

THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK



Artist and Title Unknown

Living at the Intersection of Doubt and Faith

INTRODUCTION

As you observe local, national, and world-wide events, do you wonder if God hears His people's cries or if He cares about justice and salvation? Do you question God's answers to some prayers implying that your solutions are better? If our answers are honest, we would, most likely, say yes. Likewise, the minor prophet Habakkuk questioned God during a very difficult time in the life of Judah.

We know very little about Habakkuk whose name means "embracer" or "wrestler." Both meanings appropriately describe his unfolding prophecy. Scholars place Habakkuk in the late 7th century between 609 and 605 B.C. His ministry precedes the rise of the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) under King Nebuchadnezzar. In Judah, Josiah was killed in battle by Pharaoh Neco. The people of Judah chose his son Jehoahaz to replace him without consulting God. His evil reign ended after 3 short months when he was taken captive by the Egyptians. This opened the way for Eliakim, another son of Josiah, to be given both the throne and a new name by Pharaoh Neco. As a puppet of the Egyptians, Jehoiakim reigned in evil for 11 years until the Chaldeans defeated Egypt at Carchemish and seized control of Judah in 605 B.C. (see **2 Kings 23:28-24:7**). This would lead to the eventual deportation and exile of God's people in 586 B.C. (see **2 Kings 24:8-25:30**). Obviously, the social, political, and religious situations in Judah in Habakkuk's time were a chaotic mess!

Habakkuk cries out for the Lord to act but then doubts the way in which God declares He will respond. The prophet steps into this intersection of doubt and faith and delivers an amazing declaration of hope in God's steadfast love and faithfulness. Such a declaration is as vital today as it was then, for we also live at the intersection of doubt and faith. Remember: Faith is not the absence of doubt but is belief amid overwhelming doubt.

We hope this devotional prepares you for each worship service in this series. It includes each worship service's Scriptures for you to consider and meditate on. Please use this in your personal devotional worship or in your family worship. We pray it blesses you!

We all tend to prescribe the answers to our prayers. We think that God can come in only one way. But Scripture teaches us that God sometimes answers our prayers by allowing things to become much worse before they get better. He may sometimes do the opposite of what we anticipate. He may overwhelm us by confronting us with a Chaldean army. Yet it is a fundamental principle in the life and walk of faith that we must always be prepared for the unexpected when we are dealing with God.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, From Fear to Faith: Studies in the Book of Habakkuk

Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.
But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.
For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked...
But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,
until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.

Psalm 73:1-3, 16-17

HABAKKUK 1:1-11

Questioning and Doubt in the Midst of Suffering

1. Have you ever wondered why the wicked and arrogant prosper as the Psalmist does in *Psalm 73:1-3*? What conclusion did you come to? Did you wrestle with it long enough to receive an answer?
2. Read *Ephesians 1:3-10* and reflect on all that you have been given as a son or daughter of God through Jesus Christ. How does this compare to all that the wicked could gain in this life?
3. Consider the current condition of our world at the local, national, and international levels. How are they similar to those in Habakkuk's time in *Habakkuk 1:1-4*? Consider God's response in *1:5-11*. What might be some similar solutions that God may bring to pass in our time?
4. Meditate on the Psalmist's confession in *Psalm 73:25-28* and thank God for what you have experienced that is similar.

Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.
But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.

Psalm 73:25-28

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!
If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;
My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

Psalm 130:1-6

NABAKKUK 1:12-2:1

Perseverance in Remembering the Attributes of God

1. Are you patient to wait for the Lord when you have questions and doubts recognizing that our hope is in His word as does the Psalmist in *Psalm 130:1-6*?
2. According to *Ephesians 1:11-14*, what have we the children of God been given as the guarantee of our inheritance in Christ? What will be evident in our lives as a result of the presence of this guarantee (see *Galatians 5:16-24*)?
3. Read *Nabakkuk 1:12-2:1* and note the attributes of God that he highlights. How do these attributes of God help you to persevere in seasons of questioning and doubt?
4. *Psalm 130:7-8* declares God's ultimate will for His people. How does this truth inform and influence your life?

O, Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is plentiful redemption.
And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Psalm 130:7-8

Righteous are you, O Lord, and right are your rules.
You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness.
My zeal consumes me, because my foes forget your words.
Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it.
I am small and despised, yet I do not forget your precepts.

