

HABAKKUK

HOW GOD DEALS WITH A WAYWARD NATION

Summer, 2004

KEY VERSE: "Oh, Lord, now I have heard our report, and I worship you in awe for the fearful things you do. In this time of our deep need, begin again to help us, as you did in years gone by. Show us your power to save us. In your wrath, remember mercy."

THEME: The just shall live by faith.

OUTLINE:

- I. Habakkuk's questions 1:1-17
 - A. Question about God's concern 1:1-11
 - 1. Why doesn't God do something? 1:1-5
 - 2. "I will use the Chaldeans" 1:6-11
 - B. Question of methods: "why does God use wicked men?" 1:12-17
- II. God's answers 2:1-20
 - A. The prophet waiting 2:1
 - B. The Lord responding 2:2-20
 - 1. The significance of the reply 2:2-3
 - 2. The central truth for believers 2:4
 - 3. The consequences of the truth for unbelievers 2:5-20
 - a. Woe to the greedy 2:5-8
 - b. Woe to the complacent 2:9-11
 - c. Woe to the violent 2:12-14
 - d. Woe to the shameless 2:5-7
 - e. Woe to the idolaters 2:18-20
- III. Habakkuk's prayer 3:1-19
 - A. The Lord's power 3:1-16
 - 1. A call for mercy 3:1-2
 - 2. Power in nature 3:3-11
 - 3. Power over nations 3:12-16
 - B. The prophet's faith 3:17-19
 - 1. Confidence in spite of circumstances 3:17-18
 - 2. Confidence because of God 3:19

CONTENT

The book of Habakkuk gives the account of a spiritual journey, telling of one man's pilgrimage from doubt to worship. The difference between the beginning of the book and the end is striking. If the heart of the gospel is change and transformation, the book of Habakkuk demonstrates evangelical renewal.

At the center of the book stands the clear credo: "The just shall live by faith."

To New Testament writers like Paul, this statement of confident faith becomes demonstration of the power of the gospel to give assurance of eternal salvation.

For Martin Luther, it became the watchword of the Reformation.

What happens when God's people neglect His Word?

What happens in a nation when men run from knowing God?

What happens in the life of a church when the Word of God loses center stage and is given a minor part?

What happens to you when day after day you neglect to spend time alone with God in His Word?

When you neglect the Word of God, does it make any difference in your life?

THIS STUDY WILL LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENED IN ISRAEL AND MAKE THE OBVIOUS COMPARISONS TO OUR LIVES AND OUR NATION TODAY.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding Habakkuk's historical setting is vital, especially if you are unfamiliar with Israel's history. There is much from the Old Testament that we can apply to our own lives.

I Corinthians 10:11, in reference to Israel, says, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come".

Read Malachi 3:6 and record what you learn: _____

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

After the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel was split into two kingdoms: the northern was composed of ten tribes and was called Israel. The Northern Kingdom went into idolatry immediately after it split from the other two tribes and fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The Southern kingdom was composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It is often called simply Judah, and its capital was Jerusalem.

At the time Habakkuk was written, the Northern Kingdom was already in captivity. Habakkuk prophesied sometime between 621 B.C. and 609 B.C. which was before the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom. The Babylonian captivity started in 605 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and took a handful of nobles and princes to Babylon. Daniel was in the group.

Then in 597 B.C. when King Jehoiachin rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem and took ten thousand captive. Among that group was Ezekiel. The final siege and destruction of Jerusalem happened in 586 B.C. when the city and the temple were destroyed.

Nineveh, where Jonah prophesied, fell to the Babylonians about 612 B.C., just as Nahum had predicted. By this time, the Assyrians, who captured the Northern Kingdom, had declined as a dominant world power.

Habakkuk, a contemporary of Jeremiah, probably lived during the time of King Josiah and experienced the revival which occurred under him. Jeremiah 1:1-3 tells us that

Jeremiah prophesied to the Kingdom of Judah during Josiah's reign through the exile of the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. This is the exile Habakkuk referred to when he wrote, "I must wait quietly for the day of distress".
(3:16)

Has there ever been a time when you questioned God?

