

H A B A K K U K

WRESTLING WITH GOD

Small Group Study Guide

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GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

QUESTIONING GOD

Small Group Study Guide | February 18, 2024

HABAKKUK
WRESTLING WITH GOD



Discuss: Do you think it is ever okay to question God? Why or why not?

“That’s not fair!” We’ve probably heard (or said) this many times. One of the basic assumptions about life is that it should be fair. We frown upon injustice. The issue of fairness rises to another level when God appears to be unjust in His ways. Today, we start a series called “Wrestling with God” in which we’ll study Old Testament prophet Habakkuk’s struggle with God’s fairness. Habakkuk lived around 600 B.C. when the nation of Judah was falling apart on the inside due to their rebellion against God and was being attacked on the outside by the enemy Babylonian empire. Habakkuk questioned God’s justice and what appeared to be indifference, inactivity, and inconsistency on God’s part. But in the process of wrestling with God, Habakkuk learned to lay hold of God by faith and grow from perplexity and worry to perseverance and worship.

Key Text: 1 *“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. 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? 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. 4 So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.’ 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. 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. 7 They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. 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. 9 They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. 10 At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. 11 Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!’ 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. 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? 14 You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. 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. 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. 17 Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever?”* (Habakkuk 1:1-17)

1. Habakkuk’s prayers for deliverance for Judah seem to go unanswered (v.1-4).

Habakkuk prayed with concern for his people, but God seemed indifferent toward his pleas (see v.2) and inactive toward the people of Judah (see v.3-4).

Discuss: What roles do patience and faith play as we wait for God to answer a prayer?

Discuss: When have you had to wait on God for an answer to a prayer?

2. God tells Habakkuk that He will answer, but in an unexpected way (v.5-11).

God replied to Habakkuk by declaring that He would answer his prayer, but in a way that would be different from what Habakkuk expected and even difficult for Habakkuk to believe (see v.5). God informs Habakkuk that He would raise up the fierce, violent army of the Chaldeans (who lived in Babylon) to chasten the people of Judah for their sin (see v.5-11). In Scripture, God frequently used sinful people to humble His own sinning people. For example, God used Pharaoh to rebuke Abraham when Abraham left God's will to go to Egypt (Gen.12:10-20), and in the Book of Judges, God used the evil Philistines and Midianites to discipline Israel for sin. God would do the same with the rebellious people of Judah by using the Chaldeans to purge His people of sin. Habakkuk did not expect God to answer his prayer like this!

Discuss: Has God ever answered your prayer in an unexpected way? Tell about it.

Discuss: What perspectives do Deuteronomy 32:4, Isaiah 55:8-9, and Jeremiah 33:3 give us when it comes to our expectations of how God should answer our prayers?

3. Habakkuk cannot understand how God could use a wicked nation to discipline Judah (v.12-17).

God's response that He would use the Chaldeans to punish Judah only created more questions for Habakkuk. Habakkuk could not understand how a holy God could use an evil nation like Babylon to discipline His covenant people. Habakkuk complained that this would indicate inconsistency on God's part in two ways: 1) God appeared to be contributing to the helplessness of His own people—they were like fish caught in a net (see v.12, 14-17), and 2) God appeared to be contradicting His own holiness by looking upon the violent actions of the enemy with approval (see v.13). But, contrary to Habakkuk's short-sightedness, God's use of the Chaldeans to correct the people of Judah for their sin would ultimately strengthen the people of Judah (not add to their helplessness), and thus would affirm (not violate) His holiness. Hebrews 12:11 says, *"For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."* In fact, as we'll learn later in our study, Habakkuk actually found peace and strength in the very attributes of God he questioned in Chapter 1:

- **God is eternal:** *"Are you not from everlasting...?"* (v.12a)
- **God is holy:** *"...O Lord my God, my Holy One?...You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong"* (v.12b, 13)
- **God is sovereign:** *"You have ordained them...you have established them"* (v.12c)
- **God is faithful and unchanging:** *"...O Rock..."* (v.12d)
- **God is Creator:** *"You make mankind..."* (v.14)

Discuss: How can remembering God's unchanging character traits (like those Habakkuk mentions above) encourage you in difficult and confusing times?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, Bible dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

"Is It Wrong to Question God?" article at gotquestions.org

Knowing God by J.I. Packer

WAITING ON GOD

Small Group Study Guide | February 25, 2024



Discuss: Have you ever had to wait on God to answer a prayer? Tell about it.