Psalm 119:137-141

NABAKKUK 2:2-5:

The Just Shall Live by Faith (Part 1): Communion

1. What does the Psalmist in *Psalm 119:137-141* turn to and cling to in every circumstance? What do you turn to and cling to in times of sorrow, in times of joy, and everything in between?
2. Meditate on *Ephesians 2:1-10* and give thanks for the gift of faith granted by God out of the richness of His mercy. How is your faith currently growing through sanctification in the power of the Spirit?
3. In *Nabakkuk 2:2-5*, God declares that “the righteous shall live by his faith.” How does one become righteous (see *Romans 4*)? How does our faith affect how we live (i.e. the various choices that we make)?
4. Whose righteousness provides comfort to the Psalmist in *Psalm 119:142-144*? Whose righteousness provides you with comfort in a time of trouble and anguish?

Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true.

Trouble and anguish have found me out, but your commandments are my delight.

Your testimonies are righteous forever, give me understanding that I may live.

Psalm 119:142-144

In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to my soul,
“Flee like a bird to your mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark the upright in heart;
if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

Psalms 11:1-3

HABAKKUK 2:6-20:

The Justice of God

1. Which way does the Psalmist run in *Psalms 11:1-3* when trouble befalls him?
2. What kind of people does Christ redeem in *Ephesians 2:11-13*? What are the missional implications of this for us as a church?
3. In *Habakkuk 2:6-20*, what evidences the justice of God? Is it important that God be just in judging sin?
4. According to *Psalms 11:4-7*, the Lord hates the wicked. What is a hallmark of the wicked in light of God’s will for redemption and shalom?

The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord’s throne is in heaven;
his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.
The Lord tests the righteous but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.
Let him rain coals on the wicked;
fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

Psalms 11:4-7

Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!
Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.
Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!
Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!
Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns! Yes, the world is established;
it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."

Psalm 96:1-10

HABAKKUK 3:1-16:

A Prayer to the Glory of the Just God

1. Meditate on the words of *Psalm 96:1-10* and remember all that the Lord has done for you that would be worthy of your worship in the splendor of His holiness.
2. What is the means of our reconciliation according to *Ephesians 2:14-22*? Where does God now dwell in the Spirit as a result? How should this affect how we treat one another?
3. Consider Habakkuk's prayer in *3:1-16* in light of chapter 1. How has he been affected?
4. Why would God's judgment cause creation to rejoice as in *Psalm 96:11-13*? (see *Romans 8*)

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the field exult, and everything in it!

Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to
judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in faithfulness.

Psalm 96:11-13

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God.
 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?
 My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long,
 “Where is your God?”
 These things I remember as I pour out my soul; how I would go with the throng
 and lead them in the procession to the house of God
 with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.
 Why are cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?
 Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.
 My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you
 from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, and Mount Mizar.

Psalm 42:1-6

HABAKKUK 3:17-19:

A Psalm Born of Faith in the Midst of Doubt: Communion

1. Do you long as the Psalmist does in *Psalm 42:1-6* to be in the presence of God the Father?
2. Read *Ephesians 3:14-19* and consider how you have grown as Paul desires for the saints.
3. What strikes you about Habakkuk’s psalm in *3:17-19* given the content of the prophecy?
4. What ultimately holds the Psalmist fast in hope in *Psalm 42:7-11*? What holds you fast?

Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls; all your breakers and waves have gone over me
 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the
 God of my life. I say to God, my rock: “Why have you forgotten me? Why do I go mourning
 because of the oppression of my enemy?” As with a deadly wound in my bones, my adversaries
 taunt me, while they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?”
 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?
 Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Psalm 42:7-11

Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!
Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works!
Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!
Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!
Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones!
He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth.
He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac...

Psalm 105:1-9

GALATIANS 3:1-14

The Just Shall Live by Faith (Part 2)

1. Read *Psalm 105:1-9* and note the Psalmist's response to God's work in his life. Where are you making the deeds of the Lord known given all that He has done for you?
2. What does it look like to be an imitator of God as Paul challenges us to be in *Ephesians 5:1-2*?
3. How does Paul apply *Nabakkuk 2:4* in *Galatians 3:1-14*? What are the implications of his application for us today?
4. Meditate on *Psalm 105:43-45* and consider how the Spirit has revealed God's glory through this series so as to increase your joy in Him and worship of Him.

So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing.

And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 105:43-45