Maybe you found yourself in a trial that you NEVER DREAMED could happen to you. Maybe you cried for help, and it seemed God didn't hear. You weren't delivered. You suffered.

When you watch the evening news or pick up the newspaper, do you wonder, "Where is God? If He is God and in charge of this universe, why does He allow the world to continue on its course of self-destruction? Why doesn't He put an end to all the cruel and bizarre things happened in our society?"

Do you know about something that has happened to a child of God that seemed so unjust, so evil that you doubted God? In the secret part of your mind, have you wondered how God could allow such things to happen to those who belong to Him? Maybe you don't allow yourself to verbalize such a question because it seems unholy. But have you ever wondered, "Why does God allow bad things to happen?"

A friend of mine was raped; my father died; in many countries, countless Christians suffered for their faith, living on almost nothing and enduring the ravages of malnutrition, beatings and hard labor. Others were committed to psychiatric institutions and subjected to all sorts of treatments simply because they refused to be silent about their faith in Christ. Children are aborted.
People lose their jobs. WHERE IS GOD?

These are tough question, aren't they? Skeptics delight in asking these questions. They are questions many of us would prefer to ignore or bury under weak and insufficient theological theories.

"Why does God allow bad things to happen?" It's a question that many who call Him Father want to avoid. It doesn't fit with our concept of God. We can't explain it from the Word. Are we afraid to ask these questions for fear that God won't have an answer? Are we afraid that if we find the answer, it will distort our view of God or make Him into someone we cannot explain or understand?

There are some who would have you believe that God, who is a God of love, mercy and compassion, does not have a thing to do with the evil that takes place in this world. But

if He doesn't, then what does that imply about His power, His authority, His involvement in the affairs of men?

Are these new questions which have never before troubled the heart of men? No, they are as old as human history, and they are the questions of Habakkuk, the prophet. They are the queries of his heart, and he asks them without shame or apology. And, rather than ignoring them, God has preserved His answers to Habakkuk, which are also His answers to us!

WHAT QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD HAVE YOU HIDDEN IN YOUR HEART? Write them in the space below; then see how God will answer them in the weeks to come.

We live in a world that is going the wrong way. Men have forgotten God. There is no fear of God before their eyes. In pride and arrogance they walk their own way, flaunting their sin, taking His name in vain. They refuse to blush and demean those who do. They scorn anything which would restrain them from pursuing their desires. They are their own god!

Where is God? Why does He allow such things? Why do the wicked continue? Why do the wicked prosper? Why do the righteous suffer? Why aren't the righteous delivered? Why doesn't God hear the prayers of His people?

This was the cry and dilemma of Habakkuk, and from Habakkuk's conversation with God, we will begin to find God's answers to our own dilemmas.

TO BEGIN THE STUDY

Make sure you read through the book of Habakkuk. It is very short, only 5 pages in my Bible. Before reading, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into the truth. We cannot understand and discern spiritual truths apart from His work in our lives. Just as Paul prayed in Ephesians 1:17, we need to ask the Lord for a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the true knowledge of Him.

The book is a conversation between the prophet and God.

1. Note who is speaking conversation shifts.
2. Note every question Habakkuk asks God.
3. How does the book begin and end? Note contrast.
4. How does Habakkuk's situation change at the end of the book?
5. What can you learn from what you have seen so far?

HOMEWORK

For next week, complete the questions above. Then find out all you can about what was going on in Israel under King Josiah and during the time of Jeremiah.

Find out who the contemporary prophets were.

Find out all you can about who Habakkuk was.

CHAPTER ONE

Have you ever thought of what it would be like to lose your freedom to some foreign power--especially a power which was not sympathetic to Christianity?

Habakkuk was distressed because the southern kingdom of Judah was threatened by a fierce and impetuous people called the Chaldeans, or Babylonians. In reality, the prevailing thought in Judah was that the Babylonians would **NEVER** rule over them.

Isn't this typical? People rarely think something like that will happen to the country in which they live. The Israelites didn't think it could happen in Jerusalem. They were God's elect nation. Jerusalem was the home of Solomon's magnificent temple. Who could be closer to the sovereign God than Israel.

