



2022 SERMON BUILDER

BASED ON *REBECCA: NIGERIA*

SERMON TITLE: OUR KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE WHEN CALAMITY COMES

What is the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians?

The International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians is a special time set aside as a global prayer meeting on behalf of persecuted Christians who stand as bold witnesses to Christ on the world's most difficult and dangerous frontier mission fields.

The earnest prayers of the global body of believers testify to the unity found only in Christ. May God inspire us as we enter into fellowship with our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters.

Sermon Builder — What Is It?

The Voice of the Martyrs desires to serve the local church to the glory of God and the purposes of Christ for the advancement of His eternal kingdom. This resource is a tool to help you engage in the International Day of Prayer for Persecuted Christians resources with your congregation. We provide this sermon builder resource as a starting place to help you lead your congregation's focus during IDOP. Feel free to pull illustrations, content or thoughts from it as you create your sermon for that day. Know that we are praying for you as you lead your church into fellowship with our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters and into a greater obedience to the Great Commission.

Sermon Planning — Begin with the End in Mind

WHAT BIBLICAL TRUTH DO I WANT MY CONGREGATION TO UNDERSTAND MORE FULLY AS A RESULT OF THIS SERMON?

Biblical disciples view difficult circumstances, even those that create individual suffering, differently than the people of this world.

WHAT BIBLICAL TRUTH DO I WANT MY CONGREGATION MEMBERS, LIVING AS BIBLICAL DISCIPLES, TO PUT INTO PRACTICE?

As a biblical disciple suffering for righteousness, I am able to live by faith, knowing His glory will fill the earth and then worshiping God joyfully.



OUR KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE WHEN CALAMITY COMES

FOCAL PASSAGES: HABAKKUK 1:5-6; 2:4, 14; 3:17-19A

Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. Habakkuk 1:5-6 [Context verse]

Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. ... For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2:4, 14

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength. Habakkuk 3:17-19a

Sermon Introduction

Habakkuk (huh-BAK-uhk) prophesied as the southern kingdom of Judah faced imminent invasion by the Chaldeans (Babylonians) and as the wickedness of his own people grew. As Habakkuk saw the wickedness of both his own people and the wickedness of the invaders God was choosing to use as an instrument of correction, he questioned God. His first question (1:1-4) inquires about God's forbearance for the wickedness of Judah. His second question (1:12-17), in light of God's answer to his first question, expresses dismay that God would use the Chaldeans (who were more wicked than Judah, in Habakkuk's estimation) to punish Judah. Finally, the prophet ends the book with a hymnic prayer, confessing his confidence in God and servitude to the will of God in the face of certain catastrophe.

Nestled into these questions and God's responses in this short book are three principles of hope that every believer can rely on when their environment is chaos, when wicked people flourish, and when we seek certainty for today.

ILLUSTRATION

Meet Rebecca, a biblical disciple living in Nigeria who exemplifies what you should do when encountering those who oppose the advancement of the gospel and hate you for your faithfulness to Christ. In her story, we see a modern-day situation of what Habakkuk addressed and point our hearts toward a proper response as biblical disciples when all around us seems to fall apart.

(Show the video, Rebecca: Nigeria, available for free download at www.persecutionsa.org/idop)



Sermon Builder Outline

I. KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE 1: WHEN CALAMITY COMES — VICTORY

A. **“But the righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4): Biblical disciples experience victory as they walk in the righteousness of Christ during difficult seasons.**

i. **“But”**

1. Contrasts the “puffed up” (KJV: “As for the proud one, his soul is not right within him, but the righteous will live by his faith.”)
2. Leads reader to see the stark difference between living by faith and living according to the pursuits of this world

ii. **“The righteous”**

1. Just and righteous in conduct and character towards God [see Strong’s H6662]
2. Righteousness is attained through Christ’s atonement alone.
 - a. “All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy cloth” (Isaiah 64:6).
 - b. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).
 - c. “...the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe...” (Romans 3:21-22).
3. Biblical disciples thirst for and pursue righteousness.
 - a. Matthew 5:6 — Our thirst for righteousness
 - b. 1 Timothy 6:11 and 2 Timothy 2:22 — Pursuing righteousness
 - c. Matthew 6:33 — The priority of seeking righteousness
4. Biblical disciples are persecuted for righteousness’ sake yet are not forsaken.
 - a. “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).
 - b. “But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled” (1 Peter 3:14).
 - c. “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).



- d. “Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:9-11).

iii. “Shall live by his faith”

1. “Shall live” — The Chaldeans are coming to bring judgment and destruction, but in the face of this calamity, the righteous live, bearing testimony to God.
2. “Live by his faith” — The faith of Christians is not simply a theory or philosophy but an activation of our righteousness into daily living:
 - a. We live by faith in good times and in bad.
 - b. We live by faith when we experience blessing and when we endure hardship.
 - c. We live by faith at any cost.

