing downstairs in the basement area. And the elevator would go up and there would be someone to remove the bodies out of the elevator and take them to the crematory. So the bodies would be taken there and burned to ashes and the stench of human flesh would waft through the air as the workers awaited their own deaths.

Elie shared as they were transiting from Auschwitz and leaving for Buchenwald that they would be packed together on train carts. And as they were waiting in line to get on the carts they were not able to bend over, they were not able to kneel down. And so they would take their spoons and they would eat the snow off of the back of the person in front of them. Then like meat, they were packed into the trains and people began dying, freezing to death. And for several days they would travel this way with open tops and with constant snowing. And this was their existence, totally emaciated, but he was still with his father. By this time his father barely had the strength to get into the barracks.

And then the way they would treat you is they would literally brutalize you if you were too weak. If you were strong, you could help out. But his father grew weak. And Elie says, “There I was on the top bunk after they had been beating my dad for several days straight. And my father was calling out my name over and over and over again. And the guard kept telling him to shut up. Eventually he took a club and hit my dad across the head. I didn’t say anything because I feared the same injustice would be incurred on me. I looked over the top of the bunk and looked down at my dad, who is
emaciated, he is almost lifeless, and he is bleeding. I stared at him for an hour, looking at the imprint of his face so I could have it sketched and branded into my mind. Finally in tiredness I fell asleep, only to wake up and realize when I looked down at the bottom bunk that my dad was no longer there.” Someone had come in during the night and took his dad off to the crematorium. And that morning he would smell the stench of his own father’s flesh.

Injustice! The horrors that took place there. Elie shared how on another occasion there were three people who were taken to the gallows, two adults and one child. And this child had the face of an angel. He could not understand the brutality of it. What they would do when they would hang people on the gallows is they would make all the people in the concentration camp line up and then walk in single file past the gallows. And they would have to look directly into the faces of those who had just died, knowing that if they did not follow the rules that would be their destiny also.

And as Elie described that moment of walking in this line, he said, “Then came the march past the victims. Two men were no longer alive, their tongues were hanging out, swollen and bluish, but the third rope was still moving. The child, too light, was still breathing. And so he remained for more than a half hour lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes. And we were forced to look at him at close range. He was still alive when I passed him. His tongue was red, his eyes not yet extinguished. Behind me, I heard someone say, ‘For God’s sake, where is God?’ And from within me, I heard a voice answer, ‘Where is He? This is where, hanging here from this gallows.’ In other words, God is dead. Elie went on to say, “That night the soup tasted of corpses.” From Elie Wiesel’s book, ‘Night.’

We live in a world that is filled with injustices. Injustices of the sex trade, injustices of babies living in a womb that are no longer protected in their safest place in their mother’s womb. It is a world with injustices where there is slavery that takes place in certain portions of the world. A world where people are brutalized and beaten and we see it on TV as people jump on people and beat on them. And sometimes we see the world we live in and questions can arise like, ‘God, where are you?’ ‘You seem so silent.’ ‘You seem like a shy, distant, detached God.’ ‘How can you say you care, God, when all of this is before our eyes?’

And maybe that is the way you have felt before. Wondering where in the world is God. This question in the midst of injustice has been around since the beginning of time. And it grew more sophisticated with the rise of modern philosophy. Like the Scottish Philosopher, David Hume, who would say “there is no way there can be a God with so much evil.” Or the philosopher Atheist J. L. Mackie who died in 1981 who said, “God and evil, they cannot simultaneously exist, because if there is a good god, he would never allow for this kind of atrocity.”
Or the Four Horsemen of the New Atheism movement, a form of Atheism that has grown much more vitriolic than earlier Atheism because now this type of Atheism, the face of it says, “Religion is the problem with this world.” The late Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett and the well-known, notorious Richard Dawkins in his book, ‘The God Delusion’ would write in his book, “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.” That is a mouthful by somebody who struggles with God, and whether He is just.

Well, maybe you are sitting in the audience today or in the Venue, and maybe you have come in and you have struggled in your life wondering, ‘you want me, Christians, to believe in God. How, in the midst of this world can I do so?’ Well, what I want to contend for you today is that I realize, and I concede, that there are some hard questions to answer.

