

Does “faith” prohibit questioning God?

Does “faith” prevent any sense of despair, anger, or confusion?

Does “faith” protect the believer from any difficult circumstance?

Habakkuk is named in this single book alone in scripture. Not much else is known of this prophet except for the short book bearing his name. Outside this book, only Haggai and Zechariah’s records begin with their designation as a prophet (signifying a professional prophet possibly serving in temple duties).

Habakkuk’s name means “he who embraces” or “he who clings” and is fitting to the one who grapples with God as he tries to understand the world and circumstances around him. Much like Jacob, Habakkuk wrestles with God and refuses to let go.

The theme of the book is that of one with enough faith to question God and the understanding that God’s response could be as heavy as the burden which began the conversation. Habakkuk teaches us that faith often drives us to question God, however, that same faith opens our ears and our hearts to the Father’s answer.

Wondering, waiting/watching, and worshipping (everyone falls into at least one of these categories at some time in their Christian walk)

Hab 1:1 The **oracle** that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

- *Oracle*, or the *burden* Habakkuk saw
- Can we *minister* without a burden? Can we *intercede* without a burden?
- It has been said you can sum up a man with three questions: What makes him laugh? What makes him angry? What makes him cry?
- There are certain theologies that would have us believe the faithful are able to observe the world around them without question or concern – stating the presence of either is evidence of a lack of faith, however, the scriptures give evidence of many saints that had direct questions for God.
- The same theologies would also state burdens have no place in the heart of those fully devoted to God. To this, one has to ask of the lives of Paul who desired to be lost so his countrymen might know salvation and others whose burdens for the world to know Christ overshadowed their desires for earthly pleasures.

Hab 1:2 O LORD, **how long shall I cry for help**, and you will not hear? **Or cry to you “Violence!”** and you will not save?

Hab 1:3 **Why do you make me see iniquity**, and **why do you idly look at wrong?** Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

Hab 1:4 So **the law is paralyzed**, and **justice never goes forth**. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

- Habakkuk’s writing begins with questions and complaints to God (When? How? Why?)
- Habakkuk appeals to God based on his understanding of God – if I cry for help, when will you respond? Will you not save? Why do you show me evil and not act? The law is perverted and justice is not enforced.
- The prophet’s questions originate from a deep faith in God doing what is right
- Because of his faith, he expects God to be active and involved in the events of humanity
- These questions do not give evidence to a lack of faith, they actually illustrate his faith in a God that honors His word and whose character does not tolerate evil, violence, or injustice

Hab 1:5 “Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

Hab 1:6 For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.

Hab 1:7 They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.

Hab 1:8 Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour.

Hab 1:9 They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand.

Hab 1:10 At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it.

Hab 1:11 Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!”

- What about a “faith” that always promises a “story book ending”?
- Does true “faith” always manifest itself in a manner that satisfies our flesh or our expectations?
- There are a great many “faith” theologies that prey on the desperation of the would-be participant, however, the scriptures promise God to be faithful, for His purpose to work for our good, and His refusal to abandon us – none of these always equate to what might be termed “a happy ending” in this present life
- Habakkuk’s faith to question must also be coupled with a faith to hear – a faith of acceptance
- One must be prepared for God’s response and accept that response as part of His divine will (even if the response is silence, a period of waiting, or possibly an outcome completely opposite to my expectations or desires)
- We read the headlines or hear the news and say we want God to act in our world – but, do we?
- God responds to Habakkuk’s complaint with a vision of coming judgment and, at this point, Habakkuk must decide if his faith will accept the answers for which he has prayed
- Are we willing to endure judgment for divine correction? We complain of losing our children to the world’s indoctrination, but will we suffer through economic collapse, hostile takeover, natural disasters, or whatever the course of action may be to see the Lord work in our nation?
- We cannot dismiss these verses as “Old Testament” actions on the part of God. Yes, we are under the dispensation of grace, but that grace can appear just as ugly to accomplish God’s will
- The Lord speaks of the Babylonians and their vicious actions as they conquered their way across the region. These would be the vessels of God’s corrective actions against His chosen people

Hab 1:12 Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof.

Hab 1:13 You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?

Hab 1:14 You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler.

Hab 1:15 He brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad.

Hab 1:16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich.

Hab 1:17 Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?

