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Devotional

## **In Wrath Remember Mercy**

When the nation of Israel had declined into a state of moral corruption and decadence, God called Habakkuk to be His messenger. This decline was due to the treacherous combination of material prosperity and idolatry.

As was true in Habakkuk's day, many fail to realize how dire the situation in our own society has become. With Habakkuk, we might be inclined to conclude that the wicked are prospering and appear to be gaining the upper hand.

The reality of a morally corrupt society brought Habakkuk to his knees, and he uttered a prayer that serves as a model for our prayer when we consider our own lands; the law is slackening, judgment is not going forth, the wicked are compassing the righteous, and wrong judgment is proceeding (Habakkuk 1:4). As with Habakkuk, our prayer must

be prompted by God's speech, for a revival of God's work, and for God's mercy in the midst of judgment.

### **A Prayer Prompted by God's Speech**

Habakkuk prayed because he heard God speak. So, it must be with us. True prayer will always be informed by what God says in His Word and through His providential deeds. Thus, a prayer that is pleasing to God will be a prayer in which He hears the echo of His own Word.

When Habakkuk understood what God was saying, he was afraid—and for good reason (see also 2 Kings 22:10–13). We also need to consider our current circumstances in light of God's speech, in areas that relate to our culture, like abortion, sexual immorality and perversion, and numerous other national sins, we have reason to be afraid—that is, unless God would do a dramatic work of revival in our generation.

### **A Prayer for a Revival of God's Work**

We must be deeply impressed with the reality that only a revival, worked by the Holy Spirit, can bring about a genuine moral reformation of our troubled nations. Too many people put their confidence in princes and political leaders. What a vain illusion this is! At best, political reformation can only bring

a cosmetic reformation of our nations. It will not address the depravity of the human heart, which is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Thus, Habakkuk’s prayer must be our fervent prayer: “O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years.” Revival, and revival alone, is the only hope for our sin-indulgent and morally decadent nations.

### **A Prayer for God’s Mercy in the Midst of Judgment**

We ought to recognize, therefore, that all that remains for us is Habakkuk’s petition, “In wrath remember mercy.” What God said to Israel, he says to us today: “Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place and shall not be quenched” (2 Kings 22:17).

The mercy of God is, therefore, our only hope. Having heard God’s speech, we must bow at His throne of grace and beseech the God whom we (yes, we also) have provoked to wrath that He would bestow on us the very opposite of what we deserve. For Christ’s sake, He is also a God of

abundant mercy who, as Matthew Henry puts it, is more ready to forgive than we are to repent (Psalm 86:5).

May our humble response to God's speech thus be, "O LORD, correct [us], but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me [us] to nothing" (Jeremiah 10:24).

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