In our previous lesson (Habakkuk 1:1-17) in our “Wrestling with God” series, we observed Habakkuk questioning God about His apparent lack of concern and inaction in working on behalf of His disobedient people of Judah. But Habakkuk learned that God was fully aware, God deeply cared, and God was putting His plan into action—but it was an action Habakkuk did not expect and would not fully understand. In His love, wisdom, and sovereignty, God would use the enemy Chaldeans as His instrument to humble the people of Judah and bring them to repentance.

In today’s lesson, we find that Habakkuk desired to have the right perspective on what God had planned to do, so he waited patiently for God’s response. God answered Habakkuk by giving him insight into what the world is like and how He was at work in it.

Key Text: *“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.” 2 And the Lord answered me: ‘Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. 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. 4 Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.”* (Habakkuk 2:1-4)

1. Habakkuk confidently expected God to answer his prayer.

After Habakkuk prayed, he confidently anticipated that God would answer his prayer. Just as a sentry would stand alertly at his “watchpost” (2:1) (a tall structure set on top of the walls of a city), Habakkuk says he would attentively be on the lookout for God’s answer to his prayer: *“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”* (2:1).

The Bible teaches that a key aspect of successful praying is confidently expecting God to answer our prayers in a way that will be for our good and for His glory. In fact, the Apostle James warns that if a person does not pray in faith, but instead prays in doubt—that is, they do not expect God to respond to their prayer—then *“that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways”* (Jms.1:7-8).

Discuss: How do these verses instill confidence in you that God hears and will answer your prayers: Job 22:27; Psalm 145:18; Jeremiah 29:12; James 1:5?

Discuss: While God promises to hear our prayers, there are some barriers that God says we must remove for Him to answer. What are some of these barriers according to Isaiah 59:2 and James 4:1-3?

Discuss: When has God answered a prayer of yours recently? Tell about it.

2. God told Habakkuk to write down His response to his prayer so there would be a permanent record.

“And the Lord answered me: ‘Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.’” (2:2)

Because God’s answer to Habakkuk’s prayer would impact future generations, and God wanted those who would read it to “run” (2:2) and share it with others, He instructed Habakkuk to “*make it plain on tablets*” (v.2). Habakkuk was to write God’s answer carefully and clearly and make it permanently and publicly available for all. Because Habakkuk obeyed God, we are able to study the Book of Habakkuk today!

While God does not command us to write about our experience with Him like He did Habakkuk, many Christians have experienced spiritual benefits from journaling—writing down lessons God is teaching them, answers to their prayers, etc.—and thus preserving a written record of God’s faithfulness and blessings.

Discuss: If you journal, what benefits have you experienced from it? If you don’t journal but you’re interested, see the journaling article in “For Further Study” below.

3. God told Habakkuk that he and the Jews would have to wait for His answer to be fulfilled at His appointed time.

God’s answer to Habakkuk would not be fulfilled until about sixty years later when the Jews would be released from Babylonian captivity in 539 B.C. God encouraged Habakkuk to wait patiently—His answer would surely come: “*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*” (2:3).

Discuss: According to Psalm 27:14 and Lamentations 3:26, what attitudes are we to have as we wait on the Lord?

Discuss: According to these verses, what special blessings has God reserved for those who wait on the Lord: Psalm 37:34; Isaiah 40:31; 64:4?

4. Unlike unbelievers who are not right with God due to their self-reliant pride, believers rely on God by faith for righteousness.

