**Habakkuk: Is God Faithful?**

Background: Habakkuk is a prophet near the time that God brought Judah into captivity. He is a contemporary of Jeremiah, around 607 BC.

His name means embrace or wrestle. You will see Habakkuk wrestling with God.

In 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and forced them to submit. They took Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael as royal hostages to Babylon, fulfilling Isaiah 39:5-7. (read it)

This prophecy of Isaiah was from around 700 BC, when Hezekiah unwisely brought the Babylonian envoys into the temple to show off the wealth of Judah, hoping to create an alliance with the world.

Eighty year later, in 597 BC Israel rebels, Nebuchadnezzar returns, breaks down part of the wall, taking Jehoiachin and 10,000 captives into exile in Babylon.

He sets us Zedekiah as a puppet king. Zedekiah rebels. Nebuchadnezzar returns, killing Zedekiah, tearing down all the walls, destroying the temple, and leaving Jerusalem in ruins.

The Jews are asking: Does God still love us? Has God abandoned us? Are we still his people (remember Hosea)? How can bad things happen to good people?

Why does it appear that God is not just? The world is not fair.

This is a question about theodicy, about God’s sovereignty.

Theodicy: “the vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil.”

Will we continue to trust God when things go very badly.

Is this at all relevant to the US right now?

Is this at all relevant to you right now? Maybe you are experiencing things that make you question God’s providence and love…

Habakkuk 1:1-4 Habakkuk’s first complaint

v. 1 *How long, O Lord, but I call for help, but you do not listen?*

Can any of you relate to this cry of Habakkuk? God, are you even listening?

I have been looking for a spouse for 20 years. My son is caught up in addiction. I have chronic illness which limits my ability to do the things for you I want to do. I am trying to provide for my family, but then I lost my job. My daughter is dealing with chronic illness.

v. 2 *I cry out Violence! But you do not save!* Why don’t you step in?

v. 3 *Why do you make me see injustice?* Can anyone relate to that right now?

Why do you tolerate so much sin in the world?

v. 4 *The law is paralyzed. Justice never wins out.* Life is unfair!!!

v. 4 *The righteous are not defended.* The corrupt seem to do just fine.

Will God strike Habakkuk with lightning or leprosy for his questioning him? No! God wants to year our anguished cries.

Jeremiah 12:1-2 God: You are always righteous… Yet I would speak to you about your justice… Does God send lightning down on Jeremiah? No!

Habakkuk 2:5-11 God’s first answer

v. 5 God: I will do something utterly amazing in your lifetime. You would not believe it even if a human were to tell you it will happen. (this passage is often used out of context)

Right now, the Assyrians are the dominant power in the world. But here is what I am going to do:

I will raise up Nebuchadnezzar, a very youthful king. They will come and destroy Judah!

Habakkuk: Is this supposed to be a good thing?

Will God use bad people and institutions to bring about his will?

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1 Habakkuk’s second complaint

I get it, Lord. You do not tolerate sin.

v. 13 “Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.”

I get that you are wholly holy. Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts (Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8). You do not tolerate sin.

v. 13 b But… There is a ton of sin you seem to be ignoring right now. You sit silent. How is that consistent with your holiness? Why are you silent in the face of all this evil—especially of the Babylonians you are using to judge us?

Habakkuk is asking the wrong question here. He should be asking: What is God trying to do here? What is it about us Jews he is trying to correct through the agency of Babylon?

For us when a greedy, arrogant abusive person fires us: What do I need to change? What do we need to change? What is God trying to tell me?

But still, Habakkuk is human.

God allows Habakkuk to question him.

v. 15-16 The fat-cat wicked catch the peasants with a hook and a net. He is having a great time (so he rejoices and is glad). He is basking in his wealth, stolen from the common people. He lives in luxury.

Habakkuk 2:1 God: How is this consistent with your holiness? I am waiting for your answer!

Is Habakkuk being ironic/sarcastic? No.

Wisely, despite his doubts, Habakkuk chooses to wait for God’s answer.

