

Coming Persecution and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

by Brian Long

The sermon emphasizes the coming judgment of God on the house of God, but also reveals a coming glory of God that will cover the earth even as the waters cover the sea.

Scripture: Habakkuk 2:3, Habakkuk 3:17, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Peter 4:7

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Persecution"

Description

Brian Long preaches a powerful sermon on the importance of embracing God's call to martyrdom and suffering for His glory, emphasizing the need to surrender all to Jesus and pursue Him wholeheartedly. He challenges the congregation to turn to prayer, run with purpose in sharing the gospel, and seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit for power and boldness in witnessing. The sermon progresses from wrestling with the vision to receiving it and ultimately running with it in prayer and praise, trusting in God's mercy and strength.

Transcript

Thank you brother Frank, my dear brother. I have that testimony of Algerius written down. I had actually written down his testimony at home and have it in my study. It has ministered to me time and time again; The Glory of Jesus in the Dungeon. He found 'infinite sweetness in bowls of the lion' - I don't think I will ever forget that expression.

I am very grateful to be here with you tonight. I do have a burden on my heart that I am convinced - absolutely persuaded - is from the Lord. I want you to turn with me to the book of Habakkuk. We will begin in chapter 2. My message is 'A plain vision for the church and coming persecution.'

Hab 2:1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

Hab 2:2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

Hab 2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Habakkuk 2:1-3 (KJV)

Now the vision that the prophet Habakkuk saw was a burden from the Lord. You notice, if you would, in the first verse of chapter 1:

Hab 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

Habakkuk 1:1 (KJV)

His burden was a vision from the Lord. A vision that God said would surely come. It wasn't that it might come to pass; it wasn't that it could come to pass. He said:

though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come

Habakkuk 2:3 (KJV)

Now there are two parts to this vision that I want to share with you tonight. Then having shared the vision, [I want us] to see how we are to run with it because that is what He says:

Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

Habakkuk 2:2 (KJV)

So first of all, the vision: what was it that the prophet Habakkuk saw? What was it that God said would surely come? He first saw a vision of coming judgment. It was judgment that was sure to come from the hand of [the] God to Judah. According to the word of the Lord in chapter 1, [the] judgment of the Lord was surely coming.

And the way that God was going to send judgment was not exactly what the prophet Habakkuk had in mind or had expected God to answer him this way in his prayer. He had been praying, verse two:

Hab 1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

Hab 1:3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

Hab 1:4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

Habakkuk 1:2-4 (KJV)

Habakkuk is praying. He is interceding for God's people. And he is saying 'how long? How long, Lord?' How long will the iniquity, the perversion, the violence, the lawlessness, the injustice in this land continue? How long will you show me all of this trouble in our nation and yet it seems like You're not doing anything about it? How long, Lord, will godly people pray revival and yet there is no revival?

He was crying out to God from an honest heart. He was praying for God to stop the sin and the decay, and to stop this dishonor and disgrace that was being brought to the name of God through God's people. And yet it seemed like God was not answering.

How long will godly pray and there is no revival? And he is begging God to turn God's people back to Him in repentance. Brothers and sisters, how long have we prayed the same way? I know I am not the only one. How long have we prayed for revival? I remember the first conference that was held here. The burden I came to Atlanta with . . . with such expectation that there was a revival conference - and I know something about SermonIndex so I knew this is real revival we're talking about - and fully expecting that after this conference, we're going to see a great spiritual awakening. How long have we prayed for revival yet there is no revival?

Granted, God has moved in little pockets around the nation. He is moving, but I am talking about spiritual awakening - the kind of revival that turns the whole tide of a nation, a city or even a society. We've not seen that in this nation. We've not seen anything that compares to the great awakenings of the past nor the great revivals like the Welsh revival or the Hebrides revival. We've prayed and yet God hasn't answered like we might have expected Him to. I want to tell you tonight that God does answer. God has heard those prayers. God heard the prayer of Habakkuk and He answers. Maybe not like Habakkuk expected Him to answer, maybe not like we expected God to answer, but God speaks and here's His answer in verse five:

Hab 1:5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

Habakkuk 1:5 (KJV)

Now that sounds amazing to me when God says 'be astounded [wonder marvelously, KJV] I'm going to work a work in your days that you would not even believe though it were told you.' But the question is what kind of work? In the next verse, God says:

Hab 1:6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs.

Habakkuk 1:6 (KJV)

I am going to work a work in your day and here's the work: I'm raising up the Chaldeans. Who are they? Babylonians. These were not God-fearing people. These were enemies of God; enemy armies that God would sovereignly raise up and use as an instrument of His judgment to chasten His own people. And can you believe it? Can you believe God would do that? Maybe that's why God said 'be utterly astounded [wonder marvelously, KJV] for I will work a work in your day which you would not believe though it were told you':

wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

Habakkuk 1:5 (KJV)

Keith Green said, several years ago; when God wants to speak to His people, He will do it in three ways. First; He will touch their economy. He will touch them where it hurts, in their economy. If that doesn't work, if that doesn't turn God's people to repentance, then God will touch their ecology. Then you have floods and pestilences . . . hurricanes . . . a drought this year that has covered a huge part of this nation . . . tornados, hurricanes, tsunamis. Lastly though he said, God will raise up a nation to come in and invade them.