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

Discuss: This verse is quoted three times in the New Testament: Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38. What is the emphases of each of these verses?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

“What Value is There in Christian Journaling?” article at gotquestions.org

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life by Donald Whitney

FALSE SHORTCUTS TO SUCCESS

Small Group Study Guide | March 3, 2024

HABAKKUK
WRESTLING WITH GOD



Discuss: Why do you think arrogant, self-reliant pride is such a destructive sin?

Our previous lesson (Hab.2:1-4) ended with a contrast between unbelievers who are not right with God due to their arrogant, self-reliant pride and believers who rely on God by faith for righteousness: “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith” (Hab.2:4). In today’s lesson, we see God’s strong condemnation of the pride-based sins that led the Babylonians—and people today as well—away from Himself.

Key Text: “*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. 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!” 7 Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. 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. 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! 10 You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. 11 For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond. 12 Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity! 13 Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing? 14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. 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! 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! 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. faith.”*” (Habakkuk 2:5-17)

1. God condemns self-reliant pride by comparing it to drunkenness.

Habakkuk 2:5 carries the thought over from v.4 which condemns pride. In v.5, God compares a proud man to a drunken man in two ways: 1) Pride, like drunkenness, promises peace but ends in agitation and restlessness: “Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest” (v.5a), and 2) Pride, like drunkenness, makes a person feel they are stronger than they actually are and leads a person to think he can do more than he actually can: “His greed is as wide as Sheol [Note: Sheol was an Old Testament term for the grave or realm of the dead]; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples” (v.5b).

Discuss: How did Jesus address the pride of His disciples in Luke 9:46-48?

Discuss: What’s the difference between the pride and boasting described in Psalm 10:4, Proverbs 16:18-19, and 1 Corinthians 4:7 and the pride and boasting described in Psalm 34:2; 44:8, Galatians 6:4, and 2 Corinthians 7:4?

2. God condemns ambition that leads to selfishness and greed.

In Habakkuk 2:6-8, God warns the Babylonians that those they had taunted, plundered, and victimized would turn around and taunt, plunder, and victimize Babylon: *“Shall not all these take up their taunt against him...will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. 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...”* (2:6-8).

Discuss: What are some examples of ambition that pleases the Lord in Romans 15:20, 2 Corinthians 5:9, and 1 Thessalonians 4:11?

3. God condemns covetousness and stealing.

God warns the Babylonians that the security and fame they thought they had gotten for their homes by stealing from others would result in shame and death: *“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm! 10 You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life”* (2:9-10).

Discuss: How can our violation of the 10th Commandment: *“You shall not covet”* (Ex.20:17) put us in danger of violating all other nine Commandments (Ex.20:3-16)?

4. God condemns the oppression and exploitation of people.

Babylon had been built by the slave labor of Jewish prisoners of war. God assures Babylon that it would all burn and be replaced by His glory that would cover all the earth: *“Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity! 13 Behold, is it not from the Lord of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing? 14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”* (2:12-14).

Discuss: How does Isaiah 11:1-9 depict the earth after Christ returns and establishes His kingdom?

5. God condemns drunkenness and violence.

The disgrace, violence, and destruction Babylon had brought upon others would be brought upon Babylon by God Himself: *“Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness! 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! 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”* (2:15-17).

Discuss: How do Proverbs 20:1; 23:20-21, 29-35 warn against drunkenness?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

“What Does the Bible Say about Pride?” article at gotquestions.org

“Is It a Sin for a Christian to Drink Alcohol?” article at gotquestions.org

BECOMING WHAT WE WORSHIP

Small Group Study Guide | March 10, 2024

HABAKKUK
WRESTLING WITH GOD



Discuss: How would you define the term “idolatry”?

In our previous lesson in Habakkuk 2:4-17, we learned about God’s strong condemnation of the arrogance of the Babylonians and the sins that resulted from their pride. In today’s lesson, we’ll see God’s condemnation of the Babylonians’ sin of idolatry—a sin that the Israelites themselves had been guilty of at times, too, and that we may be guilty of ourselves today as well.

