



The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity
The Collect.

O LORD, we beseech thee, absolve thy people from their offences; that through thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. 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. 3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. 5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation? 9 Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. 10 The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. 11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. 12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. 13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed;

thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. 14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. 15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters. 16 When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. 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: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 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. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments. (Habakkuk 3:1-19)

This psalm of Habakkuk is beautiful for its treasures of faith, and the knowledge of the ways of God. So often in our day, Christian men and, especially ministers weak in faith, attempt to reduce the dealings of God solely to an individual work and application. Be not deceived, God is not only the judge of men, but also of nations. We have national, as well as individual, responsibilities to God. You may say, "but wait: God would not destroy the good with the wicked." Though He spared Lot, he destroyed all of the cities of the plain and all of the possessions of Lot in that Holocaust. Do you believe there were none righteous in Jerusalem when they were all hauled off, bag and baggage, to Babylon? Do the innocent not also suffer with the wicked when the level of wickedness rises to the righteous indignation of God? Some have tried to reduce the Christian walk to a politically correct, and individual, responsibility. They falsely claim a separation of church and state under the Federal Constitution. That Constitution nowhere stipulates such a clause and, even if it did, it would be null and void in the Christian mind. The Law of the Holy Bible takes precedence over every manmade law.

As Christian citizens, we must express our faith in ALL that we do – including voting and public expressions of faith. How can one be considered a Christian who voluntarily chooses a man as ruler who supports homosexual marriage and partial birth murder? But some hide behind the curtain of separation of church and state. They have not the guts to stand against the state and FOR God. Habakkuk was no such fellow. Though fearful of the coming fury, Habakkuk rejoiced in the terror of God's coming judgment. Why did he? It was because Habakkuk loved His God more than the flimsy walls of Jerusalem. He knew that only the judgment of God could revive and restore a spirit of righteousness among the wicked inhabitants of the city. Habakkuk was righteous, but he welcomed that judgment of restoration. He suffered the same consequences of all of the inhabitants, yet, like a desperate field commander, he called the artillery guns of God to target his own position. At least the blasting would awaken the loyalists from their spiritual stupor.

Not only does Habakkuk praise the Lord for His beauty of presence, but for the vanquishing and fearful terrors that preceded His glory in coming. Christ, too, is coming as both a great blessing to those who know and fear Him, and as a withering terror for those who have rejected Him. If, like Habakkuk, we love His Word, we will not dread Christ's coming, but rather beckon Him to come sooner and not later. "*....even so, Come Lord Jesus!*"

If we have not known that the foundations were crumbling, and the walls of America penetrated by evil design, where have we been, and what have we been drinking? Have we become so indifferent to wickedness and bondage that we cannot

sense the tightening of the ropes, the rattle of the chains? Sixty years ago, a man would be arrested for using vulgar and profane language in public. What now? Sixty years ago, a high school pregnancy would have made front page headlines. What now? Sixty years ago, the school day began with prayer, a psalm, and, our readers contained stories about Daniel in the Lion's Den, When Joseph went down into Egypt, and other biblical, character-building accounts. What now? Our youth are served up a ration of explicit sex education (which would have landed the teacher in jail earlier) to hone their temptations; they are taught how to relate to those with perverse appetites more than being taught history, the sciences and the arts. The euphemists call this 'progress,' and they label their politics as either 'liberal' or 'progressive.' I rejoice with Habakkuk that these evils shall be met with a fiery judgment and retribution from God. I hate evil because God hates evil. I am weak and imperfect, yet God makes me into that which may be useful in His hands, and He has placed our feet on high places. Why wallow in the mud and mire of an adulterous generation? He does the same with all who believe and follow.

Take solemn counsel in the words of the Lord: ".....*Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.* (2 Chronicles 19:2) Get ready, my friends!