

"THE REVIVAL WE NEED"

(Habakkuk Chapters 1-3)

Habakkuk was a prophet. It is the business of a prophet to speak to the people for God. It is the business of a priest to speak to God for the people. A prophet is not supposed to deal in pious platitudes nor perfumed phrases. It is his business to see the evils of his day and to point them out with words of warning to the people.

This prophet, tottering upon his staff, with white, flowing beard falling down upon his breast, looked through tear-stained eyes upon the times in which he was living, sought to describe the conditions and to prescribe the remedy. In these three chapters as we seek to apply their message to our own day we observe:---

I. An Awful Condition.

1. Political corruption (1:4)

There was great laxity in the administration of law. Legislatures were corrupt and legislators might be bought as bags of potatoes. The executive departments of the government were always going about with an out-stretched hand ready to receive any graft that might be placed there in. And not even the judicial department was free. There was corruption in the courts of the land.

(1) Violence was abroad

Practicing spoliation, causing distress, producing devastation, evoking strife and contention, and leading to deceit and treachery.

(2) Iniquity abounded

(3) The law of God was treated with disrespect.

(4) Human justice was perverted.

When criminals were brought to trial they could nearly always secure a verdict in their favor.

This condition distressed the prophet. He lamented over:---

a. The insecurity of property (vs 3b)

b. The strifes of parties and factions (3c)

c. Laxity in the administration of the law (4a)

d. The good suffering unjustly at the hands of the evil. (4b)

e. The openness and audacity of wrong-doers in their evil course.

There was no attempt at concealment or disguise, and no sense of shame

2. Social treachery and deceit (1:13)

The social condition of the times was characterized by treachery and deceit. Selfishness:---

(1) Practically ignored the rights of man as man.

(2) Assiduously worked to turn men to its own use.

(3) Greatly adored self on account of its success.

3. Business graft and profiteering (1:16)

The business conditions were marked by greed and graft and profiteering.

4. Drunkenness and licentiousness (2:5)

Personal conditions were drunken and licentious. Drunkenness is one of the most loathsome, irrational, and pernicious forms which such conditio can assume. Drunkenness puts one absolutely in the hands of Satan, to do whatsoever he wills-----lie, swear, rob, murder, and luxuriate in moral mud. This sin is the curse of America today. It fills:--

- (1) Our work-houses with paupers
- (2) Our hospitals with patients
- (3) Our jails with prisoners
- (4) Our mad-houses with lunatics
- (5) Our cemeteries with graves.

Wine deceives in its nature--it promises pleasure which it cannot give. Wine deceives in its effects--that it strengthens the system is a deception; it contains no nourishment for the body. That it enriches the national revenue is a deception. As an individual cannot drink himself prosperous, even so a nation cannot drink itself prosperous. Drunkenness itself is sin, and is the cause of other sins. Those given to it are sensual and licentious.

5. Domestic Infelicity and infidelity (2:5)

The domestic conditions were very unhappy and unsatisfactory.

6. Religious idolatry (2:18-19)

The religious conditions were extremely idolatrous. Religion was formal and ceremonial but lacked power and vitality.

- (1) They gave to the works of their own hands the devotion that belonged to God. Such works included wealth, fame, fashion, pleasure or power.
- (2) They looked to the works of their own hands for a blessing which God alone could bestow.

They expected these works to give them relief and render them happiness. They were crying for happiness to the objects which were incapable of yielding it. They were like devotees of Baal who cried all day long for help and no help came.

Could any condition be more terrible than this? Yet, we have practical the same condition existing in our midst today.

II. An Actual Cure

What was the remedy for such a condition?

As the prophet looked around he saw much for discouragement. As he looked within he found no help or hope. But as he looked up he found inspiration. What was the hope of a society so sordid and so sinful?

This prophet in order to find a remedy for these conditions did not wait on some legislature to secure a new law. He did not propose some new educational system. He did not seek to promote a better social order. He did not propose a new philosophy. He knew, as all of us should know, that there was no hope for man's redemption in any or all of these things put together. If man be redeemed from sin, ~~as~~ these things maybe a blessing to him but not without redemption. The only remedy for the conditions of his day, as for the conditions similar to these in any other day, including our own, was and is a revival of spiritual religion. And for this the prophet devoutly prayed, "O, God, will thou not revive thy work?"

That a revival of spiritual religion was the only hope for his day and for our day is attested by statesmen and statisticians, by educators and evangelists, by patriots and prophets, by priests and promoters. It would be easy to give many quotations from leading thinkers in all parts of the world and in all ~~spheres~~ ^{realms} and human activities to the effect that a revival of spiritual religion is the supreme need of the present hour. Take two for example:--

(1) The president of the American Banker's Association said to three-thousand of the nation's leading business men, assembled in National Conference, "Gentlemen, I do not know what your church religion is, but I advise you to go back to your home and give more of your time, more of your talent, and more of your money to your church. Your stocks and bonds and business and enterprises are stable in proportion as your church prospers."