But I want us to take a look at a prophet in the Old Testament by the name of Habakkuk. And Habakkuk struggled himself with the ‘why’ question. But what is neat about this book is he lives in a time as a pre-exilic prophet before Judah goes into Babylonian exile in 586 BC. And as a pre-exilic prophet, he saw the injustices surrounding him. And the ubiquitous evil that was so transparent. And he wondered when God was going to mete out His justice as he had to eyewitness so many horrific atrocities.

And Habakkuk would move in the book from Chapters 1 and 2 from feeling God forsaken and things would shift to becoming God enthralled. And that is what we want. We want you to be able to shift from feeling God forsaken to being God enthralled. And this is the story of Habakkuk, this prophet that existed many, many years ago. The book would have been written sometime around 608 to 605 BC. And this is no doubt a time when the nation of Judah is dying due to debauchery. They are dying because they love their sin to death. They are killing themselves in their divine detachment as they take on life according to their own shape. And the way that life begins to morph them is a character of evil in its worst form.

And so I invite you to the book of Habakkuk to take a look at how we can see a book where God has revealed an ominous threat that sits in the horizons waiting. Because as you read Chapter 1, Habakkuk raises questions about why God is staying silent, why He is not doing something about the injustices that are taking place in Judah. And then when God answers him, it goes from worst to miserable as God says He is going to raise up the Chaldeans, or the Babylonians, and they are going to come in and Judah is going to experience His justice at their hands. And Habakkuk thought boy, I
was having a hard time understanding you, God, why you are staying silent and not dealing with the sins of Judah, but how in the world are you going to use a country far more wicked to come in and chastise Judah? And Habakkuk was scratching his head.

Now the Babylonians were being led by Nebuchadnezzar and he was a ruler who was fierce, who was taking over many different lands, and Judah just happened to be next. Their judgment was imminent. And there is this element where God is just going to allow the Babylonians to do what they are doing. But here is the deal; they will have their own judgment too. It is not God doing it, but evil is running its course and He allows them to do what they are doing, and then it will be a form of judgment. As they work out this evil, He lets them continue to conquer these different lands.

The first thing I want to share with you though, is when you think about this question, ‘God, I don’t understand.’ I don’t understand why my bank account runs dry. I don’t understand why I have been unemployed so long. I don’t understand why my spouse doesn’t love me anymore. I don’t understand why my child is so rebellious. I don’t understand you, God.

Well, first, when you fail to understand God’s ways, remember that you are finite. That is to say, remember that you are limited, that you have a myopic scope when it comes to understanding the world at large. In the book of Habakkuk, we see in this little book in Chapter 1 and verse 12 that he says, “Are you not from everlasting?” Now this is the question that Habakkuk raises because many will believe that religion is inimical to society. They can’t be together.

And here is one of the things that Habakkuk is going to do in this moment. He realizes as he is stuck in his faith, as the torrent of evil continued to rush around him, what he says to God is, “Are you not from everlasting?” That is a great declaration. What he is saying is that he realizes that his scope is limited. He realizes his own sense of finitude. He realizes that God is an infinite God and that He has a perspective that he does not. But he would like to have God’s perspective.

You see this statement reveals faith in the midst of his confusion. What is going on feels like an enigma. He is stuck in the middle of a conundrum. This is mysterious, and Habakkuk wants to know how he can grasp what is taking place. And he is basically saying ‘will you elucidate this situation, will you explain, will you expound on what is taking place.’ So Habakkuk wants more insight in the midst of his pain.

He stands confused. He sees no rhyme or reason, God, why first of all He let all of this sin go on in Judah. And then there is even worse no rhyme or reason for why He would use Babylon to chastise them. So Habakkuk is confused.
Have you ever been confused by God? Ever felt confused about the ways of God? Do you ever kind of just feel like saying, ‘come on, God, this is a cop out, to say my ways are higher than your ways.’ That is too easy. I need to know. Right? I need an answer that is legit. So we sometimes stare out at life and we see all these questions. And there are moments in life where questions harass us. Have you been harassed by questions? Have you felt like you are God forsaken? Have you felt lonely? Have you felt as though God has abandoned you? Have you felt as though God does not care? Well, that is kind of what Habakkuk feels.

