

Habakkuk's Search for Understanding

1. Habakkuk's Despair

A. Conditions:

1. Period: 612-606 BC, the final days leading to the captivity.
2. The situation: Josiah dies in 609 BC and the nation falls into the hands of his sons Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim. This is a period of moral and material excess. All restraint is gone and the people are intent on selfish gain.

B. Habakkuk's complaint - Hab 1:2-4.

1. *"How long ... and You **will not hear**"?; "Violence! And You **will not save**."*
2. Everyone faces difficult situations which are not resolved as swiftly as we would hope. We might wonder:
 - a. Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? Jer 12:1-2; Job 21:7-16. Criminals profit from their crimes and good people get sick, are fired from jobs, etc.
 - b. Why doesn't God **do** something? Does He care? Is He listening? The issue is not what God **can** do but what **will** He do? The wickedness of the world is often seen as a reflection upon God.
3. Such questions can destroy belief, confidence in God.

C. God's Response: Illustrates adage "Be careful what you ask for; you may get it."

1. God replies in Hab 2:5-11 that He **is** doing something about it; the Chaldeans are coming to vent God's wrath upon His unfaithful people.
2. Sometimes God is in the process of working things out though we cannot see it.
3. God's solution, however, may not be exactly what we want. We must conform to His will and judgment.

2. Habakkuk's Second Complaint

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1. After all, thinks Habakkuk, the Jews are much more righteous than they are.
2. In this assessment, the prophet is wrong. His lack of understanding and proper assessment leads him to an incorrect conclusion.

B. Habakkuk waits for God to explain Himself - Hab 2:1.

C. God's response is deceptively simple - Hab 2:4: *"the just shall live by his faith."*

1. Life will at times be unfair - **Illus.** Hueytown teenager (athletic, beautiful, brilliant, but she died while the drunks lived).
2. Burning, troubling questions will not find satisfying answers.
3. Those who are righteous will negotiate the pitfalls of life through **faith**. Job did not forsake God but he did challenge God's sense of justice; he allowed himself to arrogantly stand in judgment of God - Job 19:6-11.
4. But the answer to Job, Habakkuk - and us - : *"But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him"* (Hab 2:20).

3. NT Exhortations Referring to Hab 2:4

- A. Rom 1:16-17 - Paul lays the doctrinal foundation for his great epistle: the gospel of Christ magnifies and illustrates the concept of faith which secures righteous standing before God. There is no other standard of salvation.
- B. Gal 3:10-12 - Salvation by merit (law) is diametrically opposed to salvation by faith. Law alone is a curse, but we *"are all sons of God through faith in Christ ..."*.
- C. Heb 10:35-39 - The faith must be permanent, cultivated for a lifetime. It cannot be derailed by perplexing questions, frustrations, failures or other circumstances which might befall us.

Conclusion: God's word can produce a degree of faith and trust in God - His power, His care, His responsiveness to our needs - that will see us through this life. Do **you** have this quality of faith?