B. Illustration: (Victory/Faith in the Midst of Persecution)

Four masked gunmen charged into Mohammad Yousuf Bhat’s home on the evening of July 1, 2015, pushed his wife aside, and demanded to talk to him. After he stepped forward, the gunmen escorted the 43-year-old father of three outside his home in the Kashmir Valley and shot him seven times, killing him. Those who worked with Yousuf describe him as being a fearless, bold and passionate believer who “would not be quiet about Christ.”

In the end, his unflinching faith and evangelism of Kashmiri Muslims in North India led to his death. Since leaving Islam himself in 1999, Yousuf had known his life could end this way. While India is nearly 81 percent Hindu, the territory of Jammu and Kashmir is predominantly Muslim. In the Kashmir Valley, 97 percent of the nearly 7 million residents are Muslim. Islamic militants in the region have created a war zone in which both government soldiers and civilians are attacked by various radical groups.

Villagers, especially Christians, have become anxious since Yousuf’s murder. They are even afraid to speak of it. Before his death, Yousuf discussed the Islamists’ efforts to stop the spread of Christianity and the fear this caused among Christians. “In Kashmir, we can see the Islamic leaders start a movement to crush the believers in Kashmir valley, but this book [the Bible] changed my life,” he said. “I want to share my testimony of it.”

Despite the dangers, Yousuf boldly shared his faith in big ways. He helped create a disciple-making movement among Muslim converts and distributed thousands of Bibles and copies of *The JESUS Film*. “It would be fair to say that Muslims have been receptive to the gospel in Kashmir,” a front-line worker said. “The church grows, and Yousuf was seen by many as the leader of the church in



Kashmir.” After a major earthquake in the region, Yousuf worked with others to provide health and dental care in relief camps. He also helped distribute solar-powered lights to people without electricity and brought clean drinking water to thousands of people.

Such sacrificial acts of service had been a reflection of his deep faith ever since he encountered God through the Scriptures and left Islam. Life wasn’t easy after he turned to Christ, but he felt God’s presence.

“I got lots of persecution to my family,” he said. “My son was tortured. My daughter was also tortured by different people. Of course we get persecuted to [the] body, but inside we are getting so much peace.”

Yousuf was grateful for how these experiences increased his faith and helped him experience the peace of God. Citing Matthew 5:10, he said the persecution was a blessing.

Before his death, Yousuf knew there were plans to kill him. However, he forgave those who persecuted his family and plotted his death.

“God bless them,” he said. “Our prayer is that God will open their ‘spiritual eyes.’ So we are praying for them.” Following Yousuf’s murder, three militants were killed in a gun battle with security forces in Kashmir. Some believe the man who shot Yousuf was among those killed.

The week before he was killed, Yousuf visited 13 of the house churches that he and others had started, challenging each group to remain faithful. He also asked them to continue his work should anything happen to him.

Yousuf’s overall goal, he once said, was that Kashmir will come to know Christ.

“This is not a religion we can see; this is a freedom,” he said. “[Jesus] takes me out of darkness and into the light of the Lord. We are praying that there will be open worship of the Lord. This is our main burden in our hearts. My prayer is, when I see stars, like every evening, I want to see that many believers in Kashmir Valley. God give us power and victory in Kashmir.”

II. KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE 2: WHEN CALAMITY COMES — HOPE

A. **“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).**

i. **“For the earth will be filled as the water covers the sea”**

1. The earth belongs to the Lord as the psalmist declared in Psalm 24:1.
2. This promise is certain (“will be”).
3. This promise is complete, or “filled,” as God does not make false promises.



4. This promise is comprehensive (“As the waters cover the sea” gives the reader/hearer a mental image of the span of God’s redemptive work).

ii. “With the knowledge of”

1. “Knowledge” is the Hebrew word *yada* [Strong’s H3045].
2. This knowledge is more than simple information. Our world is full of information about God — just type “God” into any search engine and you will have more than 3.5 trillion results in under one second. But *information* about God is not *knowing* God.
3. In Hebrew thought, “knowledge” is understood in relational terms: to know God is to be in right relationship with God.

iii. “The glory of the LORD”

1. “Glory” is the Hebrew word *kabod* [Strong’s H3519].
2. This word is the technical term for God’s manifest presence:
 - a. Often represented as the Shekinah glory cloud (Exodus 16:10)
 - b. Also represented as a consuming fire (Exodus 24:17)
3. This glory involves honor or a position of power.
 - a. The glory of the Lord reveals Himself and His character.
4. His goodness sets Him above all other gods.
 - a. “Moses said to the Lord, ‘See, you say to me, “Bring up this people,” but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, “I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.” Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.’ And he said, ‘My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’ And he said to him, ‘If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?’ And the Lord said to Moses, ‘This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.’ Moses said, ‘Please show me your glory.’ And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name “The Lord.” And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.’ And the Lord said, ‘Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you



with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen” (Exodus 33:12-23).

