

“Habakkuk here faces the dilemma that has confronted faithful people in every age—the dilemma of seemingly unanswered prayer for the healing of society. The prophet is one with all those persons who fervently pray for peace in our world and who experience only war, who pray for God’s good to come on earth and who find only human evil. But he is also one with every soul who has prayed for healing beside a sickbed only to be confronted with death; with every spouse who has prayed for love to come into a home and then found only hatred and anger; with every anxious person who has prayed for serenity but then been further disturbed and agitated.” – Elizabeth Achtemeier

CONTEXT: Assyria been big empire for while. Taken Northern Kingdom Captive. Judah was vassal state of Assyria under Manasseh (Hezekiah’s son). The people are entrenched with idolatry (2 Kings 21:9). Babylon is rising as an empire. Manasseh’s grandson Josiah becomes King and begins sweeping reforms to lead the people back to God and His covenant. Babylon wages war against Assyria. The Egyptian Pharaoh Neco travels north to help Assyria and Josiah rides out to stop him at Megiddo. Josiah is killed at his reforms die with him. Jehoiakim takes the throne and reverses them. The kingdom of Judah is plunged again into wickedness, idolatry, and injustice.

I. Habakkuk’s First Question: Why Don’t You Act Against Evil (v. 1-4)

A. The Burden of Habakkuk (1)

1. Word “oracle” also translated burden
2. Is what Habakkuk saw but also weight upon him
3. Habakkuk described as “prophet” – that is all we know about him
4. The prophet begins by asking troubling questions of God

B. Why Do You Not Answer? (2)

1. He begins by asking “how long” – until you answer?
 - a. apparently Habakkuk has been praying and calling out to God for some time about the state of affairs
 - b. He has been crying for help and it seems like God doesn’t hear – and doesn’t answer
 - c. He has been calling for salvation from the violence and injustice but it seems there is no deliverance forthcoming
2. Habakkuk’s Question is Not Asked in Doubt or Arrogance
 - a. He is a godly man – a prophet of the people
 - b. He is offering a question that is troubling his soul to God
 - c. His question is akin to the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-10

C. Why Do You Not Act Against Wickedness? (3)

1. He asks why so much wickedness is allowed before him?
 - a. Notice that he knows God is in control – “why do you make me see...”
 - b. It seems that God is not acting but idly looking at all the wrong
 - c. He decries all the destruction, violence, strife, and contention
2. He asks why Is The Law And Justice Not Upheld? (4)

- a. The law is paralyzed and justice isn't done
 - i. He is asking if the law is ignored because God is not acting
 - b. The prophet is bemoaning the state of Judah after the death of Josiah
 - i. The law is God's law – pagan nations would not hold to it
 - ii. The people were forsaking justice and descending into wickedness
 - iii. Your people are acting like this – why are you not doing anything
 - 3. Context of Habakkuk:
 - a. Josiah was a good king in Judah – he enacted many reforms to bring the people back to the covenant and worship of God. 2 Chronicles 34:3-7
 - b. Josiah was killed in the battle of Megiddo by Pharaoh Neco and the Egyptian army in 609 B.C. – his reforms seem to have died with him as Israel returned to their ways
 - c. When Josiah died – Jehoiakim took the throne – he was a wicked king
 - i. See Jeremiah 26:20-23 – Jehoiakim killed a prophet
 - ii. the rulers of Judah were wicked and there was no justice available
 - 4. TODAY: War, Abortion, Sexual Wickedness, Political Corruption, Acceptance of Evil
 - 5. We should loathe wickedness and injustice – we should take it to God in prayer
 - a. He is big enough for our questions
 - b. We must ask our question with a heart of faith in God
- II. God's First Answer: I Am Working (v.5-11)
- A. God Is Working Among The Nations (5)
 - 1. God tells the prophet to look to the nations and see
 - a. God's answer is not found among His people but among the nations
 - b. God is working there – He tells the prophet to "look" meaning he is already working
 - i. Look is plural – calling the prophet as the representative of the nation to all look and see His work
 - 2. God tells the prophet that His work will be hard for him to believe
 - B. God is Bringing Forth The Chaldeans (6-11)
 - 1. He is raising up the Chaldeans?
 - a. Habakkuk probably expected God to work graciously through revival to draw His people back to Himself
 - b. Instead God tells him He is bringing an even more wicked nation against them in judgment
 - 2. The Description of the Chaldeans (6b-11)
 - a. They are Conquerors (v.6)
 - i. They march through and seize what is not theirs
 - b. They are Ruthless (v.7)
 - i. They inspire dread and fear in all those in their path
 - ii. They have no sense of justice except what benefits them
 - iii. Their dignity is bound up in their strength and power
 - c. They are Fierce and Swift Like Predators (v.8)
 - i. God describes their calvary and army in terms of predatory animals
 - ii. Their horses are swift like leopards and fierce like wolves
 - iii. They press proudly on – they are determined and unrelenting