That is exactly the judgment that God is pronouncing here and that is the judgment that is soon to come upon this nation and upon North America. God is sovereignly raising up enemy armies to invade a nation and, America, this nation, believes she's too strong for that. Her military forces are too strong for that. 'That will never happen.' I want to tell you tonight, that this nation sits on the brink of utter destruction. She is ripe for the judgment of God. Judgment is at the door. America will not have a godly president to save the day, nor the nation.

National leaders and politicians will become even more corrupt. Muslims and other anti-Christ groups will be God's instrument of judgment and what is most surprising of all, probably, is that this holy remnant - and she is found all over the earth, gathered in all kinds of different congregations - that has seen the King, that has come to know Jesus and is following Him wholeheartedly, she will be persecuted by people who profess to be Christians. Churches, if you will, persecuting them because they are not pledging allegiance to patriotism or anything else but the Lamb of God . . . and she will be arrested, we will be imprisoned, hated, beaten and even executed in this nation. I want to tell you brothers and sisters, when it happens, do not think that God's hands are tied. Don't think that this has taken God by surprise. God has actually executed the judgment however and whenever He chooses. We need to see the sovereign hand of God behind it all. I love what the brother said earlier, 'the lions had to look up.' God here raised up the Chaldeans and God is a God who will allow even His people to suffer at the hands of the enemies.

His hands are not tied. Judgment is surely coming. That is a hard message for some to embrace. Habakkuk himself is wrestling with this. He says in verse twelve:

Hab 1:12 Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

Hab 1:13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

Habakkuk 1:12-13 (KJV)

Judgment was coming to Judah. Judgment is surely coming to North America but I want to remind you again tonight, that judgment must begin at the house of God.

1Pe 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

1 Peter 4:17 (KJV)

Habakkuk's question in verse thirteen was 'why would God look on those who deal treacherously with His people? Why would He hold His tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?' It's true that the Chaldeans were more wicked than God's own people, Israel, but it's also true that Israel was sinning against much greater light. Brothers and sisters, the Muslims aren't holding a bible in their hand, but the prosperity preacher is. The Muslims aren't holding, the world's not holding a bible in their hand, but I am. When God's people sin against God, they're sinning against a much greater light than the world or any other religion has.

The angry atheist doesn't claim to preach Jesus Christ nor do they rob from the people of God, but the wolf in the house of God does. The communist doesn't claim to know Christ, but hypocrites in the house of

God do. God will not always strive with such mixture in His house. There is coming a shaking. There is coming a sure and definite judgment to the house of God. A shaking where everything that can be shaken will be shaken and it will bring about a holy separation; from those who fear God and those who do not; those who know Christ and those who do not; those who have pledged their allegiance to Christ and those who haven't. It is coming. It is coming to the house of God.

God is merciful and He is so patient. He has shown me more mercy than anybody I know. I will never give up on the mercy of God, but I will tell you this: He will not always strive with man and there is a judgment coming to the house of God. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and He must have the preeminence in all. It's His Church, it's His body, it's His bride . . . and I tell you, that any assembly where Jesus Christ is not truly the Head is sliding rapidly to the judgment of God. Here's where we've got to make the vision plain; we've got to make it personal: do I honor Him as the Head of the house? It's not enough for us to memorize scripture that says that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. It's not enough to know the bible in our minds that says that Jesus must have the preeminence. The issue is do I honor Him as the Head? It's not enough to call Him King. Do you glorify Him as King? Do you obey Him as Lord? Do I obey Him as Lord?

There is hypocrisy in the house of God that comes under the judgment of God. We can preach . . . and before I could ever stand up here, God took me through weeks . . . because I never want to preach something I am not willing for God to do in and through me. I have asked myself these questions that I am posing to you tonight. How many of us listen to so many good messages? We even preach good biblical messages but the issue is not 'can we preach them?' Not 'can we listen to many of them?' The issue is 'do we live them?' Are we the incarnation of these messages that we are receiving? There is more preaching today - good preaching - especially on SermonIndex; all these saints of the past. It's not the issue of how many sermons you listen to. Do you live them?

Listen, 'why do you call me Lord, Lord' Jesus said, 'and not do the things that I say?' Why do you emphatically call me Lord and not obey? To live this way is to build your house on shifting sand and to have it all fall down and blown away in the coming storm.

There is lukewarmness in the house of God. This attempt to serve two masters; and it will come under the judgment of God. There is coming a day . . . where . . . people now are trying to combine allegiances. There will be a shaking. Christ alone or Christ not at all.

The pride of leaders and pastors who love to have the preeminence will have the rug pulled out from under them very soon, except they repent. Secret sin in the house of God; there is no fear of God and secret sin in the house of God is coming under the judgment of God. Judgment is surely coming upon the American dream message of 'your best life now;' the word of faith movement; the prosperity gospel - which is another gospel preaching another Jesus; a false gospel that promotes the love of money, self-centeredness and pride - and not only will God demand an account for the deception and dishonor to His name in this nation, but He is especially going to demand an account of those who have tithed it into the nations all across the world, and robbed the poor to line their greedy pockets. That is coming under the judgment of God.

