

# Habakkuk 1 (3/31/19)

## Who was Habakkuk?

- Habakkuk was a prophet of the late 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

## Background:

- Written 600 years before the birth of Christ
- During the “divided Kingdom”- 10 tribes of Israel in the north, 2 tribes in the south called Judah.

## What is Habakkuk about?

- Habakkuk is about a Godly, faith-filled man processing and grappling with the mysteries of God’s plan.

## Why is Habakkuk important?

- Often we wrestle with understanding the reality that God is both sovereign AND good.
- Habakkuk teaches us that it is permissible to question what God is doing and to wrestle with the difficulties of life- all the while holding on to faith that God is still good.

## “Oh Lord, how long?” (1:1-4)

- The book of Habakkuk begins in a **very unique way** in that Habakkuk very boldly asked God why He tolerates sin in Judah.
  - Habakkuk lived in the final days of Judah- **despite remarkable revival** that had taken place under King Josiah in 621 B.C., society once again was engaging in social injustice and violence.
  - Habakkuk uses the words: “**violence**”, “**iniquity**”, “**wrong**”, “**destruction**”, “**strife**”, and “**contention**”.
- Habakkuk asks God, “**how long?**”, a phrase that actually occurs sixty-five times in the Bible often as psalmists would express their anguish over **God’s perceived delay in bringing justice**.
  - Habakkuk was disturbed that God seemed to be **oblivious to or unconcerned about the rampant evil in Judah**.
    - Apparently he’d been pleading for help, **but no help had come (1:2)**.
  - In vs. 3, Habakkuk asks God “**why**” **this kind of injustice was happening**.
    - In Hebrew thought, wickedness always leads to **societal trouble**, hardship, and **suffering**.
    - Vs. 4 makes it clear that this wickedness was manifesting itself in injustice as the “law is paralyzed” and “**justice never goes forth**”.
    - Righteous people were being **mistreated** by powerful people in **courts of law**.
  - Judges weren’t following Israel’s law code in **administering sentences**, and they were rendering unjust decisions (**probably due to bribes**).
    - The wicked “trapped” the righteous by forcing them to court on bogus charges where **unjust judges rendered decisions** against them.
    - Often the wealthy were able to take property, possessions, and even **the family as slaves**.
  - Habakkuk’s big question to God was, “**why are you allowing this to happen?**”
    - When painful situations happen, **it’s sometimes difficult to see how God can be a God of justice, love, and mercy** and be in control at the same time.
    - Honesty and depth in our **prayers, thoughts, and words** can lead us to greater trust in God.
  - God already knows **our thoughts** and our struggles, and He can handle our wrestling, **processing**, and attempts to understand His heart in **the midst of difficulty**.
    - When we **aren’t honest with ourselves**, with God, and with others about how we’re really doing in times of struggle- we set ourselves up to **grow bitter, resentful, and even faithless**.
    - Habakkuk takes **his questions to God**.

## “I am doing a work...” (1:5-11)

- Habakkuk seemed to think that God had been asleep on the job, **but God makes it clear that He has seen all that has gone on and will intervene**.
  - In fact, God makes it clear that He’s going to do something so **decisive and drastic** that Habakkuk and his countrymen (“you” in vs. 5 is plural) will be shocked.
  - Sometimes it **may appear as if God’s not at work**, but this reminds us that He sees.
- Not only that, His works are often beyond our **comprehension and understanding**.
  - If we knew the exact plans God has for us over the course of the rest of our lives, we would struggle to even **believe how it could be possible**.
  - What was **God’s plan to punish wickedness in Judah?**
  - God was going to send the “**Chaldeans**” (**Babylonians**) to deal with Judah’s sin.

- The **Babylonians were feared and dreaded by the world’s peoples and were lawless**, doing whatever they pleased (vs. 7).
  - Babylon was the greatest military on earth with a **well-equipped** and highly motivated army.
  - They “**all come for violence**” (vs. 9), which is ironic because **Judah is being judged for violence** against their fellow Jews (1:2-3).
- The **Babylonians were God’s chosen instrument** to punish Judah- so did they acknowledge and worship God?
  - No! They were “**guilty men, whose own might is their God**” (vs. 11).
  - God can use **anyone or anything** to accomplish His purposes.
  - Just because **someone is used by God** doesn’t mean they belong to God (**Matt. 7:21**).
- So **God answers Habakkuk’s question and responds** that He’s doing something bigger and more radical than **Habakkuk can even believe**.
  - In the **biggest mystery of your life story**- what if God is behind the scenes even now working out a plan for **His greatest glory and your greatest good?**
  - What if the reason you don’t know all of **the details of the plan** is because you’d have even more questions if you did?

## A 2<sup>nd</sup> Complaint (1:12-2:1)

- What **surprised Habakkuk** was not that God was planning judgment for Judah and had an answer to his questions...
  - It was the **agent of judgment** and the answer to Habakkuk’s **questions that shocked** him!
  - Whenever we ask God for revelation and for answers, **we need to be prepared to hear answers** that may not expect or sometimes even like.
- Habakkuk’s **biggest question** now becomes, “how can God be just and use a wicked nation like Babylon to punish Judah?”
  - In **vs. 12** he affirms that God is eternal, holy, and in spite of coming judgment/discipline, **God will protect His covenant people from complete destruction (“we shall not die”)**.
  - But Habakkuk is perplexed that a God that hates sin (vs. 13) can use **evil men** for His purposes.
- In verses 14-17, **Habakkuk compares those whom the Babylonians oppress** to defenseless fish caught in a net.
  - The Babylonians grow rich (“live in luxury”) **by those whom they conquer, and instead of giving glory to God**, they worship their “net” (vs. 16, they boast of their own military might, power, and even worship their leader).
  - How could **God use such a godless nation?**
- Habakkuk had **cried out to God about the mystery of evil**, and now he has confidence that God will answer him (2:1).
  - Like a sentinel perched **high in his watchtower scanning the horizon for signs** of an enemy army, the prophet stood ready with anticipation to hear what God would say to him.
  - When we are willing to **listen, humble ourselves, and wait on the Lord**- He’ll answer.

## How do we receive answers from God?

(1) Through **His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17)** (2) Through **Godly, wise counsel** within the Church or through close Christian friends/family. (3) Through **events, circumstances**, and our mind/conscience. (4) Through **revelation** (most subjective and should be verified by the previous).

- When **we wait on God’s answers**, sometimes we won’t get the answers we want- sometimes the answer we get is “no”, “not yet”, or **something else we don’t like**.
  - We have to rest **assured of the promise** we have that God works for the good of those **who love Him (Rom. 8:28) and for His glory**.
  - Even when it might **not feel good in the moment, we can know that He’s good**.
- In spite of all the **unknowns, confusion, frustration, and pain** that Habakkuk must be experiencing- there’s **one thing** he is certain of.
  - God is his “**rock**” (vs. 12)- a figure for **security, protection, and certainty in the midst of uncertain times**.
  - When life becomes **disappointing or frustrating**, we can be honest with ourselves and with **God because He’s still the rock**.

**-Honesty and depth** in our prayers **can lead us to a greater trust in God**.

**-In the greatest mysteries of your life**, know that God is behind the scenes working a plan for His greatest glory and your **greatest good**.

**-When we are willing to listen, humble ourselves, and wait on the Lord**- He’ll answer.