But he remembers that he is finite. He gives God the benefit of the doubt. He sets off on the right foot. And I think it is important for all of us to remember that our perspectives, our scope, our understanding is narrow. We don’t serve an aquarium God who sits in a glass tank above just directing our every wish. No, He is a God at times where His presence will overwhelm you with power and you will fall to your face and worship. And then there are other times He can feel so far away that you will stand on the tips of your toes reaching for Him and waiting to hear from Him only to hear silence.

Secondly, when you fail to understand God’s ways, remember that He is good. Look with me if you will in verse 12 again, “Are you not from everlasting?” Okay, He is an everlasting God, He is an eternal God and He is all knowing. “O Lord my God, my Holy One. You who are of pure eyes than to see evil.” So Habakkuk says this great statement, “My Holy One.” In other words, all this is evil and he is tempted to think ‘are you unjust’ but he sets off and says you are “My God, my Holy One.” And we see a great declaration of faith in the midst of his questions.

A lot of people treat God as if He is guilty until proven innocent. Habakkuk is a faithful prophet. But he is not a prophet who doesn’t struggle with his own set of doubts. He is a prophet who is a philosopher. A philosopher is a person who asks the ‘why’ questions. A pragmatist is a person who asks the ‘how’ questions. Habakkuk is a philosopher. See, some of you if you are philosophically inclined, you will eat up a message like this because you are thinking keep talking, Bobby, because I struggle with these kind of questions. If you are a pragmatist you might be thinking hey, what is the big deal? God’s ways are higher than ours so enough is enough. I get it, dude. I trust God. Just show me how to live in this world.

Do you see the difference? And some of you are both. I started out in my faith as a pragmatist and I wanted to know ‘how’ to live my life. My life was broken, it was messed up. I had screwed my life up not living for God. And I just wanted some ‘how.’ Just show me how to do this thing called life. Now I am in this place where I ask lots of ‘why’ questions. And my shifting is very philosophical in its approach.
And so here is what I want you to understand. Habakkuk recognizes that God is good. And this again reveals faith in the midst of the confusion. He is not accusing God of injustice. He is just perplexed by what seems to be unjust. And he is honest and he is vulnerable before his maker. And he says, “My Holy One.” He is saying that he doesn’t get it.

Now here is one thing I want to share with you to consider. We often talk about the problem of evil, this thing that philosophers refer to as Theodicy. But I think that there is a problem that is even deeper than this that we should consider. We are often surprised by this problem of evil, but why aren’t we more surprised by the problem of good? There is this problem of good. In other words, in light of our human natures, in light of how fallen we are, how stricken by sin we are, why is there so much good? We talk about injustices and granted there are a lot of them. But let’s face it; all of us who have lived long enough have experienced some injustice. But most of us if we are honest have probably experienced a long more good than injustice. And we have this problem of the good. In light of who we are, why is there so much good? And what I want to contend is it is the generous grace of God. It is the Omni benevolence of God at work in our lives that restrains us in His goodness. From fully expressing who we are He allows us to see a little bit of who He is in the good. But left to ourselves, in our freedom, in our will, we will destroy.

Some of you may be thinking, man, I don’t believe that, I just don’t believe it. That is because you are created in the imago Dei, the image of God. You are hardwired by Him. Don’t be surprised when you see non-believers doing good things. They could never do good without God, but they could do good without believing in God because they are created in His image. And the moral law is built within; we are hardwired with a sense of right and wrong. We know this. There is a universal standard in place. There is this common creed you could say that we share together. This togetherness that we have when it comes to morality. Sure it’s nuanced in some of the miniscule areas but all in all we agree that killing is wrong. All in all we agree that rape is wrong. But the good that you see is because we are created in God’s image not because we are good in and of ourselves. So consider the problem of good the next time you consider or ponder the problem of evil.