- Habakkuk struggles with God’s reply and “reminds” God that His chosen people cannot perish before this new enemy
- The prophet has also been faithful in his reading of God’s word and he calls God’s attention to it (this is not to say that God had forgotten, but the Lord will extend the courtesy of conversation to His children)
- Habakkuk’s second complaint builds on God’s reply to the first (complaint becomes conversation)
- Not only does the prophet’s faith lead him to question God, it prompts him to continue the

conversation when he does not understand

Hab 2:1 I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

Hab 2:2 And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.

Hab 2:3 For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.

- Habakkuk has wondered, now he has resigned to waiting/watching
- Habakkuk does not retreat after receiving news of coming judgment, he resolves within himself to watch for God's movement
- God commissions the prophet to write that he might share the news of what God is doing, yet He also prepares him for the greatest task ahead – waiting
- The fact the vision is to be written implies sharing the vision – one man's burden leads to a vision shared by many
- The seasons and circumstances in life might be endured by one, but can be encouraging to many
- Oswald Chambers said, "our reach should always exceed our grasp" in regards to we should never become spiritually satisfied (complacent), we should always have a hunger to be closer, etc.

Hab 2:4 "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.

- The just/righteous (Romans 1:17) shall live (Galatians 3:11) by faith (Hebrews 10:38)
- In essence, the believer must live off promises and not explanations (Warren Wiersbe)
- This statement is made in contrast to the life of the non-believer which is lived in his or her own pride

Hab 2:5 "Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples."

Hab 2:6 Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, "Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own— for how long?— and loads himself with pledges!"

Hab 2:7 Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them.

Hab 2:8 Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

Hab 2:9 "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!

Hab 2:10 You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life.

Hab 2:11 For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond.

Hab 2:12 "Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!

Hab 2:13 Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing?

Hab 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Hab 2:15 "Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink— you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!

Hab 2:16 You will have your fill of shame instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory!

Hab 2:17 The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

Hab 2:18 "What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its

maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols!

Hab 2:19 **Woe** to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.

Hab 2:20 But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

- The Lord explains the difference in Himself and man-made idols (whatever shape they might take)
- The Lord pronounces His "woes" on the wicked and opens Habakkuk's eyes to the actions He is already performing against the unrighteous

Hab 3:1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.

Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years **revive** it; in the midst of the years make it known; **in wrath remember mercy**.

- The prophet has been wondering, he has been waiting/watching, but now his faith has him worshipping
- Please note, at this time no resolution has been made for the circumstance, there has been no "happy ending", yet Habakkuk worships God
- He has heard the Lord – and it scares him
- Habakkuk accepts the coming judgment and only pleads that the Lord remember mercy
- In the end, the prophet prays for one result – revival
- Today we hope for unity, change, tolerance, enlightenment, etc. when we should long for revival
- When is the last time our prayer ended with the goal of revival instead of the expected result?

Hab 3:3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

Hab 3:4 His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power.

Hab 3:5 Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels.

Hab 3:6 He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.

Hab 3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

Hab 3:8 Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation?

Hab 3:9 You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers.

Hab 3:10 The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high.

Hab 3:11 The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear.

Hab 3:12 You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger.

Hab 3:13 **You went out for the salvation of your people**, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah

Hab 3:14 You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret.

Hab 3:15 You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.

Hab 3:16 I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.

- As new testament believers, we have had the good fortune to see God as manifested in His Son
- We cannot, however, lose our awe of God in His majesty and power
- Remember, God came down to us in order to redeem, but He has not relinquished His throne

Hab 3:17 **Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail**

and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,

Hab 3:18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Hab 3:19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

- Habakkuk's true faith is revealed
- No matter the circumstance, no matter the outcome, no matter the state of my affairs, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation
- Please note, the prophet still upholds the Lord as the God of his salvation even though the coming days would be difficult
- In all things, God gives him the strength and stamina he needs
- Most of what we know as chapter 3 is written in song form – in all circumstance, Habakkuk never lost his song
- This is not simply the power of positive thinking or mind over matter, the prophet realizes the coming days will be difficult, yet he clings even more tightly to the Lord in whom his faith is founded
- The inexperienced sailor might head for shore in the storm, however, the experienced captain will often head to deep waters and anchor his vessel to avoid being dashed on the rocks or running aground