Habakkuk 2:2-4

Trust me, Habakkuk. You can mark it down. All will come out right at the end.

v. 3 The revelation… speaks of the end. Though it linger, wait faithfully for it will certainly come and will not delay.

My justice will prevail! You can mark it down!

v. 4 God to Habakkuk and to you and me: I totally get it! Believe me, I see all the evil done by the wealthy and the ungodly poor as well.

But what is the key?

The righteous will live by faith!!! (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38

Is it hard, sometimes, to see how God is working?

What is the key? The righteous will live by faith!!! (and faith is assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1, which he says right after Hebrews 10:38, by the way)

But here is God’s promise to you!!! (and God does not lie):

Habakkuk 2:4-12 Woe on those greedy and corrupt people!

Justice will be done in the end. You can mark it down.

v. 4 The puffed up will be deflated.

v. 5 The arrogant will be humbled.

The wealthy will become impoverished.

v. 8 the peoples who are left will plunder you (Babylon).

Actually, there are 5 Woes in Habakkuk: (which means it will not be good for them in the end)

Greedy (2:6-8)

Exploiters (2:9-11)

Violent (2:12-14)

Immoral (2:15-17)

Idolatrous (2:18-20)

(Vs. 2:6) “Woe to him who piles up stolen goods and makes himself wealthy by extortion! How long must this go on?” Greed

(Vs. 2:9) “Woe to him who builds his house by unjust gain, setting his nest on high to escape the clutches of ruin!” Exploitation and Extortion

(Vs. 2:12) “Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a town by injustice.” Violence

(Vs. 2:15) “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wineskin till they are drunk, so that he can gaze on their naked bodies!” Immorality

(Vs. 2:19) “Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Come to life!’ Or to lifeless stone, ‘Wake up!’ Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it.” Idolatry

Habakkuk 2:13-14 A great memory verse!!!!

The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Get the picture….

This will be the final state of mankind. It will all shake out at the end. Rom 12:19 “It is mine to avenge. I will repay.”

Habakkuk 2:15-19 Here is what will happen to the wicked—specifically to Babylon whom God is using right now to humble Judah and Jerusalem. To the one who is persecuting, harassing, abusing you right now.

I, the Lord, do not lie! Numbers 23:19 God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

No, he does not!!!

Habakkuk 2:20 An even better memory verse!!!

The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before him!

(a moment of silence….)

Have you struggled with some of the same doubts and feelings Habakkuk felt?

The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all of us be silent before him!

Habakkuk 3:2-16 A beautiful poem that simply needs to be read without comment.

God is awesome, beyond description. He will vindicate those who are faithful to him.

When? I do not know.

Exactly how? I have no idea, actually.

Who will he use to do it? I cannot say.

But one thing I know:

v. 2 I stand in awe of your deeds. Repeat them in our day.

v. 3 His glory covers the heavens and fills the earth.

v. 3 His splendor is like the sunrise.

v. 8 He rides his horses and chariots to victory.

v. 13 You come out to deliver your people. You crush the leader of the wicked.

Habakkuk 3:16b-19

No matter how bad it gets. No matter how bad it appears. No matter how great the apparent victories of the arrogant, the proud, the atheist, the religious hypocrite.

16b. I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come to my enemies.

Q: Can you wait patiently for God to act?

v. 17 read it again.

v. 18 Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will, despite all that is happening around me, be joyful in God my Savior.

These other things cannot save me. Only God can save me.

v. 19 The Sovereign Lord is my strength.

There is that word sovereign. Do you trust in the sovereignty of God in this world? That is theodicy.

God will make my feet like those of a deer. God will allow me to tread on heights.

God is good. Do you believe this? Habakkuk did.

Conclusion:

It is OK to question God’s justice, his mercy and even his love for us.

When we question God, we need to hold on to our faith that God’s ways are above our ways—that God is sovereign, even when it does not seem so.

We need to be patient—we need to wait for God to act is his own time.

We need to doubt our doubts, and claim the promises of God.

The righteous shall live by faith.