

**HOW TO WALK WITH GOD WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE
WHERE YOU ARE GOING
Habakkuk 3:16ff**

**Living God's Word—A Walk Through the Bible
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Perhaps some of you have experienced the trust game. A blindfold is secured around your eyes and tied behind your head; they make sure that you cannot see anything. Then a person takes you by the hand and leads you through a maze. The leader tries to describe where you are walking; where you need to place your feet and body so you can make it to the end.

The focus of this exercise, of course, is to trust the one who is leading. It seeks to have a person completely relax and believe that this leader will avoid dangerous terrain; will guide you carefully through obstacles and steps, and will bring you safely through this course.

Having done a faith walk like this many times with youth groups and at youth camps, I remember one time in particular when I was participating in this exercise on a youth retreat. As I was putting my trust in my guide, this person decided that they wanted to be funny. So they led me through a mud puddle right into a tree.

In these last books of the Old Testament God calls his faithful remnant of people to trust him. Even with the terrible destruction inflicted on them by the Babylonians, God calls his prophet Habakkuk to trust and walk by faith. Even with the wicked people murdering and swallowing up the righteous, God calls Habakkuk to trust in his sovereignty.

So in his prayer of faith, Chapter 3:16bff, Habakkuk says, *"Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior."*

It is certainly difficult enough to trust God when everything is going well in life. Yet to trust God when the news is discouraging, when things are falling apart, when the opposition seems to be winning, is really hard. Habakkuk however puts his trust in God's power and sovereignty; he believed that the wicked will be dealt with in God's own way and in God's own time.

Habakkuk says in Chapter 2:4, *"But the righteous will live by faith."* This is his key message of how to live in uncertain and challenging times. In fact, Habakkuk's words are quoted and repeated several times in the New Testament that *"the righteous shall live by faith."*

We live in a time, my friends, when these words of trust seem to be more and more difficult. A reason for this is that we really like to try and map out our lives. Some of us go to college, major in our interest, get further training or enter into a job that provides extra education; then we map out how through experience and promotion how we can advance our careers. In that, some are

even able to gage what their earning power might be; how they can establish the home and life they dream of.

On top of that a person may even plan for the kind of spouse they would like to have; in this day and age they can even search for this ideal person on the internet. Some can then plan for the exact number of children they want, and may even be able to know the sex, health and the exact size long before they are born. With the technology of today, why leave anything to chance?

In one's personal life many like to keep a certain routine, follow a familiar working schedule, play golf on the same day, go to the cabin on weekends, take certain kinds of vacations. Also by plugging one's kids into the right school; into the right sports and activities; into the right college one may feel they can guarantee success and opportunity.

When you can plan it all out why do you need God? When you've got money to make things happen, to get things done the way you like, to be able to plan future events and direction, why would you need God? When you can plan your career track, can plan for your financial security, can plan a retirement part-time in the south, at the lake or whatever, why would you need God?

Faith is so difficult in this world today. In fact, the American Dream says you don't need it. The prevailing attitude is that you can make it on your own, can achieve any goal you set, can be in control of your life. And with you in charge who needs God?

Yet as many have pushed God away; have made him just a nominal figure they say they believe in, these goals and self-made plans often fall apart. The career track you are on falls apart as the company has major layoffs; as that young up and coming worker is given your job, or what you thought was your promotion. You are phased out as an older worker.

The plans you have for financial security may be quickly hurt by a down turn in the stock market, a business that fails, by major unforeseen bills, grain and land prices falling lower. The plans for a long life and wonderful retirement may be rocked by the diagnosis of cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's or by the needs of your parents, children and your family.

Plans for a certain size family are devastating increasing numbers of couples as they struggle with infertility issues. And plans for the perfect family, with kids that follow the path exactly as one tries to lay out for them, is often shattered by kids rebelling against those values; by the influence of alcohol and drugs; by hurtful and bad choices.

As the American Dream of being able to control life has subtly led many away from God; from understanding anything about faith and trust so many today are waking up one day to discover that their life is completely out of control. Many are finding that the successes they were striving for are not providing the fulfillment, happiness, and the peace they hoped for.

In these times the words and example of Habakkuk of old are still very relevant, "*the righteous shall live by faith.*" In the messiness of today, where none of us are ever able to know or plan for the future, we are called to trust God when we can't see where we are going.

Coming this fall Messiah will be introducing a new mission statement and focus, along with a renewed vision and opportunities for our youth and children. This exciting new focus will help people of all ages better understand why God created you, how he has gifted each one with special talents and how each person has significance.

Sometimes I know people scoff at this idea that God has a purpose and plan for their life; or that God has a plan and purpose for a church. They think this must mean that God has everything planned out for them; to follow God's plan means they have no choices or input; or they may need to give up on some of the dreams and happiness they want.

Yet that is not true. Discovering God's purpose and plans for life actually enhances one's choices and opportunities. To know God's purpose for creating you helps you evaluate whether you are going the right direction; whether your values are in the right place; whether your happiness and fulfillment are in the right place. It is like having a compass that can keep you on the right path.

I heard it said one time that with God there is no "plan B." God gives us the freedom to choose your life's direction and in his omnipotent wisdom he certainly knows the consequences, and opportunities, each choice will present. So each choice is "Plan A" as we live in relationship with him. As we trust him to lead us into the unknown, he can bring us through the challenges, joys, pain and successes of these choices; as we live in his plan and purposes.

I remember four years ago when Kim and I were praying about whether to take the call to be the pastor of Messiah in Hoffman. In this discernment process God didn't say there is one perfect choice; that this is my exact plan for you. He said you need to decide, you need to choose; yet he promised that no matter what he would be with us.

In accepting this call we have certainly felt God's leading these years. We have certainly felt God's blessings and growth through serving in this church, and through the new visions that have come forth. Yet we also know that it would have been God's plan, that he would have blessed us if we had turned down this call and had taken a call to a different church.

God calls us, my friends, to make a decision, to make a choice, and then to trust that this is his "Plan A." He calls us to hold his hand and rely on him when we can't see, when we can't plan, when we don't know what's coming. In knowing his eternal plan and purposes for us, in building our lives on him, we know that God will lead us and our church through whatever may come. We know he will give us a deeper purpose and meaning than this world could ever offer.

My friends, please join us this fall as we continue growing together in our faith in Jesus and as we move ahead with God's vision and hope. I'm sorry to tell this morning that you can't achieve the American Dream; you can't be successful in life all by yourself. Come learn together; find the support of a small group; allow God's Spirit to work in you.