- b. “It will be to me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it” (Jeremiah 33:9).
- c. “For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

B. Illustration: The Hope of God’s Glory in North Korea

North Korea began to tighten its control of the border in the mid-1990s, and fewer Chinese churches were willing to help North Koreans because of pressure and punishment from the Chinese government. Pastor Han’s church was the exception.

Word spread among North Koreans that if you needed help, you should go see Pastor Han. He provided clothes and food to his visitors, before carefully evaluating them for several days. If he believed a person was truly seeking to know God and was not a spy, he would cautiously begin to share Bible stories. After fully assessing the person’s character, he would share the gospel in its entirety and begin to train the new believer. New Christians would then join small house churches that Pastor Han maintained along the border and undergo several months of intensive training.

The pastor took a conservative but systematic approach to spreading the gospel in North Korea, training new believers and then encouraging them to return to their own country. “Pastor Han would have them invite their closest relatives or friends ... to China,” a front-line worker in the region said. Urging the North Koreans to share the gospel themselves in North Korea was much too dangerous.

Pastor Han took a risk each time he helped a North Korean who crossed the border into China, but his work was also very rewarding. In 2012, a woman who made her living smuggling various goods into North Korea came looking for the pastor. While “Jung-ah” [not her real name] was in prison in North Korea for smuggling, another prisoner had told her about God, using the term *Hananim*, meaning “One God.” Since North Koreans generally use the word *hanulnim*, meaning “sky god” or “god in the heavens,” Jung-ah became curious about the One God. After her release from prison, she crossed into China and went looking for Pastor Han.

When the pastor first met Jung-ah, he took her to a safe house where he taught other North Koreans. After several days, he determined that she was “very smart and she had a good heart,” Mrs. Han recalled. The pastor taught Jung-ah the Bible for three months, and her life was transformed. She left her smuggling work and began to help Pastor Han share the gospel with North Koreans.



Eventually, Jung-ah became one of the pastor's top workers in North Korea, sharing the gospel with more than 70 people and leading them to Pastor Han for further discipleship. Her work was cut short when in 2014 another of Pastor Han's disciples, Deacon Jang, was kidnapped in North Korea and mercilessly interrogated, ultimately giving up some details of Pastor Han's ministry.

Another man Pastor Han led to the Lord, "Sang-chul" [not his real name], was drawn to the pastor after hearing from him in North Korea. "The thing I really wanted to know from him was why he helped North Koreans, because it was very dangerous for Pastor Han to help North Koreans there," Sang-chul said. "Pastor Han unconditionally loved us and treated us well with love. I felt his heart. The more I met Pastor Han, I felt more his heart came from the Lord; without God he wouldn't help me. That is why I realized Christianity is a real religion."

Sang-chul could understand showing love to someone with the expectation of receiving something in return, but he had never seen someone like Pastor Han who gave to others for no apparent reason. "They helped us from a genuine heart even though they put themselves in danger," Sang-chul said. "They didn't ask anything from us."

After spending five months with Pastor Han, Sang-chul placed his faith in Christ. "From that time we made a group, ... and we received intensive training," Sang-chul said.

Four years after meeting the pastor, Sang-chul is still full of praise for his mentor. "He was a truthful man because China and North Korea discriminate against Christians," he said. "But in the middle of those kind of situations he has love; that is why he is different."

III. KINGDOM PERSPECTIVE 3: WHEN CALAMITY COMES — JOY

- A. "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength" (Habakkuk 3:17-19a).
 - i. All of the circumstances mentioned in vv. 17-18 ("*Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls*") are the result of the devastation caused by the invading Chaldean army, causing suffering to all of Judah.
 1. The devastation touched every aspect of Judean life.
 - a. Fig: primary staple food, also symbolic of wealth/prosperity
 - b. Fruit of vine: wine for feasts/festivals/celebrations, also symbolic of joy
 - c. Olive oil: was pressed three times; used for anointing in temple, for lamps/light, and for medicinal purposes; also symbolic of God's covenant blessing
 - d. "Fields yield no food": likely grain for bread, considered to be a gift from God (manna God provided in the wilderness)



- e. “Flock be cut off from the fold”: animals scattered to the wild; future herds vulnerable to predators and thieves
- f. Herd in the stalls: no meat for consumption, and no animals for sacrifice

ii. “Yet”