- iv. They devour fast as an eagle swoops in
 - d. They are destroyers and enslavers (v.9)
 - i. They come for violence – to plunder and kill
 - interesting that God's answer to the prophet decrying violence is to bring more violence.
 - ii. They come to take captives – implying God's people will be among them
 - e. They are arrogant and powerful (v.10)
 - i. They scoff and laugh at rulers and fortresses that align against them to do battle
 - ii. They build siege works easily to overcome defenses
 - f. They are wicked and idolatrous (v.11)
 - i. They are proclaimed to be guilty men by God himself –
 - ii. They are idolatrous in that they serve their own might as their god
- III. Habakkuk's Second Question: How Can You Do This?
- A. Habakkuk Knows God's Nature And Righteousness (12-13a)
- Habakkuk can only hold to what He knows about His God
1. You are faithful to your covenant people (12a)
 - a. He says you are everlasting and holy
 - i. Notice – My God – My Holy One
 - ii. Habakkuk is confessing His faith – his love – his loyalty
 - iii. He settles his heart to trust in his God no matter what
 - b. Because of this Habakkuk cries – we shall not die
 - c. He knows that Israel is God's covenant people and his covenant is everlasting
 - i. God cannot be set on destroying his people
 - ii. God's covenant would be void if He did so
 - iii. God appeared to be doing the opposite of what Habakkuk believed of God. The God who is too pure to look on evil in fact tolerated the treacherous and stood silent while the wicked swallowed up the righteous.
 2. You are right to bring judgment on your people (12b)
 - a. But he knows that God is right to bring them as a reproof and judgment
 - b. This the prophet understands and sees
 - i. He accepts God's right to bring judgment
 - ii. He accepts that the people of Judah deserve judgment
 3. You are pure and holy and cannot look upon evil (13a)

HE KNOWS GODS HOLY NATURE

 - a. He knows that God must take action
 - b. He knows that God cannot forsake justice
 - c. But there is a huge question Habakkuk doesn't understand
 - i. There seems to be a contradiction between his nature and this act
 - ii. Habakkuk's problem was with the silence of God in the face of the particular wickedness of the Chaldeans —not their wickedness as such, but the divine permission given to such wickedness to swallow up those more righteous.
- B. Habakkuk Asks How God Can Use Babylon (13b-2:1)
1. How can you use an even more wicked nation for judgment? (13b)

