
Habakkuk – Perplexity to Praise

Habakkuk 3:16-19

Introduction We have been talking about victimization – our world is filled with people who are victims. These are people who have been harmed and hurt by the actions of others. They have been the object of the verb of someone’s sins. In addition, we have mentioned how our culture has taken this problem, given it a psychological label and thus have explained and excused a lot of wicked behavior.

We have seen that the grand theme through the Bible from which have emerged several faith building, hope focusing truths.

Living in fallenness and among sinners, we will be sinned against.

Others may intend evil, but God is intending and designing good.

God uses the sin of others to refine His children.

You do not own your own suffering; it is a stewardship for others.

Submit to God in both His providence and His provision.

Do not strike back, but rather await God’s timing.

Be humble and lowly before God, allowing Him to defend you.

But what do we do when it seems that we are being sinned against by God? Now do not be shocked. There are many people who believe and feel that God has allowed or even actively brought them their suffering. He is responsible. The result is that they are angry with God. Many Christian pastors, churches and counselors will tell people that it is OK to be angry with God. Is that so? When you have been sinned against, understand that God is behind it in His providences, how do you respond? Are you angry? Frustrated? Perplexed? Does the “openness of God” seem to have the answers?

Habakkuk takes us right there. In an unusual style for prophetic books, Habakkuk engages God in the form of a dramatic dialog. Job and Canticles take this form. However, among the prophets, this book is unique in its structure. It is also so very contemporary in its struggle.

It was written around 607BC during the reign of Jehoiakim, the godless king who led Judah down the path of destruction (2 Kings 23:34-24:5; Jeremiah 22:17). He would have been a contemporary of Jeremiah at home and Daniel abroad. Babylon was the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. The people of God were being dragged off into 70 years of captivity from which only two tribes would return. The message of the book reflects the struggle of godly people in all ages when it seems that all around them everything is going wrong. It wrestles with piercing clarity with the bottom line of where is God when everything falls apart for His people.

Here is the question before you: How are you supposed to accept the fact that God allowed or even brought upon the experience of someone sinning against you?

Dialog - Faith Troubled in Questions**(1:1-2:20)**

Here is God's preacher and prophet. He is observing what is happening around him. He probably has read the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Moreover, he has a problem. It is a familiar problem. Things that are going on our world just do not seem to be right!

Complaint - Why do You tolerate wrong?**(1:2-4)**

Habakkuk had called on God and had apparently received no answer. He thought that his requests should be answered because of what he knew to be true about God. If God had not answered, then why was God tolerating evil?

At this point, Habakkuk is praying about and expecting the hand of God to deal with the evil *in God's people*. He had preached and prayed and God still had not moved to deliver his people from their sinning ways. Why does God tolerate this?

Response - Justice will come in a most unexpected way. (1:5-11)

God's response is somewhat startling. He does not tolerate evil. Nor is He going to deal with their sin in a way that is expected by Habakkuk. He is going to do something that is wholly unexpected. He is going to deal with the sins of His people by raising up Babylon.

We had better listen to this. *It may well be that the rise of pervasive evil in our culture and apostate churches is God's judgment on His people.* It is quite possible to make a direct application from the principle that God declares.

Complaint - How does this fit in with Your character? (1:12-2:1)

Now Habakkuk has a real problem. How can this be? How can God, who is holy in unimaginable ways, raise up wickedness in order to judge God's people? How can this possibly fit with the character of God?

The trembling outrage is evident in verse 13, "Why are you silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" He obviously thinks God is grading on a curve. God's people are not nearly the sinners the Babylonians are; how can God use them to engulf his people in judgment?

How can this be possible when God is too pure to look on evil with approval and cannot tolerate wrong (v.13)? He is the Holy One.

Therefore, Habakkuk asserts that they will not die. Now I have news for Habakkuk and so does God. They will most certainly die. They will die terrible deaths. However, as he will soon learn, there are worse things than death.

I love Habakkuk at this point. This is so like us. He challenges God. He has sort-of thrown down the gauntlet. Now, he goes out onto the Temple or city walls and sits down with his arms folded. "Here I am, sitting right here. I do not understand what is going on here. I want to know why. Now what do you have to say for yourself, God?"

Response - *The righteous believe that God is in control.* (2:2-20)

The Lord's response to Habakkuk is massive. Listen to this.

(v.2-3) – What God is about to reveal will not come fully to pass until the very end of time. In other words Habakkuk, you will never see the fullness of what I am doing in your lifetime.

