

“A Conversation With God”

Habakkuk chapters 1, 2, 3

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Please turn in your Bible to the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk was one of the Minor Prophets of which there were 12 in number. They not called Minor because they're under 21. They're not called Minor because they're less important than the Major Prophets. They are called Minor Prophets because they produced shorter writings than the Major Prophets. A genuine prophet, Minor or Major, was a spokesman for God, bringing whatever message was needed: correction, rebuke, and warning, or comfort, assurance and a glimpse at relevant future events..

Most of us know very little about the Minor Prophets, so over the next couple of weeks or a few weeks or however long, I want to consider some of the Minor Prophets. I won't commit myself to do all 12 of them or even to 2 of them or to any particular order – we'll see how the Lord leads.

Today we will consider Habakkuk. Little is known about him, but some speculate by the nature of his writing, which is similar to the poetic style of the Psalms, that he was a Levitical lyricist. Habakkuk wrote this prophecy just before the fall of Judah. Habakkuk was announcing God's coming judgment upon His people because of their sin and wickedness.

Habakkuk engages in a struggle to understand why God seems to do nothing about the rampant wickedness, strife and oppression in Judah. I'm calling this sermon “A Conversation with God.” It may be a conversation we would like to have.

1. HABAKKUK POSES A QUESTION:

- a. Habakkuk engages in a struggle to understand the nature of God and His seeming slowness in dealing with the rampant evil of the people. “How long, O LORD, will I call for help, And You will not hear? I cry out to You, ‘Violence! Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, And cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted.” Habakkuk 1:2-4 (NASB).
 - i. “Are you going to punish the wicked?”
 - ii. “Look and see the violence and strife and lawlessness and injustice that is so evident to me!”
 - iii. “I'm sick of the sight of it all!”
- b. God replies, “Look among the nations! Observe! Be astonished! Wonder! Because I am doing something in your days — You would not believe if you were told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, That fierce and impetuous people Who march

throughout the earth To seize dwelling places which are not theirs. They are dreaded and feared; Their justice and authority originate with themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards And keener than wolves in the evening. Their horsemen come galloping, Their horsemen come from afar; They fly like an eagle swooping down to devour. All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces moves forward. They collect captives like sand. They mock at kings And rulers are a laughing matter to them. They laugh at every fortress And heap up rubble to capture it. Then they will sweep through like the wind and pass on. But they will be held guilty, They whose strength is their god." Habakkuk 1:5-11 (NASB).

- i. "I am doing something!" When it looks like God is doing nothnnh – He is doing something!
 - ii. "I am using the fearsome Chaldeans even though they are wicked!" God uses who He chooses!
 - iii. "But they'll be dealt with according to their own sins." He is not unmindful of their transgressions.
- c. Habakkuk responds, "But, something seems out of whack here! Israel needs spanking but why use skunks who are worse than we are?"
- i. He is still confused as to how a Holy God could consider using iniquitous pagans., "You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct. Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?"
 - ii. He reminds God of the cruelty of the Chaldeans. "Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, Like creeping things without a ruler over them? The Chaldeans bring all of them up with a hook, Drag them away with their net, And gather them together in their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad. Therefore they offer a sacrifice to their net And burn incense to their fishing net; Because through these things their catch is large, And their food is plentiful. Will they therefore empty their net And continually slay nations without sparing?" Habakkuk 1:12-17 (NASB). "Why?"
- d. Have you looked at our present world and wondered, "Why has God let this mess go on?" "Why does evil seem to triumph? How long, Oh Lord, will you withhold your conquest of evil?"
- i. God's timing is not our timing.
 - ii. God's ways are not our ways.
 - iii. God's delay is not denial.
 - iv. God is neither too late nor too early.
- e. A couple of illustrations illustrate the "Why?" question.
- i. Calvin: "it's not fair!"
 - ii. Two elderly ladies were eating ice cream when they noticed at the table next to them two elderly men were doing the same. One of the ladies complained, "Waiter! Why did those men get more ice cream than we did?" Rather than have a scene, he gave each of the ladies another scoop. But one of them complained, "Waiter! Why did she

get more ice cream than I did?” When something happens that we don’t like, we ask, “Why?” Habakkuk asks, “Why?” and then,