Every house of worship where the Holy Spirit has been rejected, resisted, ignored . . . because we want to have church without Him . . . is coming under the judgment of God. When the shaking comes, that house will shake and it will not stand. We cannot have church apart from the Spirit of the Living God. He has

been grieved. He has been resisted. He has been rejected. Listen to this scripture from Ezekiel 6:49. We think of homosexuality and perversion . . . to God that was an abomination . . . God sent fire and brimstone on Sodom . . . but that was not the sin even mentioned here. These were the sins of your sister Sodom:

Eze 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Ezekiel 16:49 (KJV)

Arrogance. Pride. Over-fed. We've been given so much, and yet unconcerned . . . the poor and needy die outside the house of God. Have we abandoned our mission, Church of Jesus Christ? Have we forgotten the great commission . . . to go and preach the gospel to every creature? And it's two-fold: and also to make disciples of all nations teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded us. Have we forgotten that? Have we forgotten what true religion is in the house of God? Caring for the orphans, the widows in their trouble, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to the poor, visiting those in prison and keeping yourself unspotted from the world. I tell you, because we have neglected this - we have not taken this seriously - judgment is coming to the house of God. But even that judgment will be an expression of God's mercy and love. The worst thing that could happen today is for God to allow Christendom to continue as she is without Him. And there is a clear distinction in 1 Peter 4 that God makes between the punishing judgment of God upon the unbeliever and the purifying judgment of God upon the believer.

The judgment that will be punishment for one will be purifying for another. For one it's punishment and utter destruction, but for the remnant, that shaking, that persecution will be to test and try and refine His holy remnant; His beloved bride, His cherished Church.

Now I want you to watch this because someone inevitably says 'a message of gloom and doom.' It's not gloom and doom to me. Gloom to me is for the Church to continue as She is. Hypocrisy in the house of God, hypocrisy in my heart: that's gloom. This is not a message of gloom and doom and this vision of judgment is not all that the prophet saw. He did see judgment coming. He saw the suffering of God's people coming but that's not all He saw. God says to the prophet Habakkuk: write down the vision and make it plain. Habakkuk what do you see? 'I see judgment that is sure to come. Persecution, yes. Incredible suffering of God's people, yes. A storm unlike we've ever experienced before, yes! But that's not all I see.' Chapter 2 verse 14: surrounded by verse after verse of coming judgment, there's this little nugget like a nugget of gold hidden inside the side of a mountain:

Hab 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk 2:14 (KJV)

What do you see, Habakkuk? 'Coming judgment but wait . . . I see something else. I see a coming glory. A glory that is so great that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth even as the waters cover the sea.' Hallelujah! As the waters cover the sea - now where do the waters not cover the sea? Seas make up the waters. In other words, there is no place on earth where the glory of the Lord will not be known. Have you seen that, saints, through the eyes of faith? A coming glory that is a latter glory greater the former . . . the greatest display of God's glory that has ever been known in the history of the world. A coming glory; where the knowledge of that glory will cover the earth even as the waters covers the sea. Why? Because in the fires of persecution, the Church gets purified. Yes, all who live godly in Christ Jesus

shall suffer persecution but suffering for Christ and the sake of Christ always precedes glory. Suffering for Jesus equals glory to Jesus.

Paul the Apostle says in Rom 8:16:

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Romans 8:16-18 (KJV)

Suffering : glory. Suffering with Jesus precedes the glory of Jesus. His glory will be revealed where? According Romans 8, in the heavens somewhere? Among the stars? In some cathedral temple somewhere we have to go find? A man-made . . . no! In us! The glory of the Lord revealed in us! How? Through suffering. Through persecution. Habakkuk sees something else in verse 20 of chapter 2:

Hab 2:20 But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

Habakkuk 2:20 (KJV)

And the Lord, beloved, in His holy temple, through His holy temple will display His glory and the knowledge of that glory will cover the earth even as the waters cover the sea.

You remember under the old covenant when God chose to reveal His glory in the days of Moses. He commanded Moses to build the tabernacle. Moses built the tabernacle just as God had told him to do. And in that tabernacle, in the Holy of holies, the Shekinah glory of God would come down. God's glory would rest among His people. God would visit His people in the tabernacle. The glory of the Lord displayed in the Holy of holies. And everybody who was there knew that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He is God. The glory of the Lord.

But that tabernacle was one day no more and King David had a deep desire to build a house for the Lord: a temple for the Most High God. God honored that request in David but He said 'David, you're not going to build Me My house. Your son Solomon will build My temple.' King Solomon did build the temple; an incredible, magnificent temple for the Lord. You remember what happened when Solomon finished dedicating the temple to God in prayer: the glory of the Lord came down. So much so that the priests could not even enter the temple but down on their faces they went on the pavement and they worshipped God. What did they say? 'For He is good and His mercy endures forever.' That display of God's glory was greater than the former in the tabernacle.

God manifested His presence. God displayed His glory. His glory came down and was revealed through the temple but that beautiful magnificent temple of Solomon was also destroyed. God's people were taken captive for seventy years to Babylon. God then raises up a remnant. God always has a remnant and the remnant marched to Zion, back to Jerusalem to once again build the temple for the Lord at the command of the Lord. They were few in number but they were one in purpose and one in vision. They had come to build the house of the Lord so that the Lord could visit His people; another place for the glory of the Lord to

rest - to come down among His people - that all may know that He is God. God said this: though that outward temple was not as spectacular as the previous temple (Solomon's temple), I will fill this temple with My glory, and the latter glory will be greater than the former glory.