So this is what Habakkuk does. He calls God, “My Holy One.” And he says, “We shall not die.” In other words, Judah is not going to be completely extinguished. God is going to leave a remnant of the Jews. He says, “O Lord, you have ordained them as judgment and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.” Habakkuk gets it that they are going to be judged. But a remnant will be preserved.

Third, when you struggle to understand God, when you fail to understand His ways, pray through your questions. I talked about this idea last week of setting your
questions to prayer. And we are going to dig into that a little bit more. We are going to do a little bit more exploratory work around this. Habakkuk starts off in a little compliment in verse 13 and then he raises his questions. “You who are of pure eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong.” So first of all God doesn’t have eyes. That is anthropomorphic language. That is language that uses human descriptions to understand God. But God is spirit. God doesn’t have physical eyes. He is spirit. But the authors will use this anthropomorphic, this human like language. And it is relational language that helps us to grasp and to understand God.

“You who are of pure eyes than to see evil.” Now Habakkuk is not saying that God doesn’t see the evil. God is all knowing. But he is saying you who are of pure eyes to condone it. You don’t condone evil. In other words, you will ultimately be just but why not now? Why not now? “Why do you look idly?” He is saying God is sitting still. Unbuckle your seat belt. “Why do you look idly at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?” Are you going to sit silent when this happens? Are you going to not deal with Babylon then? You are going to deal with Judah through Babylon, but will you ultimately deal with Babylon?

Absolutely. You are going to see the woes that are going to come to Babylon as we shift to the next chapter in the upcoming weeks. So set your questions to prayer. Pray through them. I think it is important for us. Even Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is honest and He takes on humanity when He says, “Is there any other way?” This was going to be brutal. There was a lot of injustice coming His way. And He asks if there is any other way. “Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.” And this humanity that He took on in the incarnation, when He became flesh, raises the questions up in prayer.

I believe it is a sad thing that many people grew up feeling like they could never ask questions. They were told to just shut up and believe. You just have to have faith, that is all it is about, just faith, faith, faith. I think that is sad because you want to know what happens? Questions can torment you, can’t they? All of a sudden you begin to sit in a church and you have these questions and you feel these doubts looming large. And you begin to feel inauthentic. You feel like, man, I have all these things but I am not allowed to talk about what I am feeling. I am not allowed to ask big questions. Or I will be accused of not having faith. And that is what people will say, you don’t have enough faith.

And what I want to say is I think that that does a real disservice to people, to leave them in turmoil. You know you take boiling water and if you just keep a lid on that it just starts shaking a little bit, it gets disturbed. And I believe that questions will haunt you unless you have someone to talk to. And that is why pastors need to be as equipped as possible. They will never know everything but they should keep constantly learning.
And people sometimes think I am crazy when I want to go on to school and get another doctorate. But I want to be the most equipped I can possibly be in leading this flock. And I believe we live in a melting pot culture of beliefs. I believe our culture is completely confused. And you may say, but Bobby, you are busy and you have a lot of work going on. And I get that. But I can manage my time, and Monday is my Sabbath. A lot of guys like to go out on their Sabbath to play golf and shoot baskets. I am a weirdo; I like to sit around and I teach my son logic and apologetics and then I work on my PhD. I enjoy that and that is my downtime, studying philosophy. That gives me renewed energy.

Now there are a lot of questions that we have and I want to say that you will be in agony if you do not find people that you can talk them through with. And I want to encourage you. Listen to the ‘One Minute Apologist,’ we have almost 400 videos that we have done. Talk to people who are equipped. Make sure that you wrestle through things. Pray and talk, because here is the deal. What if your questions that you don’t feel like you are allowed to ask or even bring up to God makes you feel as though your intimacy has been crushed? You don’t feel close to Him anymore. Now you have too many questions. What if God wants you to take those questions to Him in prayer and it is through the questions that you raise in prayer that intimacy is cultivated.

And I want to tell you that you have permission to take your questions to God in prayer. And then intimacy will be there. And you will know Him more deeply. And maybe you won’t always get the answers you want, Habakkuk didn’t, but you will get faith and you will get His presence. You will get an ability and strength to trust. Those would be some things I would encourage you to consider. Set those questions to prayer.