(2) ~~One~~ ^{One} of the world's greatest political, scientific and statisticians has pointed out that it is not cheap labor which makes a people great and prosperous else China would be the greatest nation in the world. It is not scientific efficiency which creates the greatest benefits for mankind, else Germany would be the happiest people on the globe.

It is not national resources that produces greatness in a people, else Africa would be the mightiest nation in the world. He goes on then to point out that America has achieved its measure of greatness not by national resources nor by scientific genius, nor by cheap labors, but through spiritual ideals.

We need only to make a hurried survey of history to discover the fact that no other force in the world except spiritual religion can save a people or their civilization. Let's go on a little journey up the stream of human history to see whether or not this is true.

Our United States of America is still a young nation--less than 160 years old, just in early adolescence.

Journeying back up the stream of human history from America toward its source we come first of all to the European civilization. The European civilization began more than two-thousand years ago. Were we to travel out from Paris into the war-torn section of that beautiful land we would discover that its villages still lie desolate, its business institutions are destroyed, its industries are broken and the people discouraged. We would find that other European nations are likewise in great distress financially, socially, politically, and especially religiously. And yet, Europe had the finest scientific efficiency the world ever saw. But science without God produced a World War of destruction.

Journeying back again up the stream of human history we come to the Roman or Grecian civilization. We travel with the Apostle Paul along the Appian way into the imperial city upon seven hills. We see the ruins of Caracala's baths, and we look upon the Colosseum in its ^{gastly} appearance. We walk further into the city and stand in the midst of the Forum. On this spot the mightiest eloquence of all times poured forth its streams of influence, moving the people to peace or to war at the will of the orator. But now it is a broken, blasted set of ruins--the rendezvous of bats and owls. All of this, notwithstanding the fact, Roman jurisprudence is the foundation for the jurisprudence of all civilized nations. But mere law could not save the people.

Go ~~still~~ still further back and stand ~~upon~~ upon the Acropolis in Athens. There is the chief architectural triumphs of all the centuries in the Parthenon. Art and philosophy flourished here. And yet, at the present moment the

Acropolis with its magnificent columns stands a wreck. Art and philosophy did not save this civilization.

Traveling still farther up the stream of human history we come to the Assyrian civilization, and visit the little city Baalbek, just ~~upon~~ ^{beyond} the Lebanon Mountains from Beirut. We stand in the midst of the temple which represented the greatest religion of the day. This temple to the sun god, Baal, or the Roman Jupiter measured one thousand feet in length and seven-hundred and fifty feet in width. We stand among its ruins and observe that its foundation is forty feet above the earth. On this foundation stands six columns, the greatest in the world. They are each seventy feet high and seven and one half feet in diameter. They are crowned with a corone of fourteen feet of solid marble carved by the greatest genius of the day.

This temple is so magnificent that the greatest church building of America could be hid in one corner of it. In the foundation supporting these columns are two of the largest monoliths in the world. They are each sixty-four feet long, fourteen feet wide and twelve feet thick, weighing fifteen thousand tons. Engineers of today are yet in doubt as to how the people of the past managed to get these monoliths, ~~a mass of~~ ^{a mass of} stones from the quarry into this foundation. And yet, in spite of all this the Assyrian civilization is gone. An ornate, ~~form~~ ^{form} religion did not save them.

We travel still farther back the stream of human history and come to Egypt. It is here where the study of language began, where the ~~sciences~~ ^{sciences} were born, where civilization originated. We go on a journey out to the pyramids. Standing upon the corner of one of the pyramids which was the chief glory of this past civilization we see the swirling sands of the desert caught up by the wind and in the midst of them the poorest, most ignorant, most superstitious ^{people} in the world. The imperial powers of the Pharaohs did not save this civilization.

What does all of this teach us? It teaches us that:--

1. Scientific genius has not saved the European civilization.
2. Jurisprudence could not save the Roman civilization.
3. Art and philosophy could not save the Grecian civilization.
4. Mere ornate religions, form and ceremony could not save the Assyrian civilization.
5. Imperialism could not save the Egyptian civilization.

Neither could any of these, nor all of them put together save our civilization. These civilizations of the past are gone, not because they lacked any of these things in which men glory in this world, but because they lacked the one essential thing, namely, spiritual religion and unless we are able to maintain spiritual religion in our own civilization it will follow in the same course of all the past.

If we are to create and maintain spiritual religion we must have

1. Personal religion in the family
2. Personal Bible study
3. Personal service in the interest of the spiritual needs of others.
4. Personal Christian living.

III. An Absolute Certainty