What happened? Was the glory greater? It was greater because one day the Son of God Himself stepped down and He walked into that temple and He opened up the scriptures and He read. Jesus Christ stood in the temple and the word became flesh and dwelt among us. John said 'we beheld His glory.' The glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. God once again filled His house with glory and that glory was much greater than any of the former glory because this is the Son of God Himself: Jesus Christ.

Displaying and seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus. We beheld His glory. Our Lord went to the cross, died on the cross for our sins, was raised again on the third day, ascended into heaven and He is now seated at the right hand of the Father. That temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. Not one stone found left on top of another. I still hear the Spirit of the Lord 'Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you build for Me? Where is the place of My rest?' God longing to visit His people. Where is the place once again where God will display His glory? Habakkuk said 'I see the Lord in His holy temple, all the earth be silent' and through that holy temple the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covers the earth even as the waters cover the sea. But where is that temple? Stephen said in Acts 7 'the Most High no longer dwells in temples made with human hands.' Where is that temple? The answer is given by the Apostle Paul:

1Co 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

1Co 3:17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (KJV)

The prophet says 'I see the Lord in His holy temple' and the Apostle Paul says 'yes, the temple of God is holy and which temple you are.' You see it, brothers and sisters, that's the vision. The vision of God's coming glory is the coming of the greatest display of the glory of God ever in the history of the world. I want to tell you that this is the Church's finest hour. I believe it with all of my heart. We are living in incredible days. God almighty wanting to display His glory once again to such a degree: that glory will be greater than the former glory. It has to be if the knowledge of it will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. He wants to do it where? Through His Church, through His body, through His temple which is us.

Coming judgment, yes. Coming persecution, yes. Suffering; yes. But a glory of God and to God who makes it all worth it. I agree with the Apostle Paul: the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. There is the vision but, how do we run with it?

He said write the vision that He may run who reads it. In other words, do something with this vision. It demands a response, a practical response. Run with the vision. Someone who is running is either running away from something or they are running in pursuit of something. I want to say to you tonight to run with this vision is to run in pursuit; not of something but Someone.

Hebrews chapter 12:1. Run with the vision but how? Run pursuing Someone:

Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is

set before us,

Heb 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12: 1-2 (KJV)

This is a pursuit, namely, of Jesus Christ Himself. You want to run with the vision? Pursue Christ with all your heart. Fix your eyes on Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Let Jesus fill your vision. Go after Him. Let Him be your chief delight, your highest ambition, your most passionate pursuit . . . your greatest desire should be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Otherwise, you're not running the race! You're not running with the vision. Make it plain. Make it personal. How is it with you? What is your greatest passion? What's your most passionate pursuit? What do you talk about the most? Who do you talk about the most? Jesus Christ? Or your bible translation? Jesus Christ? Or your particular doctrine, theology, eschatology . . .? Jesus Christ? Or your ministry? Jesus Christ? Or your gifts? Jesus Christ? Or your head-covering? Jesus Christ? Or your children, your family . . .? Jesus Christ? Or your denomination? It can be a number of things, brothers and sisters, and they're not all bad. Everything should pale in comparison with love for Him. Love for Christ; the pursuit of Christ. I tell you, this remnant that God is raising up that is scattered all over the earth shares one thing in common: to you who believe, He is precious! Christ is precious! Hallelujah!

When He's precious to you like that, you are willing to suffer the loss of everything and to count it but dung - rubbish - for the sake of knowing Christ more. There is so much more of Jesus to know than I know and that you know. Are you willing? Are you willing to suffer the loss of all things for the sake of Him? Knowing Him, following Him, being closer to Him . . .

Algerius said in that dungeon 'the One who I once followed afar, I now see. He holds my hand. He's with me.'

When Christ is everything to you, something else happens. You run with this vision in pursuit of Christ, something else happens. You will hate sin with a passion. You will loath it. You will hate it with a passion. Notice he says in verse 1:

let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run

Hebrews 12: 1 (KJV)

Again, the Lord made so clear to me: make this plain. Is there sin in your life? Make it personal. Is there sin in your life? Are you regarding iniquity in your heart? When Christ is precious to you, you will hate sin! You will get dead-serious about repentance. Not just confessing your sin but forsaking it!

I was walking this trail I always walk to pray, the other day. The Lord was showing me 'to you who believe, He is precious.' Blessed are the pure in heart. Worshipping Jesus as I'm walking along and someone's dog had vomited right there in the middle of the trail. I looked at that and obviously you're repulsed by that. The Holy Spirit reminded me 'that's what sin looks like to me.' I said Jesus 'make sin look like that to me.' Repulsive.

This pursuit of Christ is a pursuit of holiness. Remember brothers and sisters, without holiness, no one will see the Lord. The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth be silent.