To appreciate how the book of Habakkuk parallels our day, we must consider its historical context. Last week, we learned that Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah and the good King, Josiah. Today's study will look at the times of Josiah more specifically.

The story of Josiah is recorded in II Kings, chapter 22. This chapter opens around 622 B.C. One hundred years earlier, the Assyrians had invaded and captured the Northern Kingdom. Josiah had become king at the age of eight years. Yet, this was not a surprise to God! Nothing is a surprise to Him because He is the sovereign, omniscient ruler of the entire universe.

In 1 Kings 13:1-2, there is a prophecy that was given by a "Man of God" in about 930 B.C. regarding the birth of Josiah and the events that would take place in his lifetime. This was over three hundred years before Josiah was born! God calls into being that which does not yet exist. He moves in the affairs of mankind to perform His will and brings His desires to pass exactly as they are predicted. Why do we refuse to bow before Him and honor Him as God, King of kings, Lord of lords?

II Kings 22 focuses on the events that occurred in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign when he was twenty-six years old. The time would have been about 622 B.C. Judah went into captivity in 586 B.C. which was only thirty-six years later.

When Shaphan the scribe was sent to clean and repair the damages in the temple of God, Hilkiah the high priest, in the process of helping, found a copy of God's Word. The Word of God had been lost in the temple! What effect had this had on God's people? How is the Word of God lost in our churches today?

In II Kings 23:1-27, we read about how religious people live when they worship God without the knowledge of His Word: They fell into idolatry, worshipping Baal and Asherah (II Kings 23:4) They were also caught up in astrology.

Read II Kings 23:4-5 and Deuteronomy 17:2-7. Record what you learn:

Whenever you find idolatry, you will find immorality or some sort of sexual perversion. One follows on the heels of the other. II Kings 23:7 tells us that male cult prostitutes were in the house of the Lord; they were part of the immorality and perversion associated with Baal and Asherah worship.

The departure from the Word of God not only affected the morals of the people, but endangered the lives of the children. II Kings 23:10 tells of parents making children "pass through the fire" for Molech.

And human sacrifice was not the only perversion. Judah had become involved in the occult. Although strictly forbidden in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the people had turned to mediums and spiritists instead of consulting God. Behind mediums, spiritists, and astrology, you will find demons. (I Corinthians 10:19-20).

Look around you! Is it any different today? Has the United States always been this way? In forty short years, great changes have occurred in what is condoned in America. Why are we in such a state? because, as a nation, we have lost the Word of God.

WHAT PRIORITY DOES THE WORD OF GOD HAVE IN THE LIVES OF THE MAJORITY OF CITIZENS?

THE MAJORITY OF PASTORS?

THE MAJORITY OF CHURCH ATTENDERS?

HAVE YOU LOST THE WORD OF GOD?

What happened in Judah can happen again. It is the inevitable result of losing the Word of God. Over and over again, church history testifies to the effects of neglecting the Word. Nations have been turned around only when a reformer has discovered, and proclaimed the truths of God's Word for the people to hear.

Anguish struck Josiah's heart when Shaphan the scribe read aloud the Book of the Law that had been lost in the house of the Lord. King Josiah saw how far they had strayed from God's standard of holiness. Once Josiah heard God's Word, he understood the righteous wrath of God that had to be executed in holy judgment.

If God's Word has been lost in many churches, how can we even expect the world to be aware of the righteous commandments in the Word? Once people begin to study the Word, they discover how they have been deluded by men's arguments, philosophies and traditions. They realize that they've bought into human reasonings and fad teachings. They realize that our society has sold out to a psychology of self-preoccupation.

Are you able to quote and expound upon the latest Christian bestsellers, but not the Word of God? Without the plumbline of God's Word, we cannot perceive how far out of alignment we are from the truth. It is precisely this that Paul was speaking of in Colossians 2:1-23. Read this passage and note Paul's concern. _____

Ask God to search your heart and to show you have neglected the Word of God. Be honest and open before him as you ask Him to show you what has taken priority over His Word. Ask Him what you need to do. If you have given the Word its rightful place, spend time in worship and thanksgiving. Renew your commitment so that in everything the Word of God will have preeminence. Write down any new commitments that you have made.