Key Text: *“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! 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. 20 But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”* (Habakkuk 2:18-20)

1. An idol has no value or use since its power exists only in the mind of its creator.

An idol can be defined as anything that we put ahead of the one, true God. Archaeological discoveries have affirmed that Babylon worshipped many idols. God calls out Babylon for their idolatry, emphasizing the evil and foolishness of worshipping other gods. God makes the point that an idol built by a person has no real value or use since its power isn’t real—its power exists only in the mind of the foolish person who created and designed it: *“What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it...”* (2:18a).

Discuss: How does Romans 1:25 describe idolatry?

Discuss: According to Psalm 135:15-17, what are some limitations of man-made idols?

Discuss: Psalm 135:18 says, *“Those who make [idols] become like them, so do all who trust in them.”* In what sense do idol-makers become like the idols they make?

Discuss: What idols do Philippians 3:19 and Romans 16:18 highlight?

Discuss: What are some idols people in our culture today worship, and how do they express their worship of the idols?

Discuss: It has been said that the human heart is an idol factory. Do you agree? Why or why not?

2. An idol “teaches” lies, giving people false hope that the idol can help them.

“What profit is an idol...a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols!” (2:18b)

Discuss: What kind of lies do you think an idol “teaches” (2:18)?

Discuss: How does God highlight the folly of idolatry in Isaiah 44:9-20?

3. God strictly forbids attempting to represent Him with earthly, physical images.

Some of the images the Babylonians worshipped were made of molten “*metal*” (v.18a), while others were carved from wood (v.18b) and “*overlaid with gold and silver*” (v.19). But the one, true God cannot be contained by perishable materials such as metal or wood! Paul describes God as the “*King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, [to whom] be honor and glory forever and ever*” (1 Tim.1:17).

In fact, in the second of the Ten Commandments, God forbids even attempting to represent Him with an earthly, physical image: “*You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them*” (Ex.20:4). The reason God detests idolatry is because it steals the attention, honor, and glory that belongs to Him alone. 1 Timothy 6:16 says God “*alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.*”

Discuss: How does God express His hatred of idolatry in Deuteronomy 6:14-15?

4. God assured Habakkuk—and us today—that He is on His throne and in control.

There was no reason for Habakkuk to worry or to question God since “*The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him*” (2:20). Note the contrast between a person talking to a silent idol (2:18-19) and a speaking God telling us to be silent in His presence (2:20). Habakkuk is learning that he can replace his perplexity with praise and his worry with worship because God has everything under control! We can rest in the same comfort and assurance because God has complete and total control over every creature, circumstance, and event at every moment. Nothing is random or comes by chance; rather, God has resolved to do what He will do, and nothing and no one stands in His way. He alone is sovereign!

Discuss: How does God declare His sovereignty in Isaiah 14:24; 46:10?

The degree of our comfort and assurance during difficult and confusing times will be in direct proportion to the degree of our knowledge of God and our trust in Him. The better we know God the more we will trust Him, and the more we trust Him the deeper our confidence in Him will be. Daniel 11:32 says, “*the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action.*”

Discuss: What are some ways a Christian can get to know God better?

Discuss: In Psalm 46:10, God says, “*Be still and know that I am God.*” Why is being “*still*” (v.10) an important first step to knowing and experiencing God in our lives?

Discuss: When have you experienced God’s strength and peace in a difficult time?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

“What is the Definition of Idolatry?” article at gotquestions.org

Counterfeit Gods by Tim Keller

LOOKING BACK

Small Group Study Guide | March 17, 2024

HABAKKUK
WRESTLING WITH GOD



Discuss: Do you tend to praise God more for who He is or for what He has done? Why?