God is not limited to your agenda, to your perspective or your time line.

(v.4-5) – In contrast to prideful sin and pleasure seeking, the just will live by faith (the righteous will live by his faith). In other words, when everything is falling apart and God does not seem to care, when he seems to be tolerating sin against you, and seems to be going against His very holiness and goodness, *we must live by faith.*

You must live through all the circumstances of life by faith.

(v.6-17) – God denounces several categories of sin. Now I suspect that these categories were just as true of God's people as they were of Babylon. The searching light of God's holiness uncovered the sin that God's people were committing. These sins were ones they learned at the feet of the nations around them.

You must examine yourself for your own sin.

(v.18-19) – God shows the futility of idols. Men make it, impute divinity to it, and expect it to teach and guide them. It is utter foolishness. Yet, it is too often precisely what God's people were doing. They were carving images. Today, we today manufacture new approaches to life that are idolatrous lies and we expect to live by them. When God crushes your heart idols by His providence, even through the bringing of wicked people to sin against you, you will often respond with anger and accusations.

You must see how accusing God or being angry with God is the fruit of idolatry.

(v.20) – The closing words ring like a massive bell across the valley of our trembling lives. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him." What a word. God is on His throne - bow in silence before Him.

You must bow before God alone and silence any words of rebellion in your heart or in your mouth.

Doxology - Faith Triumphant in Song (3:1-19)

Here is Habakkuk's response. This prayer is a psalm. He breaks out in song. From dialog to doxology; from perplexity to praise; from trembling against God to trusting in God – these are all the movements of faith.

Habakkuk is an unusual name derived from the verb *habaq*, or *embrace*. His name means "One Who Embraces or Clings". His name is significant here at the end of the book. Now can you see some connections from here to a text in Hebrews? They were able to joyfully accept suffering because their faith believed that God was in control and He Himself is the only fully satisfying reward.

His Grand Theme (3:1-2)

Remembering the greatness of God in His works motivates us to hunger for His mercy to do it again.

His Glorious Vision (3:4-15)

The Majestic Person of God (v.3-4)

Habakkuk, the worshipper celebrates the holiness, glory, praise and splendor of God. He is both revealed and hidden. He moves with sovereign and stately majesty. He comes from nowhere (Temen) and is everywhere. *When we have a right view of God, we will have a right response to God.* This is a central truth in the Scripture and for our lives. I am convinced that a wrong view of God underlies all our rebellion, sin and self.

The Awesome Power of God (v.4-15)

Then, His power moving as a storm of wrath against sinners, is underscored God is moving against all the wicked. Right in the midst of this wrath, there is the merciful deliverance of His people (v.13). We are most safe in the center of where God's mercies are.

His Glad Response (3:16-19)

In Patient Submission (v.16)

Habakkuk submits, patiently waiting for God. The wicked nation may rise. The people of God may suffer. Nevertheless, the mercies of God rest on the righteous, on those who please God by faith in the midst of pain.

With Joyous Acceptance (v.17-18)

When everything is lost and the very things that mark the blessings of God are destroyed, he will rejoice in His God. This joy is an active pursuit on his part. It must be for you as well. This is not a passive resignation to what you cannot change. It is an active embracing of Whom you love, serve and follow. Joy is a choice. Rejoicing is the experience of a heart repented and submitted to God and truth.

By Strengthened Expectation**(v.19)**

In the beautiful metaphor of a loving relationship used in the Song of Solomon, Habakkuk moves to higher ground like a deer, strengthened by His God. How wonderful it is in the midst of pain and perplexity to run in the strength of God's grace in the high mountains of His love.

Conclusion Where is God when everything is falling apart?

He is in control.

He is going to deal with sin in justice.

He is going to deliver His people.

He has purposes whose design will glorify Him.

What does God teach you to believe when you are being sinned against?

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God is not limited to your agenda, to your perspective or your time line.

You must live through all the circumstances of life by faith.

You must examine yourself for your own sin.

You must see how accusing God or being angry with God is the fruit of idolatry.

You must bow before God alone and silence any words of rebellion in your heart or in your mouth.

What do we do when everything is falling apart?

Believe all that God has taught us.

Trust God to do what is best for us *in the long run*.

Accept with joy suffering and loss because you have something better and lasting.

Turn away from your own resources and draw from all the resources of your Sovereign Lord.