HOMEWORK

Reread Habakkuk 1:1-11.
Think through the ramifications of Habakkuk's question in light of current events.
Record God's answer.

CHAPTER TWO

In light of what we have learned about the kingdom of Judah through our II Kings study of King Josiah, and our readings in Jeremiah, reread Habakkuk 1:1; 2:4

Have you ever been in such anguish, despair or confusion that you felt that you couldn't go on? Have you ever overwhelmed with grief? Have you been angry because of what was going on or because you could not control the situation? Have you been angry because of injustice or because what happened shouldn't have happened at all? Have you felt anger swelling up inside...maybe even anger with God?

How do you handle situations like these? How do you cope with these feelings? Do you survive and come out as a conqueror rather than a conquered one?

Christians are not exempt from feelings like these. Even the spiritually mature can encounter such experiences. But these situations don't have to capture us or cast us into a prison of despair. We can do what Habakkuk did!

When overwhelmed, Habakkuk embraced God. His very name means "one who embraces or caresses". Although Habakkuk's situation never changed as far as we know, he was a conqueror. He walked above his circumstances on the high ground of faith.

When God seemed to ignore the sin of Judah, Habakkuk didn't bury his frustration with God. He expressed his anguish with God's seeming silence over the iniquity he saw. He didn't hide his real feelings and questions under a disguise of spirituality. He didn't deny that they were in his heart. Rather, he brought it all out into the open and asked God some hard questions. Then, in faith, he embraced what he knew about His covenant-keeping God and his Word.

We need to do the same thing! We need to acknowledge where we are. God knows anyway! In faith, we need to embrace what we do know and understand about God. If you have felt that God hasn't heard your prayers, the study of Habakkuk will enable you to hear God's voice in a new way. God may not change your circumstances or remove your burden, but through His Word, He will bring you to the point where you can rejoice in Him and find Him as your strength.

It touched God's heart to have his son, Habakkuk, embrace Him in faith's love. In essence, Habakkuk said, "Father, I love You for who You are, not just for what You can do for me. I love You no matter what...and I will trust You. I know You love me."

We also need to learn to embrace God in unconditional love, pleasing Him with our faith.

Read Habakkuk 2:4. How does this parallel the doctrine of justification by faith?
Read the following New Testament scriptures:

Romans 1:16-17 _____

Galatians 3:10-11 _____

Do a word study of the word translated as "just" in Habakkuk 2:4. Record the results here: _____

It is the same word used to describe Yahweh in Lamentations 1:18 from which we get the song "Yahweh is Holy". Our justification through our faith in the redemptive work of Christ renders us also "tsaddiq" in the eyes of the Father.

Compare this state with that of Judah as described in Jeremiah 7:28. Notice the attitude of the people as described in the first part of this verse. How does this compare with the attitude of Habakkuk 2:17? _____

The second part of the Jeremiah 7:28 verse indicates that the truth has been cut off from the mouth of Judah. Reflect a bit on the biblical concept of Truth. Compare these concepts with Jesus' prayer for us in John 17:17. _____

How is our sanctification brought about by the Word? _____

How does the process of sanctification compare with the justification discussed above? _____

So that the faith of Habakkuk will become your declaration of faith, memorize Habakkuk 3:17-19.

CHAPTER THREE

Last week we looked at the sovereignty of God standpoint of trials that we go through. Review the following verses that show God's position:

Luke 22:31-32 _____

I Corinthians 10:13 _____

Romans 8:35-39 _____

Genesis 50:20 _____

Now, reread Isaiah 50:8-10. Notice the verses indicating that the "suffering servant" set his face like flint. Read the fulfillment of this prophecy in Luke 9:51. _____

What does the scripture mean when it says to "set your face"? Do a word study on this phrase and record your result here: _____

Does this apply to the sovereign will of God vs our wills?

In light of these aspects of God's sovereign will, how would you answer the following questions?