Not just running now - we're running in pursuit of Christ, we're running in pursuit of Him - but we're running with purpose. The Apostle Paul says:

1Co 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

1 Corinthians 9:24 (KJV)

In other words, run to win. Run on purpose. The Apostle Paul ran with purpose. He says in verse 25:

1Co 9:25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

1Co 9:26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

1Co 9:27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (KJV)

He ran on purpose. Paul was so concerned about coming to the end of His race and finding out that he had ran it with vain. He would not be distracted from His purpose. He's running with the vision. His eyes are on Christ. He disciplined his body. He didn't let food, sleep, leisure and entertainment master him nor distract him from this vision of Christ. He wouldn't be distracted from what Christ had clearly called him to do. He wouldn't waste time. He wouldn't become spiritually lazy. I get embarrassed of myself when I'm talking about persecution. I'm reading Foxes' Book of Martyrs and all of this . . . and I see a spiritual laziness that I'm prone to . . . areas of my life where I'm not dying now. There is a lot of spiritual laziness and indiscipline in the house of God. Are we running with purpose? Are we running with our eyes fixed on Christ? And what was his purpose? Verse 23:

1Co 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake

1 Corinthians 9:23 (KJV)

That's his purpose and he wouldn't stray from it. Paul was passionate and determined not to run in vain. His purpose was the gospel. He wouldn't waste time. He took every open door; every opportunity that he had everywhere the Spirit led him. He was sitting on ready to preach the gospel. He said 'I'm not ashamed of the gospel.'

My son Luke reminded me the other day of a quote he had read by DL Moody: 'I don't find anywhere that God says the world is going to grow better and better. I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel and God has given me a lifeboat, and said to me 'Moody, save all you can!' You know, Moody didn't stray from that purpose. Brothers and sisters, you and I have a purpose. It has to do with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are you running with it? The messenger who runs with the vision is a messenger who is running with good news. Christ died for our sins. He rose from the dead. He lives and He is coming again. Repent and believe the gospel. That's the man, that's the woman, that's the child of God who's running on purpose. They have not lost sight of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to ask you again: what are you doing with the news that has been placed at your hands? Are you running with the vision? Have you gotten away from the true gospel of Jesus Christ? He came to save souls; to seek and to save that which was

lost. The sins of Sodom, again I tell you: the poor and needy were dying outside and she was unconcerned.

Any Christianity that doesn't carry the compassion of Christ to the lost is a dead religion. It's not true Christianity. Get back to your calling, brothers and sisters. Who are you praying for that's lost? Who are reaching out to with the gospel of Jesus Christ? Who are you discipling? There is at least one person who is younger in the faith than you are that you can disciple. If you do not know one, you need to pray for someone, lead them to Christ, and disciple them. Get back to your purpose. Get back to your calling. What has God called you to do? Get back to it.

Don't stray from your purpose. Run on purpose. Why? Because one day, very soon, we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. We will give an account to what we have done in this body. Did I run on purpose? Pity the man - God forbid - you come to the end of the race, you see the glory of Jesus, you stand at the judgment seat of Christ and it's suddenly revealed to you, you ran in vain. You wasted time. You went this way, that way, the other . . . you didn't run on purpose. You run pursuing Christ, you run on purpose. That purpose is the gospel.

Can I tell you another purpose? It's a God-given purpose to all of us who are believers: prayer. You run with this vision by prayer . . . everything by prayer. Listen carefully to a verse that the Spirit of God has arrested my heart with. He continues to bring it back to my remembrance - it seems like every day now, 1 Peter 4:7:

1Pe 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

1 Peter 4:7 (KJV)

If the Apostle Peter said that when the Spirit of God moved him to write this, how much closer are we to the end of all things? The end of all things is at hand, therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. Because the end of all things is at hand, get serious about prayer. Get back to our knees. Get back to our purpose, church. My house shall be called a house of prayer. The prayerless church will not be ready for this soon coming storm, I assure you. The most effective ministry of preparation we have is prayer. Our Lord Jesus commanded it. Not only that, He set the example for us. The most trying hour ever that the Lord faced on this earth was in that dark night in Gethsemane. When the cross was set before Him, but it was not just the physical cross: the cup was set before Him. That cup meant He would take upon Himself the sins of the whole world. In that cup was the wrath of God. Talk about a crisis hour, talk about a difficult hour that none of us can even come close to understanding or comprehending . . . how would He prepare for it? Let's follow in His steps. How did He prepare? He went to prayer.

He says to His disciples 'You stay up and stay awake with me. Watch and pray' because they were also about to face a very difficult, trying, testing time . . . an hour that was set before them.

The only way for you to be prepared is pray! Stay awake and pray. Jesus went a little further, fell on His face and prayed. He comes back and finds His disciples sleeping, wakes them up again, goes back and prays again so fervently that He sweats as it were, droplets of blood. He prayed and He prayed and He prayed. . .

When the hour came, He was prepared. His disciples slept when they should have been praying. What is the result? One denies Him, one betrays Him, and they all forsook Him and fled. How will you stand in the

coming persecution when you're prayerless? The prayerless church will not stand in the coming storm. I assure you, the most - single most - vital, important meeting of the church is the prayer meeting. I believe that. I am one hundred percent persuaded of that and I am not just preaching it - that's what we live in Barn's Dawn. Why? Because we're nothing without God. We started in a barn, coming together and saying 'What are we going to do brother Brian?' 'I don't know.' Down to our knees and we prayed. We never lost sight that Saturday night, is prayer: prayer meeting. Nothing can substitute that. There is nothing more important. I feel tonight, as the richest man on the face of the earth. You know why? Because I have I have a little flock in Barn's Dawn who, right now, they're not listening to the message; they're watching it, the volume is down, they're praying corporately. 'Brother Brian, we're going to pray for you till it goes off air. We're not going stop praying.'