Habakkuk is saying God; your silence is beginning to look a lot like your approval. He was saying God, you are not doing anything and it looks like you are approving. What is going on? But then he gives God the benefit of the doubt.

Now I shared with you Epicurus, who lived about three hundred years before Christ, who was a Greek philosopher, and how he began to talk through these ideas about evil and God and how can they work together. And I shared with you some steps that people will take. They will say if God is all good, He will get rid of evil. If God is all powerful, He can get rid of evil. The Atheists will contend that evil still exists, therefore God is not good.

And some might say well He is a malevolent God, He is an evil God, and He is not good. That is why evil is here. Others will say, you know what, God is a good God, but they will limit His power, they will say He is not all powerful. And as a Christian we believe that God is good and that He is all powerful. But His timing in getting rid of evil
and His timing for justice is something that we have to trust Him to know best and we need to learn to wait for His timing.

God critics will say how could a good parent allow a child to be abused? I mean that makes good sense when you hear that, right? Like, if someone were to do anything to my child, wouldn’t I immediately jump in if I had any decency and protect my child. And aren’t we God’s children? Why does He let us writhe in our wounds and our suffering and not immediately step in? Well, first of all God has created us in a world with free will. He warned from the beginning that the day you eat of that tree you will die. We rejected Him and the great hound of Heaven has been pursuing us all through Scripture. One thousand one hundred and eighty nine chapters in the Bible and the hound of Heaven is in pursuit. But because we are free creatures and because there is free will, that means we have the problem of evil that happens because we live out and do evil things.

But not only that but God, unlike myself, knows the future. And God knows the greater good that can come out of even the momentary evils. He can see the future. Have you ever known anyone who goes through something atrocious and they would never condone the atrocious act they experienced, but they would later say that something deep happened in my life. A sort of virtue was formed. In one of my ‘One Minute Apologists’ I share some thoughts out of my own reminiscing and my own thinking about how even in the midst of evil, good can be shown about God. Check this out.

“Welcome to the One Minute Apologist. Apologetics seek to give credibility answers to curious questions, to give a defence. How can evil reveal God’s greatness? You have probably heard the statement before, If God is good, why is there evil?

But here is a twist. Can evil demonstrate something beautiful about the greatness of God? Indeed while many can picture a musical Narnia stain free from sin, few can digest a good loving God who has allowed our world to be permeated with evil. While an evil world tarnished by sin exposes our depravity, with God it provides a greater opportunity for certain attributes of His to be revealed that otherwise would have remained concealed. For instance, because we live in a fallen world, we are able to experience God in a way that would be impossible had there been no fall at all.

As evil as the fall was, it has afforded us the opportunity to experience God’s grace, mercy, forgiveness, and unconditional love. Had there been no such thing as sin, we would have never understood the length of God’s endless love, now would we understand the depth of God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness. Those attributes are highlighted against our sin. Without sin, what need is there for grace, mercy and forgiveness?
Furthermore if sin never entered the world, how would we really know that we are loved unconditionally? Perhaps we were loved because of our perfections, but God’s love is deeper, richer and more mature. And it is highlighted against the black backdrop of our depravity.

Let us not forget that the greatness of God was revealed most splendidly at the cross where Jesus Christ looked evil in the face and saw our sins and demonstrated through His death that we are loved unconditionally by a gracious, merciful and forgiving God, we like to call Yahweh.”

This visceral reaction that we feel to life’s injustices, if you weren’t created in the image of God, you wouldn’t feel that. The reason that you sense that is because you are partaking with God in Holy angst. That is what is going on. You would not feel that sense of disgust if you were the mere product of evolution. If you just evolved from some primordial soup you would not feel Holy angst, if you were not created in the image of God. And the very fact that you feel Holy hauntings when you see injustice around you is because you are shaped by God in His image and you are reflecting something about Himself that says it is wrong. The only difference between you and Him is we don’t understand all His ways, and He is God and we are not.