1. If God is sovereign, are men still responsible for what they do?
2. Why does a sovereign God allow men to do evil?

3. Why does God allow men to suffer because of the unrighteousness of others?

To begin to answer these questions, read Isaiah 45:5-7. These verses describe the rise of Cyrus, the king of Persians, who would be born 175 years later, from these verses, do you think that God holds men accountable for their evil actions, even if God has used them to accomplish His purpose? _____

God told Habakkuk that it was He who was raising up the Babylonians to correct Judah. Habakkuk 1:5-6, 12. But, even though God used them as His method of judgment. He would hold the Babylonians guilty.

In fact, in Habakkuk 2:6-20, God lists judgments that are going to come on evil people, the Babylonians especially.

List these judgments here: _____

Look at the parallel in Matthew 18:7 _____

Also look at the parallel in John 19:10,11. _____

These verses tell us that those who betrayed Jesus and sentenced Him to death would be held accountable. Even though His death was within the Father's sovereign will, and Jesus had set his face to carry out that will, those responsible would be held accountable.

Reread Isaiah 45:5-7. Who causes well being and creates calamity? _____

Remember that there is a purpose in what God is doing, whether we see it or not. Nothing is going to hinder God's plan for executing that purpose.

Read Isaiah 14:24,27. What is God's lesson for us? _____

God's sovereign will, and the fact that He causes all things to work together for good for His children does **NOT** mean that we are not accountable for our behavior. **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD NEVER LETS US OFF THE HOOK!**

It is important for us to remember that we are accountable for our actions. When some people learn about the sovereignty of God, they take the attitude, "what will be will be". With this attitude, some have excused their behavior on the basis of their misunderstanding of God's sovereignty.

Once you understand fully what the Bible teaches about the character and sovereignty of God, we can find calm in the center of life's storms. To understand that God rules over all--that there are no accidents in life, and that no tactic of Satan or man can thwart the will of God for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose brings great comfort.

Now read Romans 8:28-3 _____

How can you fit together what we have learned about the justification process (the just shall live by faith) and the sovereign nature of God? _____

When we can grasp the truth of how all things are working together for good to conform us to God's image, then in faith we can rejoice and give thanks in all things, knowing that this is the will of God in Jesus concerning us.

Read I Thessalonians 5:1 and record what you learn: _____

During your prayer time, take time to thank God for His sovereignty and your justification.

CHAPTER FOUR

For the past two chapters we have been looking at the aspects of ADONAI YHWH, and the sovereignty and eternal aspects of God.

Today's focus will be on ELOHIM, the creator aspect of God.

When Habakkuk was troubled with God's seeming deafness to his cries and agony, he remembered that the Lord was his Elohim. Habakkuk said, "Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One?" (Habakkuk 1:12).

Elohim, the Hebrew word for "God" in Habakkuk 1:12 is the name used for God in his role as Creator.

As we focus on God as Elohim, we are reminded in Hebrew 11:3 that "the world were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible"

God is the one who is in control, the one whose word is so powerful that it brought a universe into existence. If God, with a word, can create the universe, can He not also subdue all things by the word of His power when He is ready to do so?

Elohim created all things. "All things have been created by Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16). Because of this truth, "maybes" are not our rightful option. We are called to submission. No matter what happens, we need to say "Father, I exist because of You and for You. Therefore, not my will but Yours be done".

Would it do us any good to fight against God? To raise our fists in the face of Omnipotence is a frightening thing. Do we know how long we will live? Can we lengthen our life? Can we keep ourselves alive if Elohim decides to take away our breath? Can we determine our fate? If men say there is no life beyond the grave or that God doesn't exist, does that make it so?

The following scriptures show God's answers to these questions. Read them and record what you learn:

Psalm 103:19 _____

Revelation 4:11 _____

Psalm 139:13-16 _____

Job 12:10 _____

Hebrews 9:27 _____

Revelation 10:11-15 _____

Isaiah 66:24 _____

Now, take some time to reread Romans 11:33- 12:2 that we looked at before. What qualities of God has Paul discovered? What does this have for your life? _____