2. HABAKKUK PREPARES TO WATCH:

- a. Habakkuk decides to wait it out. “I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved.” Habakkuk 2:1 (NASB).
 - i. Waiting is an occupation that I find difficult and distasteful.
 - ii. Waiting is often vexing and discouraging.
 - iii. But we need to learn to watch and wait.
- b. God said, “Record the vision And inscribe it on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith.” Habakkuk 2:2-4 (NASB).
 - i. Though justice and vindication seem slow in coming it will surely transpire.
 - ii. The time is appointed and it will occur according to plan.
 - iii. So, we wait. We don’t like it, but those who live by faith will wait and:
 - (1) Learn courage: Psalm 27:14.
 - (2) Learn to hope: Psalm 130:5.
 - (3) Gain new strength: Isaiah 40:31.
 - (4) Learn patience. Romans 8:25.
 - (5) G. Campbell Morgan said, “Waiting for God is not laziness. Waiting for God is not going to sleep. Waiting for God is not the abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means, first, activity under command; second, readiness for any new command that may come; third, the ability to do nothing until the command is given.”
- c. Then God reveals the woes and afflictions of the evil ones.
 - i. Woe to those who heap up what is not their own will be plundered.
 - ii. Woe to those who build mansions for themselves by dishonest gain won’t get to enjoy them for long.
 - iii. Woe to those who build whole cities by the wealth gotten by criminal acts.
 - iv. Woe to those who lead others into debauchery and immorality because they themselves will be disgraced.
 - v. Woe to those who are idolaters because the living God will judge them.
- d. What troubles you most about our world?
 - i. Its “me first, I’m entitled!” outlook?
 - ii. Is it the virulent immorality?
 - iii. Is it the murder of millions of unborn images of God?
 - iv. Is it man’s inhumanity to his fellow man?
 - v. Is it corruption in business, education and politics?
 - vi. Whatever it is, God will deal with it in His way, His time and His power.
- e. A little boy was told by his father to wait on a corner bench while he had a tire changed on his car. It turned out that the car required more attention than the man had anticipated, and it took over an hour.

The father anxiously hurried back to get his little boy, and found him right where he had told him to stay. He said to the boy, "Did you think I had forgotten about you?" "Oh, no," was the reply, "I knew you would come. I wasn't a bit worried. I stayed where you told me, and waited, and watched for you."

We need to be like that little boy. Have a perfect trust in God, as you await His coming, watching and waiting in perfect obedience to Him. He has it all under control habakkuk realized that and:

HABAKKUK POURS OUT PRAISE:

- f. Note the poetic imagery to give expression to the might, majesty, miracles and march of God: "LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy. God comes from Teman, And the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covers the heavens, And the earth is full of His praise. His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, And there is the hiding of His power. Before Him goes pestilence, And plague comes after Him. He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, The ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling. Did the LORD rage against the rivers, Or was Your anger against the rivers, Or was Your wrath against the sea, That You rode on Your horses, On Your chariots of salvation? Your bow was made bare, The rods of chastisement were sworn. You cleaved the earth with rivers. The mountains saw You and quaked; The downpour of waters swept by. The deep uttered forth its voice, It lifted high its hands. Sun and moon stood in their places; They went away at the light of Your arrows, At the radiance of Your gleaming spear. In indignation You marched through the earth; In anger You trampled the nations. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head of the house of the evil To lay him open from thigh to neck. You pierced with his own spears The head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; Their exultation was like those Who devour the oppressed in secret. You trampled on the sea with Your horses, On the surge of many waters. I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us." Habakkuk 3:2-16 (NASB).
- g. Then comes one of the finest expressions of humble submission to, and acceptance of and agreement with, the will of God whether it be pleasant or painful, whether it be prosperity or poverty.
 - i. He admits to some temerity: "I heard and my inward parts trembled, At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, And in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, For the people to arise who will invade us."
 - ii. Yet, because Habakkuk has faith, he also has hope, and trust. So he declared, "Though the fig tree should not blossom And there be no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive should fail And the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold And there be no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will exult in

the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord GOD is my strength, And He has made my feet like hinds' feet, And makes me walk on my high places.” Habakkuk 3:16-19 (NASB).

h. Lessons we learn from Habakkuk:

i. It is okay to ask questions when we are troubled.

ii. We ought to ask for insight because James wrote, “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” James 1:5 (NASB).

iii. When the answer doesn't come quickly, pray, watch and wait.

iv. Believe God more than hopeless circumstances.

v. Put your hope in the Living God and rejoice in Him.

i. The citizens of Feldkirch, Austria, didn't know what to do. Napoleon's massive army was preparing to attack. Soldiers had been spotted on the heights above the little town, which was situated on the Austrian border. A council of citizens was hastily summoned to decide whether they should try to defend themselves or display the white flag of surrender. It happened to be Easter Sunday, and the people had gathered in the local church.

The pastor rose and said, "Friends, we have been counting on our own strength, and apparently that has failed. As this is the day of our Lord's resurrection, let us just ring the bells, have our services as usual, and leave the matter in His hands. We know only our weakness, and not the power of God to defend us."

The council accepted his plan and the church bells rang. The enemy, hearing the sudden peal, concluded that the Austrian army had arrived during the night to defend the town. Before the service ended, the enemy broke camp and left.

j. When the day of distress and vengeance comes, the only safe place to be is in Jesus, the Rock of Ages.

Is your world turned upside down? Are you confused by the evil around us. We may be able to find fleeting comfort and peace in worldly comforts, but the only true hope we have is Jesus Christ. I SURRENDER ALL