But we often complain about why God would allow so many injustices to go on and we do the same thing. We sit passively in the midst of so much injustice and we don’t take a stand, we don’t pray, we don’t speak out. We don’t say anything. Many Atheists go God is evil and if He created this world why would He allow so much evil to happen.

You know what question I would ask if you were an Atheist? Do you plan on having kids some day? Well, why in the world would you have kids and bring them into this world of evil then? If you are accusing God of creating this world and putting us into this world of evil, why would you have kids then? Because you believe that you would want them to have an opportunity for the good. And God wants us to experience the good; He wants us to experience Him and to know Him in a rich relationship.

Carrying on we see a description of the Babylonians, this evil, iniquitous nation. Look at verse 14, “You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.” In other words the Babylonians come in and they just take everyone captive. “They bring all of them up with a hook. He drags them out with his net. He gathers them in his dragnet.” Now, the Assyrians first adopted this practice. And the Assyrians are the ones that took the Northern Kingdom Israel into captivity in 722 BC.

And this idea has been depicted on ancient artwork where you see people being taken off into captivity with hooks through their lips. So they would take a hook and they would put it through their lips and they would attach it to a rope and there would be a
long line of victims. And each victim would have a hook in their lip with a line connecting to another victim. And you can see this on ancient art. And you can see how this affirms how Habakkuk is accurately recording history and what took place. And they would yank them as they walked them. This is how brutal the Babylonians were. And again this started with the Assyrians.

Not only that, they had these dragnets where they would take large nets and they would throw people in them by bundles. And then they would drag them away as they are literally screaming in pain being dragged along on bumpy ground. The Babylonians treated people like fry or fish. And Habakkuk is asking God why He isn’t like a mother Tilapia. If you know anything about Tilapia, what the Tilapia does when the fry are in danger is the mother looks around and if she sees that there is another fish coming she will open her mouth so that the fry can go into her mouth for safety. She will then look around and when it is safe to let the fry out, she opens her mouth again. So Habakkuk is asking God why won’t He cover us. What is going on?

So it is interesting. Habakkuk wants God’s justice, but he wants it his way. He doesn’t want the brutal Babylonians; he knows what they do to captives. And he says this in the last part of verse 15, “So he rejoices and he is glad.” The Babylonians are so brutal and so indifferent that they do all this evil to people and then they rejoice about it. They laugh. It is like throwing babies up in the air and using them as target practice for machine guns. They treated humans as mere fry.

And here is what I want to say. The Christian worldview like no other worldview provides dignity to the human race. The reason the world needs this Christian message is because this Christian message knows how to glorify God, it knows how to bring a sense of togetherness between God and man through what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross. And not only that, because we are created in the image of God, we realize that our fellow human being has a sense of dignity.

Hitler’s vision fits Atheism. Kill off those who are getting in the way of the best genetics. That was their worldview. Survival of the fittest. Peter Singer, the philosopher, the ethicist at Princeton, he is all for killing off those who are older and killing off the mentally retarded. When you have an Atheistic worldview and you don’t recognize every human being who is stamped with dignity, then you end up with things that take place like the Third Reich. And as Christians, the Christian worldview is the worldview that would allow everyone to be treated with a sense of justice.

Has the church got it wrong? You better believe it. There were seasons where the church was wrong on slavery, there was a season where they had the Salem Witch Trials and there was a season for The Crusades. And the church needs to repent of its own atrocities. But that is not God. And we have to understand the Lord and His ways.
Not only that but the Babylonians worshipped these nets. Verse 16, “Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet, for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.” They are living off the people that they have captured. And then Habakkuk asks the questions, “Is he to keep on emptying his net, God, and mercilessly killing nations forever? When will you deal with the Babylonians then?”

This leads to my final point. When you fail to understand God, determine to wait patiently on Him. Verse 1 of Chapter 2, “I will take my stand at my watch post and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me and what I will answer concerning my complaint.” So Habakkuk has prayed, he has lifted up his complaint, and now he sees himself as kind of going into a time of waiting on God. He is going to wait, he is going to trust.