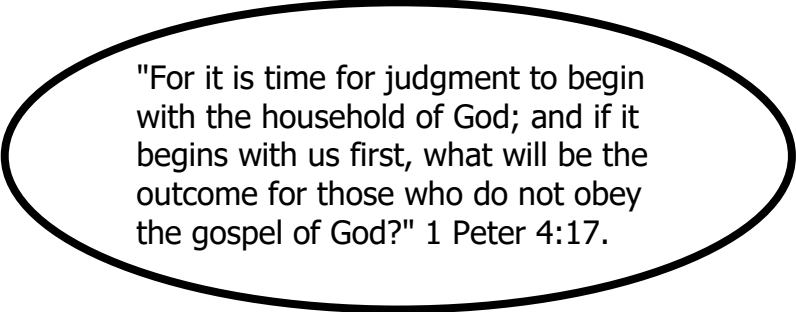
CHAPTER FIVE

Last chapter, we reviewed God as Elohim, the Creator. He is also the Holy One of Israel. This Habakkuk brought to God's remembrance when God informed him that He would judge Judah. When you are under spiritual attack, rehearse God's holiness. When things go wrong, human nature wants to blame God. But, can a holy God do what is wrong?

Holiness is total purity without any taint of evil or wrongdoing. What makes God holy? It is the summation of all of His attributes, making Him totally other than man. Because God is holy, He can do no wrong. If He did, he would not be holy. Therefore, whatever Habakkuk's conception of what God was doing in allowing evil to persist, he knew it could not contradict the truth he knew about God. And Habakkuk knew that God was holy! Habakkuk came to understand that he could not judge God as being unjust in what His sovereignty permitted. Neither can we.

While reminding God of who He is, Habakkuk saw that it was because of God's holiness that He was allowing the Babylonians to correct Judah. Reread Habakkuk 1:12 _____

God in His holiness may have to correct us even as He had to correct Judah.



"For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" 1 Peter 4:17.

Why did Habakkuk know that they would not die even though God would judge them in righteousness? _____

What did Habakkuk mean by the term "die"? Surely when the Babylonians went up against God's chosen in battle, people would die. _____

Although some died physically, as a nation, Habakkuk knew that Israel would not die. The nation would not be wiped out. Habakkuk knew that God was immutable; He would not change. Habakkuk knew that His God was a covenant-keeping God.

On the day that Abraham believed God, Abraham wanted assurance from God that he and his descendants would forever possess the land of Canaan. So Abraham asked God, "Oh Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it?" (Genesis 15:8)

Read God's response in Genesis 15:9-21 _____

Ask these questions:

1. Who passed through the pieces of animals? _____

2. What was Abraham doing? _____

3. What did God promise Abraham? _____

4. Where did the children of Israel live as slaves for 400 years and then depart with many possessions? _____

The Old Testament Hebrew word for covenant, beyrith, means a compact or agreement made by passing through pieces of flesh. To enter into a covenant was to enter into a solemn binding agreement for as long as the one who made the covenant lived.

When we read that God alone passed through the pieces in the image of a flaming torch and smoking oven, He was signifying that this was a covenant which would not be broken. On that day, God swore by Himself that the land would be Israel's forever.

Because God is a covenant-keeping God, He can neither lie nor alter words which have gone forth from His mouth. Israel will always remain a nation. Because Habakkuk grasped this by faith, he knew that they would not die. God would discipline them as a nation, but He would not exterminate them as a people.

Even before the final Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, God sent word through a letter from Jeremiah to those in exile, giving them this promise:

"When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill MY good word to you, to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare, not for calamity; to give you a future and a hope."

Jeremiah 29:10-11

Even though we might now understand why God allows bad things to happen to his people, do you think you can trust a covenant-keeping God? Have you stopped and thanked God that because you are His through the new covenant of grace, that the plans He has for YOU are plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give YOU a future and a hope?

Our hope is heaven. Our future is eternal life. We must choose to believe what He has promised.