They didn't just start tonight. Nor did they start today. Sunday morning, I had finished preaching . . . one brother stands up: 'This is what we're going to do. Remember when Brother Brian's son was sick? He was fighting cancer. God taught us to fight and pray. Brother Brian is going to Atlanta on Thursday. We're going to start to fast and pray. Who'll take the first hour? Who'll take the second hour?' One hand goes up; one after the other. Then from Thursday, around the clock, twenty-four hours all the way up to tonight: somebody has been praying for this conference and for me. Glory to God! That means more to me than anything. They told me that and I went to thank them and broke down weeping; I couldn't contain myself. That's the greatest gift any preacher, any pastor, can ever have.

But why? It's because God has revealed to us: 'in everything by prayer.' That's such a small flock. We have two prayer meetings on Saturday night; small prayer meetings. Small people . . . nobodies. But a great big God shows up every time at prayer meeting. Sometimes you have to pray through but He comes. And the result; sinners have come to Christ as a result of calling upon God on Saturday night. They've come to Christ on Saturday morning. As a result of that prayer meeting, marriages have been restored, relationships have been reconciled, people have been healed miraculously. Most of all God manifests His presence on Sunday. He meets with us. He continues to surprise us. Week, after, week, after week . . . brothers who are now standing in the pulpit preaching: if you had told them a year ago they would be preaching . . . nobody would have believed you. That's what God does when His people pray.

The greatest way to prepare - the greatest preparation we have - for persecution, or anything for that matter, is to call upon the Lord in prayer. Pray! Make the vision plain. Make it personal.

So I ask you very plainly, very straight-forwardly, are you part of a vibrant prayer meeting right now? At least once a week? Are you part of a prayer meeting? If not, why not? You know, what the Lord showed me, brothers and sisters? This coming persecution: it's not enough that I stand. Do we have any kind of love for our brothers and sisters? It's not enough that I stand. My brother, he must stand. I want him to stand. I want my sister to stand.

They denied Christ; they fell asleep instead of praying. We have got to stay on our knees and see our dependence upon God and pray together. Are you part of prayer meeting? If not, you need to start one! Somebody says 'I can't find anybody to pray with me.' You start one. I assure you, God has seven thousand that have not bowed their knee to Baal, and you need to find them. Ask Him for one . . . two . . . just one or two to join with you. If they will not join right away, you start the prayer meeting and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will show up and meet with you in that prayer meeting, and He will draw one or two. Start the prayer meeting! Let nothing substitute it! Nothing at all! That's one meeting we will not miss! If you have to miss Sunday morning, so be it! Wednesday? So be it! Do not miss Saturday night!

They don't want to miss Saturday night. They saw God bring my son through cancer and get totally healed . . . from calling upon the Lord. That's the Lord's doing . . . miraculous testimonies that God has done in people's lives. Are you part of a prayer meeting? Get serious about prayer because without it - and this is what I am coming to . . . the final part of running with the vision - there is no power. Prayer precedes the power of the Holy Spirit . . . the power of God. I want to tell you that we must have the power of the Holy Spirit. Self-confidence, grit-teeth, sheer determination and even sincere promises will fail in the coming storm and persecution. Those who have waited upon the Lord in prayer - who put no more confidence in the flesh, who have believed and received the promise of the Father, who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit - they will not waiver. They will be His witnesses. They shall prophesy. They shall preach boldly. They shall praise the Lord at all times. Through them - the holy remnant - the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will fill the earth even as the waters cover the sea.

What sets them apart? The same thing that set the Apostles in the early church apart: the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the Living God will be with them, in them and upon them. I know, believe me I know, there is so much of the counterfeit of the baptism of the Holy Spirit today. There is an overwhelming abundance of the counterfeit of the baptism in Christendom today. Then there are others who simply resist and reject and ignore any work and ministry of the Holy Spirit altogether. There are those who are even afraid to say 'baptism of the Holy Spirit.' I don't want to join or be a part of either group. I am not saying that condescendingly; I used to be in one of those groups. I don't want to be a part of either one, or join either one; nor am I afraid to say 'baptism of the Holy Spirit.' Why? Because that is the promise of the Father. Speaking of Jesus; 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.' That is what I want. That is what I need . . . and a continual filling of the Spirit of God . . . continually. The promises are for you and your children and as many as the Lord our God shall call.

The evidence - that so many would disagree on - is, lets come back to Acts 1:8, the words of Jesus:

Act 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses

Acts 1:8 (KJV)

What is the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Power! Power to become holy - because He is the Holy Spirit - power to be witnesses of Christ! You know better than I because I don't know Greek, but I know this Greek word for 'witnesses': martus. The same word for martyrs. The same word in other parts in the scripture where they actually use the word 'martyr;' Acts 22:20, the Apostle Paul speaking of Stephen:

Act 22:20 And when the blood of thy martyr [martus] Stephen was shed

Acts 22:20 (KJV)

Revelation 2, Jesus speaking of Antipas:

Rev 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Revelation 2:13 (KJV)

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs [martus] of Jesus:

Revelation 17:6 (KJV)

Witnesses / martyrs: a holy people endued with power from on-high who did not love their lives to the death. How? You tell me, how did that great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us - some of them sawn in two, some of them ripped apart by lions in an arena as the crowd cheered, jeered, mocked, some of them burned at the stake - they never denied Christ; never stopped loving their enemies; never stopped preaching; never stopped praising the Lord even in the midst as their bodies burned.

