

Habakkuk 3:16-19

The Heart That Lives By Faith

He has been profoundly challenged and, indeed, changed by this time in the place of prayer. The Habakkuk who speaks in these four verses is a very different person from the Habakkuk to whom we were introduced at the beginning of the book.

I. Habakkuk Is Undone By God's Presence (16a)

A. Has Physical Response from head to toe

1. His encounter with God has left him speechless
2. "body" (belly, inward parts) – reference to seat of will, emotions
3. He has lost control of physical faculties
 - a. trembling and quivering
 - b. because of what he has heard from God (i.e. the sound)

B. Rottenness Enters Bones

1. He recognizes his own sin and is undone (as Isaiah 6)
2. He is overwhelmed from the inside out in the presence of God

C. The Word of God Has Cut Him To His Core

1. the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart' (Heb. 4:12).
2. This reaction is good – it is proper before the Lord
3. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isa 66:2b).

D. all this was in response to Habakkuk's specific request to God to renew his work (3:2). Like us, the prophet did not fully appreciate what he was asking.

II. Habakkuk Resolves To Wait Quietly (16b)

A. Wait Quietly

1. Habakkuk had moved from "how long?" (his very first words to God in Hab 1:2) to "I will wait patiently."
 - a. 'If it seem slow, wait for it' (2:3) God had commanded it
2. Habakkuk will no longer question God's plans, motives, or judgment
3. His faith is expressed in silent waiting for he knows God is faithful

B. Wait For God's Justice

1. He accepts the coming judgment of God
2. He knows his God and will wait for justice to be fulfilled on the oppressors
3. He is leaving vengeance and justice in God's hands

C. It requires a resolute faith to wait based on a promise that is unseen

III. Habakkuk Resolves To Rejoice in God (17-19)

A. He will rejoice though all provision is removed (17)

1. The failure of all these resources had serious economic and spiritual ramifications
2. The six clauses of v. 17 seem to be in ascending order of severity

- a. Figs served as a delicacy in Israel, but their loss did not produce severe hardship.
 - b. Grapes provided the daily drink, but again the loss of the fruit of the vine would produce inconvenience rather than privation
 - c. The olive crop on the other hand produced oil for cooking and lighting.
 - d. Grain (barley and wheat) provided for the staple diet of Palestine. The failure of the fields to produce food might mean starvation for large segments of the population
 - e. Both sheep and cattle made up much of the wealth of Palestine. Sheep and goats provided wool and the occasional meat for the Israelite diet.
3. Together, the losses spelled economic disaster and devastating loss of hope—loss of their daily provisions, loss of their economic strength, loss of the Lord’s blessing due to their sin (Lev 26; Deut 28; Amos 4:6–9; Hag 1:6–11).
- B. He will take joy in God (18)
- 1. Even in the face of the loss of all things – he will take joy in God
 - 2. The prophet has learned to rejoice, not in any particular quantity or quality of blessings, but in God himself.
 - 3. true blessedness consists, not in receiving good things from his hand, but in a personal relationship of trust between an individual and his or her God: I will joy in the God of my salvation.
 - 4. Though he might lose everything in this world which normally brings life and joy, Habakkuk vowed to rejoice in the Lord and to joy in God
 - 5. NOTICE: Not just toughing it out – but rejoicing
- C. He will draw strength from God (19a)
- 1. He does not muster strength on his own – or depend on anything in him
 - 2. There is no technique to master, no guru to consult, no formula to adopt: GOD, the Lord, is my strength, no more, no less.
- D. He will walk in God’s power (19b)
- 1. When the Scriptures talk of high places, they consistently refer to places under the control of forces hostile to the LORD (over forty times in the Old Testament).
 - 2. Habakkuk knew he would walk in dangerous and harmful places
 - 3. God would equip him to tread them as sure-footed as a deer
 - 4. The hind (a female deer) was noted for its surefootedness in high places. Drawing on an image from Ps 18:34, Habakkuk acknowledged the protection of God in every experience of life

Habakkuk has been through the whole gamut of faith and doubt in the course of these three chapters. The essence of the vision given to him by God is the essence of the Christian gospel. God’s word, like God himself, never changes: it endures for ever. But each person and each community has to learn in practice what it means to live by faith