CHAPTER SIX

During this study, we have seen that the refining of God can take the form of disappointments, rebukes, minor irritations, and major tragedies. We will see that the Refiner tests our faith to prove it – not so that we are discredited—but so that we can be qualified.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:27 and record what you learn about disqualification: _____

The word Paul uses here is adokimos, which means “not approved.” Adokimos is the negative of dokimos which is translated “testing” in James. Read James 1:2-3 and record what you learn: _____

A correct response to the Refiner’s fire produces endurance as we use self-control. Read 1 Corinthians 9:25 and record what you learn: _____

It is possible to resist the refining process. It is possible to fail to learn from troubles, trials, and discipline. The refining fire of God can burn, but the impurities are not released and removed. Instead, they are stubbornly clung to, no matter how hot the fire.

Read Jeremiah 6:29-30 and describe what can happen if the refining process is short circuited: _____

What does it mean to be disqualified or rejected? _____

Read the following verses and reflect further on the refining process of God:

Proverbs 17:3 _____

Proverbs 27:21 _____

Proverbs 10:20 _____

Psalm 12:6 _____

Zechariah 13:9 _____

Psalm 66:10 _____

God is the refiner; however, He is also completely trustworthy during our times of discipline and trial. Read Psalm 50:15. What is our part? What is God's part? _____

Life has been described as like a thick curtain hung across our way. The curtain recedes before us as we advance, but only one step at a time. We cannot see beyond that curtain and cannot know what one day or hour may bring into our lives. Sometimes unexpected or undesired events are revealed. Our hearts can be filled with anxiety, frustration, grief, and heartache. Can we really believe that the Lord's unfailing love surrounds us as we trust Him? (Psalm 32:10)

The question that Habakkuk had to answer is two-fold. We must ask ourselves the same questions:

1. Can you **trust** God's sovereignty. This means, is God really dependable when bad things happen or we are being disciplined.
2. Can **you** trust God's sovereignty? This means, do you have a relationship with God such that you can really believe He is with you in times of adversity? Can you believe He is with you even though you don't see any evidence of His presence and power?

Read the following passages. Particularly note their context, and then record what you learn:

Hebrews 12:11 _____

Genesis 40:14 _____

2 Corinthians 12:7 _____

Often it is more difficult to trust God than to obey Him. Habakkuk certainly found this to be the case. The law of God is readily recognized; His moral standards are clearly defined in the Bible and are rational and reasonable. Obeying God is accomplished by adhering to well-defined boundaries of God's revealed standards. Habakkuk knew that his nation had failed to do these things.

Habakkuk, on the other hand, was a godly man who had a real relationship with God. He had to work out the issues of trusting God, which seems to have no clearly defined boundaries at all. He had to have **FAITH!**

WHEN WE DISOBEY GOD, WE DEFY HIS AUTHORITY AND DESPISE HIS HOLINESS. Israel during Habakkuk's time had clearly done this.

WHEN WE FAIL TO TRUST GOD, WE DOUBT HIS SOVEREIGNTY AND QUESTION HIS GOODNESS. This is the issue that troubled Habakkuk.

In either instance, we are defiling God's character! In light of what Habakkuk learned, do you think God considers distrust as seriously as disobedience? _____

Read Psalm 78:19-22 and record what you learn: _____

Seeing circumstances through the eyes of faith helps us trust God. Just as the faith of salvation comes through hearing the message of the gospel, so faith to trust God in times of trouble and discipline comes from the Word of God. Read Romans 10:17 and record what you learn: _____

As the scripture is applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we experience the grace to trust.

We can be certain of the following:

1. **God is sovereign.** Read the following verses and record what you learn:

Lamentations 3:37-38 _____

John 19:10-11 _____

2. **God is infinitely wise.** Read the following verse and write your thoughts:

Romans 11:33 _____

3. **God is perfectly loving.** Describe your thoughts about this verse:

Lamentations 3:32-33 _____

In order to trust God's sovereignty, we must know Him in an intimate way. As we conclude this study, reflect on Psalm 9:30. Think of areas in your own life where trusting God is difficult. Write them down: _____

Habakkuk had to learn that God's discipline was for His glory and the good of Judah. As we learn more about God, we must ask the Holy Spirit to help us move beyond knowing facts about God to knowing God. Then we will be able to trust Him more completely, understanding that the just live by faith.

God's plan and His ways of working out His plan are frequently beyond our ability to fathom and understand. We must learn to trust when we don't understand. Jerry Bridges