1. A term of contrast or a change of direction:
 - a. Habakkuk moves *from* describing devastation to a declaration of joy and *from* abject desolation to absolute jubilation.
 - The natural reaction of human beings to calamity is dejection or depression.
 - The reaction found only in our faith is absolute joy, no matter the calamity we face as biblical disciples.

iii. “I will rejoice”

1. This declaration is the prophet’s choice, even in the face of coming judgment.
2. This is not a form of self-help or “mind over matter” thinking. It is God working in the mind and heart of His beloved to give Habakkuk the capacity to rejoice in the face of calamity. It is a gift from God.

iv. “I will take joy”

1. “Joy is the flag that is flown from the citadel of the heart when the King is in residence.” (Source of quote unknown, possibly a Scottish preacher)
2. Joy is the fruit of a right relationship with God regardless of the circumstances one faces.
3. Unlike pleasure or enjoyment, joy is not created by one’s own efforts.

v. “GOD, the Lord, is my strength”

1. How is the prophet able to choose to rejoice and fly the flag of joy in his life?
 - a. Because his life is anchored in God, the Lord, who is his strength.
 - b. God did not transfer some type of super-spiritual strength to Habakkuk. Rather, God Himself became Habakkuk’s strength.
2. Other Scripture provides further insight into the strength of the Lord:
 - a. “I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service” (1 Timothy 1:12).
 - b. “That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being” (Ephesians 3:16).



B. Illustration: Joyful Worship Despite Difficult Seasons

Worshippers stand shoulder to shoulder on the auditorium floor as musicians sing and play joyfully from the stage. The balcony is also crowded, and even more people cluster around doors and windows to join in worship. The most surprising thing about this packed service, however, is its location — it's taking place in Muslim-majority Algeria, where religions other than Islam face tight government restrictions.

As evidenced by this worship service, the restrictions haven't hindered the Berber Christians living in northern Algeria. Within the last 30 years, the Berber people have reclaimed their heritage as the original inhabitants of the region, rejecting the language, culture and religion imposed on them by Arab Islamic invaders beginning in the seventh century. Having rejected Islam, many Berbers are now embracing Christianity. Both registered and unregistered Christian churches are growing exponentially in the region, some consisting of a handful of believers in a living room and others meeting in newly constructed church buildings with a complete church staff. Some of the churches VOM works with have even sent missionaries from their own congregations to share Christ with Algeria's Arab population, the very people who have oppressed Berber Christians for centuries.

Churches are allowed to meet openly, but not without risk. Outspoken Christians are sometimes beaten by Muslims in the community, and vandals throw rocks during church services and deface church buildings. Converts to Christianity are often rejected by their families and cannot find work to support themselves. But the church continues to grow as the love of Christ wins hearts in Algeria.

Corporate Reading Option as Congregational Response

Habakkuk 3:1-19

LEADER

This prayer was sung by the prophet Habakkuk.

CONGREGATION

I have heard all about you, LORD. I am filled with awe by your amazing works. In this time of our deep need, help us again as you did in years gone by. And in your anger, remember your mercy.

LEADER

I see God moving across the deserts from Edom, the Holy One coming from Mount Paran. His brilliant splendor fills the heavens, and the earth is filled with his praise.

CONGREGATION

His coming is as brilliant as the sunrise. Rays of light flash from his hands, where his awesome power is hidden.

**LEADER**

Pestilence marches before him; plague follows close behind. When he stops, the earth shakes. When he looks, the nations tremble.

CONGREGATION

He shatters the everlasting mountains and levels the eternal hills. He is the Eternal One!

LEADER

I see the people of Cushan in distress, and the nation of Midian trembling in terror. Was it in anger, LORD, that you struck the rivers and parted the sea? Were you displeased with them?

CONGREGATION

No, you were sending your chariots of salvation! You brandished your bow and your quiver of arrows. You split open the earth with flowing rivers. The mountains watched and trembled. Onward swept the raging waters. The mighty deep cried out, lifting its hands to the LORD. The sun and moon stood still in the sky as your brilliant arrows flew and your glittering spear flashed.

LEADER

You marched across the land in anger and trampled the nations in your fury. You went out to rescue your chosen people, to save your anointed ones. You crushed the heads of the wicked and stripped their bones from head to toe. With his own weapons, you destroyed the chief of those who rushed out like a whirlwind, thinking Israel would be easy prey. You trampled the sea with your horses, and the mighty waters piled high.

CONGREGATION

I trembled inside when I heard this; my lips quivered with fear. My legs gave way beneath me, and I shook in terror. I will wait quietly for the coming day when disaster will strike the people who invade us.

ALL

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign LORD is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.