- a. Compared to Babylon, Israel seems like a godly nation
 - b. How could God use a nation more wicked and idolatrous to judge his people
 - i. It seems that the cure is worse than the disease
 - ii. but couldn't God find a better instrument?
 - iii. Habakkuk still has an issue. Habakkuk's creed told him that Thou ... canst not look on wrong, but here was God looking on it and letting it intensify.
 - c. Habakkuk's point is that such divine behavior does "not hasten the coming of God's order. It simply replaces a chaotic society with one that is totally godless— with the rule of a foreign people that makes it own might its god (1:11) and that worships that might as the source of its life (1:16).... [God] has seemed to move even further distant from the goal of the establishment of his right order in the world, and Habakkuk cannot understand that any more than can we."
2. You are making your people helpless to be destroyed (14-15)
 - a. Habakkuk bemoans the fact that this nation is coming to destroy them
 - b. They will be like helpless fish being caught and eaten
 - c. They will suffer even more as the Babylonians rejoice
 - i. - even those who were righteous among the people would suffer
 - Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah
 - d. Perhaps the most repulsive element of the entire picture is the fiendish gloating of the Chaldeans. They gleefully inflict these humiliating brutalities on their victims. How can this be? Is this procedure actually the right way for the Lord to deal with his own people?'
 3. You will use an idolatrous nation against your own people? (16)
 - a. This nation doesn't even recognize God as the true God
 - b. They worship their implements of war (nets)
 - c. They are rich in their plunder and wickedness
 4. Is this the end of your people (17)
 - a. Are you empowering this wicked people to destroy everyone?
 - b. Are you letting them destroy your nation Israel?
- C. Habakkuk Resolves To Wait For His Answer (2:1)
1. Habakkuk here shows that his questions are from a heart of faith
 2. He does not doubt and deny – refusing to wait for God's answer – Instead, he brings his question before God and will not depart from his ordained post until he has an answer
 3. 'Habakkuk knows that Yahweh's second respond to his complaint may not come immediately. He is prepared to wait for it ... An answer will come: the prophet is sure of that ...
- D. We can't trust our own perspective – must trust in His nature and word
- E. God has a purpose and will bring justice in His time and His way
1. "As will be evident, his views of God were right (cf. Ps 82; Isa 57:15), but his perspective was too limited. He had looked for the punishment of the wicked so that the prosperity of his people could be assured, but God, who knew the end from the beginning, looked for the punishment of Habakkuk's people so that they could be restored to fellowship."

- F. Must Rest in our position with God and His goodness and power
 - 1. We can't think that He is always working in how we think is best
 - 2. We can't think that we know best
 - 3. We can't doubt that He is working according to His nature.

IV. God's Second Answer (2:2-5)

A. God gives A Sure Word (2-3)

- 1. Write The Vision (2)
- 2. Make it Plain For all
- 3. The Vision Is Sure To Come (3)

B. God Indeed Sees The Wicked And The Righteous (4-5)

- 1. Pride has corrupted the soul – Textual issue here (wine [MT])
 - The Dead Sea Scroll of Habakkuk makes “wealth” (*hôn*) the subject of the opening line, a reading followed by a number of translations.
 - a. NIV - 5 indeed, wine betrays him; he is arrogant and never at rest.
 - b. NASB - “Furthermore, wine betrays the haughty man, So that he does not stay at home.
 - c. NLT - 5 Wealth is treacherous, and the arrogant are never at rest.
 - d. HCSB - 5 Moreover, wine betrays; an arrogant man is never at rest.
- 2. indeed, the Babylonian regime was to be overthrown in just the circumstances of drunken pride portrayed here (cf. Dan 5:1–31)—such drunkenness being attested among ancient historians as characteristic of the Babylonians.”
- 3. But it is arrogance that takes center stage in God's description of Babylon
 - a. Like death and the grave (Sheol), the Babylonians never have enough
 - b. In short, the LORD compares the proud to drunken men, who, forgetting all reason and shame, abandon themselves to all that is disgraceful; for the drunkard distinguishes nothing and becomes like a brute animal, so that he shuns nothing that is base and unbecoming. Understood figuratively, the Babylonians are intoxicated with power and dominion. Success has swollen and befuddled their heads.
- 2. The Righteous Will Live By Faith
 - a. Verse 4 is cited three times in the New Testament. Paul uses it in Galatians 3:11 to demonstrate that salvation is not achieved by keeping the works of the law but is entered into only on the basis of genuine faith. In Romans 1:17, Paul emphasizes the fact that the believer's salvation, acquired by faith, must also be lived out totally in faith. The writer of Hebrews (10:35–38) points out that the sure coming of Christ for his faithful ones makes living by faith a categorical necessity.
- 3. Pride and Greed Characterize Babylon (5)
 - a. God affirms the wickedness of the Babylonians
 - b. The next section shows they will not be rewarded for their sin

c. They too will fall under the judgment of God – but he will use them against his ppl