How?! 'Not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord.' That's the only way, brothers and sisters. Lydia Perpetua - a 22 year old mother - had her baby boy taken away from her, thrown into prison, thrown into an arena of wild beasts . . . and finally was martyred at the end of the sword of a gladiator in that arena. While she was laying there before she died, cried out 'Give up the world. Stand fast in the faith. Love one another. Don't let our suffering become a stumbling block to you.' How did a 22 year old mother do that? 'Not by might, nor by power but my Spirit says the Lord' - she was filled with the Holy Spirit. There is no other way.

Allan Cameron, a Scottish covenanter, while being held in prison, they bring to him the head and the hands of his son. They cruelly asked him, if he knew them. He said 'Yes, I know them . . . I know them' as he kissed them 'they are my son's . . . my own dear son's. It is the Lord . . . good is the will of the Lord who cannot wrong me nor mine, but has made goodness and mercy to follow us all of our days.' How did he do it? 'Not by might, not by power but my Spirit says the Lord.' You must be filled with the Holy Spirit. We must be endued with power from on-high. We need the Spirit of the Living God.

Brothers and sisters, what do we do about our lack of love . . . our lack of faithfulness, our lack of wholeheartedness, our lack of boldness, our lack of holiness, our lack of joy, our lack of prayer, our lack of power in witness? 'Not by might, nor by power but my Spirit says the Lord.' I want to plead with you making this vision plain. Put away the modern books on the Holy Spirit. I walk into a Christian bookstore today and I get nauseated. Put away the modern books on the Holy Spirit. Even turn off the computer. Set aside the CDs. Pick up this book [the bible]. Read the book of Acts one more time. Better yet, read it in one sitting . . . at the most two sittings. Do as I have done myself; read the book of Acts and ask 'What is missing in my life?' What is missing in the Church today? What is missing? This is it! You must be filled with the Holy Spirit! You must be endued with power from on-high. That's what I want! Not what you see around . . . what did Jesus have? What did the Apostles have? What did the early church have? That's what I want. That's the answer to our lack.

So I want to ask you: if you are thirsty, if you are serious about coming to Jesus for cleansing and freedom from all sin, if you are willing to be broken bread and poured out wine, to serve others - He's not going to fill anybody that's all about themselves, full of themselves, not willing to be poured out - if you're willing to surrender all to Jesus, and you simply ask Him in faith, He will fill you with the Holy Spirit!

Are you willing to obey every word He says? He will fill you with the Holy Spirit. Regardless of what your doctrine or teaching is, no God-fearing, bible-believing, blood-bought saint of God can ignore, neglect, the command of Ephesians 5:18, which says clearly:

Eph 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

Ephesians 5:18 (KJV)

Continually - be ye being filled with the Spirit - that is a command. We cannot ignore it. The result?
Ephesians 5:19;

Eph 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

Eph 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Ephesians 5:19 (KJV)

What I am saying to you is that someone who is filled with the Holy Spirit will praise the Lord at all times. They will sing to Him. They will praise Him. They will worship Him at all times. I want to tell you brothers and sisters, we're not called in these days just to hold down the fort. No! You're not called to go and stack-up food and hide somewhere. No we are called to go in the power of the Holy Spirit on purpose; reaching the lost world, making disciples, joining the Lord Jesus in building His Church . . . because it's through that temple that glory of the Lord will cover the earth even as the waters cover the sea.

I come to a close. Back to Habakkuk. I want you to see this as we close, that there is a progression in the book of Habakkuk. Only three short chapters. In chapter 1, he's wrestling with the vision. In chapter 2 he receives the vision. In chapter 3, he's running with the vision. In chapter 1 - just as you and I must move from Romans 6 to Romans 7 to Romans 8, we must also move from Habakkuk 1, to Habakkuk 2 to Habakkuk 3. There's a progression. He's wrestling with the vision. The suffering . . . the persecution . . . judgment to come . . . but ultimately he's wrestling with the God who's calling His people to suffer. Habakkuk's very name means 'wrestle' or 'embrace.'

Number 1: Are you willing to embrace a God who calls you to martyrdom? Are you willing to embrace a Christ who calls you to take up a cross and die for His glory? That's the only true and living Christ there is. 'If any man be my disciple, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.' Some of you may be wrestling right now.

Habakkuk says 'we shall not die,' . . . yes. And you need to make the resolve if you are wrestling. 'Lord, by faith, and by Your grace, I am willing to embrace the cross.' Get on the cross. Die to this self-life, 'because I want nothing more than You . . . and You glorified.'

Chapter 2, he receives the vision. That vision is that in the midst of all this suffering - again, the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covering the earth even as the waters cover the sea - the Lord in His holy temple. He receives that by faith. God wants to glorify Himself through His Church. Receive that vision.