I love this little book. It has been such a blessing to me in my studies. It is called ‘The Triumph of Faith in Habakkuk,’ by Donald Gowan. It is an old little book, but it is rich with insight. He says, “Sometimes men such as Job and the author of Ecclesiastes have been called the sceptics of the Old Testament because of the way they have challenged the orthodoxy of their day. And if that is an appropriate label for them, it could be applied to Habakkuk as well. But if we use the word sceptic of these men we must make it clear that it means they are questioners, and not men without faith.

For most people scepticism, doubt of any kind connotes unbelief. And this has led many of faithful Christians to fear questions. To be unwilling to bring to light the unresolved issues that lie somewhere inside and to bring them to God asking help in finding the truth.

But I say scepticism is not to be feared for as George Adam Smith wrote, The attitude of the greatest sceptics is not only one of earnestness and sincerity, but of recognition of duty toward the truth. They do not give up and say there is no truth, or the truth can never be found. Rather, like Habakkuk, they climb to the watchtower to strain every level of their intellects in search of the truth.

The presence of those great questioners in the Bible, Job, Habakkuk, the author of Ecclesiastes, Jeremiah, ought to teach us that God is by no means displeased with those who question Him.”

I talk about this idea of antagonistic questioning and authentic questioning, or sceptical questioning or sincere questioning. Be authentic, be sincere. Gowan goes on to say on another page, “The doubter, the one who has problems with what to believe and why; maybe Habakkuk is included here, and Job and the author of Ecclesiastes have some claim to belong.
How many people in the church today belong with this group of doubters? We can only guess, but we do encounter someone now and then who will confide his problems to us, and we discover that there are people deeply troubled about what they can honestly believe. People who must be intellectually straight with themselves and cannot accept self-deception. And yet some of them in spite of their difficulties, they do not throw it all over. They are intelligent enough and honest enough to know they have not proved there is no God or disproved the message of the gospel, even though there is much they are unsure of.

And so they hold on, they continue to be faithful through the dry periods when most of life seems hollow and there is no joy in it. I believe God also justifies the doubter for his faithfulness."

The word doubt means to be in two minds. Doubt is not the opposite of faith, unbelief is. To be in doubt is to be in the center place, in the intermediate place between unbelief and faith. And the next book that I want to write is called ‘Doubting Toward Faith.’ How you can doubt towards faith, because that is what Habakkuk does. His questions are there and in the end his faith is strengthened.

Well, we have learned about some interesting stuff. Habakkuk’s question will be answered soon. The Babylonians will be dealt with and Judah will be dealt with. Habakkuk recognizes that God is still good, God is still holy, but he doesn’t have God all figured out. And I want to say if we can point forward to realize that Habakkuk couldn’t see what was coming in the way that we can see what has come. And that is Jesus. And God sent Jesus as a tremendous act of generosity to humanity by having Him come and die on the cross for our sins. And at the cross ultimate injustice and grace meet. As God is crucified in the flesh, the injustice of injustices, meets grace on the cross. Where Jesus Himself understood injustice, as He says, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Yet He realizes on the cross that that is the only place where injustices could ultimately be dealt with.

And we see through the cross that God allowed evil to get so grotesque so that against that backdrop we could see how great His love is. There is no one out of reach of salvation. If Adolph Hitler would have called on the Lord Jesus Christ, God would have saved him. And what you see as the worst of all evils, you also see as the greatest of all grace, the love of all loves. So the cross provides a wider view of God’s grace. And nothing resolves like Christianity. And I would encourage you to realize that Jesus cares a lot about injustice. That is why He died on the cross for our sins. Let’s pray.

Father, I thank you for your Scriptures. I pray that your word will resonate. I pray that you will change lives. I pray that if there is anyone here today that doesn’t know you that in the quietness of their heart they will pray: Jesus, I want to follow you.
I don’t understand everything about you. I know that in a world where there are free creatures, there is going to be great evil. But I know that in this world of great evil you have demonstrated your great love by dying on a cross for our sins. Please forgive me. Thank you for rising from the dead. There is our hope. Help me to live for you forevermore. In Jesus’ name. Amen.