In chapter 3, he runs with it. How does he run with it? Chapter 3 is an entire chapter of prayer. It's Habakkuk's prayer. Yet, even in this prayer, there is a progression. The prayer begins in verse two with:

Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

Habakkuk 3:2 (KJV)

We pray. You run with the vision by prayer, but don't give up on the mercy of God. Judgment has to come to the house of God. In wrath, remember mercy. Still pray for the mercy . . . above all, mercy upon us.

Never! His mercy endures forever. Never let go of the mercy of God. In wrath, remember mercy. Never let go of praying 'God, revive your work. Revive!' Yes, this is revival but it means persecution, and in the fires of persecution the church gets purified.'

This prayer progresses. It's petition now but what happens, as he prays - like always happens if you really pray - he now sees the Lord. Once he sees the Lord, there's no perplexity. There are no more questions. There is no more wrestling. He sees the Lord, he comes to the end of the chapter and he says this, verse 17:

Hab 3:17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Hab 3:18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Hab 3:19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

Habakkuk 3:17-19 (KJV)

The progression: from petition to praise. This is the remnant God is raising up in spite of circumstances, in the midst of persecution, in the midst of pain and in the midst of suffering. Praise the name of the Lord with all of your heart because He is worthy of praise!

No more questions because he's not looking at the Chaldeans now, he sees God. He doesn't see the persecutors anymore, but the Lord. His eyes are upon the Lord. When will the glory of the Lord cover the earth as the waters cover the sea? When His people rise up in the power of the Holy Spirit to praise Him at all times! Brothers and sisters, let's run with the vision. Let's pursue the Person of Jesus Christ with passion unlike we've ever pursued Him before. You willing to suffer the loss of everything to gain Him, to know Him more . . . let's run on purpose. Let's run on purpose with this message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Join with someone building the true body of Christ. Making of disciples . . . preaching the gospel, run on purpose, start the prayer meeting. Start praying. Get to prayer! Run on purpose. Seek God to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I simply want to ask you plainly tonight: if you're one like myself, who is seeing your lack, you see your need, and even tonight you say the Holy Spirit has been speaking to you . . . you say 'God, I need you to fill me afresh with Your Holy Spirit. Baptize me with Your Spirit. Baptize me with Your presence, with Your love . . . Lord God, all of You - I want more of You.' The Holy Spirit always glorifies Christ. 'More of You Jesus. More of You. Fill me Lord.'

You don't have to wait for weeks. I don't believe that. If you meet the conditions - you're thirsty - Jesus said 'out of your innermost beings will flow rivers of living water.' I simply want to ask you to join me in asking God to do something within our own hearts. Join the Apostle Paul in that prayer of his in Ephesians 3 that says 'God, strengthen us with power by Your Spirit in our innermost being.' Let the rivers of living water flow for Your glory. Fill us with all the fullness of God, so we can love our enemies, so that we can preach the gospel with power and anointing, so that we can praise You at all times in the midst of every circumstance. Fill us with the Holy Spirit. That is my prayer. If that is your desire tonight, that is your prayer - as we enter into a time of worship - I want to invite you to come to the alter. You cry out to God. You

pray. You cry out to God 'This is my need. Here is my lack. Lord, You gave a promise. This is the promise of the Father. He said it's for me, for my children . . . and as many as You shall call.

Brothers and sisters, as we heard already; if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Ghost to those that ask Him. He is willing. He is more willing to give than you are to receive. If you are willing to meet those simple requirements: 'I'm thirsty. Jesus I come to You first for cleansing. I'm willing to surrender all, I'm willing to be poured out, I'm willing to go wherever You tell me to go, do whatever You tell me to do, say whatever You tell me to say. I'm going take You at Your word and promise. Fill me with the Holy Spirit.'

I believe we should go out of this place in the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the evidences of that will be that we will be a people who praise the Lord at all times. In every circumstance, even if the fruit is not on the vine and the fig tree does not blossom, and there are not cattle in the stalls. We will rejoice in the Lord. Amen?

Please stand to your feet as we pray. Brother Dave, you lead us in praise and worship. Allow us the time not to rush in the presence of God, but to praise Him, to call upon Him in prayer. Brothers and sisters, when you know God has answered your prayer, rise to praise Him. Praise Him tonight with all of your heart.

Father, I ask You in the name of Jesus to do what only You can do. No man can impart anything, God, apart from You. We come to You. We come directly to You, our Father and our God. The One we can call Abba. We cry out to You Abba Father, we come to You tonight Father, and You know the condition of each and every heart here tonight. You know the condition of each and every heart listening online. Perhaps there are people right in their own houses right now who are seeing their lack, seeing their need, their desperate need to be filled, baptized with the Holy Spirit - would You meet us tonight, Father?

We don't have time to waste. We don't have games to play. We don't have to figure out or explain it all. It's very simple: we lack. We can do nothing apart from You. You made a promise and we come to You tonight, Father to fill us afresh with Your Holy Spirit. Would You do that, Father, as we enter into a time of worship and praise. I pray God, tonight, You pour out upon us a spirit of praise, that we would go forth praising Your glorious, magnificent Name; the Name of Jesus . . . the Name that is above every other name. We love You Lord and we glorify You tonight in Jesus' Name, Amen.

If you would like to come to the alter or pray where you are, feel free.

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