Let's do a quick review of Habakkuk's "wrestling with God" experience thus far:

- In Lesson 1 (1:1-17), Habakkuk was consumed with confusion and questions. It appeared to him that God was being inattentive to His prayers for God's people who were being disobedient. When God revealed to Habakkuk that His plan involved allowing the enemy Babylonians to overthrow and oppress His chosen people to bring them to repentance and restoration, it was more than Habakkuk could comprehend.
- In Lesson 2 (2:1-4), God told Habakkuk to record God's response so all could know of it, and He assured Habakkuk that even though he'd have to wait on God's timing, everything would occur just as God promised. God reminded him that the "righteous shall live by his faith" (2:4).
- In Lessons 3 (2:5-17) and 4 (2:18-20), God condemned Babylon for their sins including drunkenness, exploitation of people, greed, and idolatry and assures Habakkuk that He is on His throne and in control.

Key Text: "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. 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. 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. 4 His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. 5 Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. 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. 7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 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? 9 You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers. 10 The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. 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. 12 You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. 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. 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. 15 You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.'" (Habakkuk 3:1-15)

Discuss: In v.2, Habakkuk praises God for who He is and for what He has done: "I have heard the report of you [who God is], and your work [what God has done], O Lord." Why is it important to praise God for who He is and for what He has done?

1. Like Habakkuk, let's praise God for His splendor (3:3-4).

In 3:1-5, the temple choir leader named Shigionoth (v.1; 19) recorded Habakkuk's prayer song that was used in public worship. In his prayer song, Habakkuk pondered over God's splendor with this majestic description: *"His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4 His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power"* (3:3-4).

Discuss: Why do you think Habakkuk used the imagery of light to describe God's splendor: *"brightness"* (v.3a), *"light"* (v.3b), and flashing rays (v.4)?

Discuss: What words are associated with God's splendor in 1 Chronicles 16:27, 29, and Job 37:22?

Discuss: In what ways did David note God's splendor and majesty in Psalm 8:1-9?

2. Like Habakkuk, let's praise God for His strength (3:5-12, 14-15).

Habakkuk praised God for His strength displayed by:

- Judging His enemies with pestilence and plague (3:5),
- Shaking the nations, scattering the mountains, and sinking the hills (3:6),
- Utterly crushing His enemies (3:7-12; 14-15).

Because God is a God of justice (Deut.32:4), it glorifies Him when evil and evildoers are eradicated. God loves all people (Jn.3:16) and desires that all people repent and turn to Him (2 Pet.3:9). He even gave His beloved Son as a sacrifice to provide forgiveness and salvation for all who would come to Him in humble faith (Rom.5:8-10; Titus 2:13-14). But those who arrogantly choose to reject Him, oppose His love, and attempt to wrest control from Him will fail and suffer His righteous wrath.

Discuss: What connection do Psalm 89:14 and Micah 6:8 make between God and justice?

Discuss: According to Psalm 2:4-5 how does God view those who oppose Him?

3. Like Habakkuk, let's praise God for His salvation (3:13).

Habakkuk rejoices that God delivers His chosen people: *"You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed"* (3:13). Of all the things we're thankful for, we should be most thankful for the salvation God provided us through Christ: *"Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!"* (2 Cor.9:15)

Discuss: What various aspects of salvation are highlighted in Ephesians 1:3-14 that you can thank God for?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

"How Can I Know How to Properly Praise God?" article at gotquestions.org

"What Does it Mean to Be an Enemy of God?" article at gotquestions.org

SATISFIED IN GOD

Small Group Study Guide | March 24, 2024

HABAKKUK
WRESTLING WITH GOD



Today is Palm Sunday, the day we commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11). Today is also the first day of Passion Week. For more information on Palm Sunday and Passion Week, see "For Further Study" at the end of this lesson.

In this final lesson in our verse-by-verse study of the Book of Habakkuk, we find Habakkuk trembling as he considered the coming attack of the enemy Babylonians against the people of God. Habakkuk understood that God would use the wicked Babylonians as an instrument of discipline to bring His people to repentance (Hab.1:5-17), but the thought of what God's people would have to endure shook Habakkuk. Yet now, instead of being consumed by fear and questions as he was earlier, Habakkuk's heart is full of faith and hope as he waits on the Lord.

Key Text: *"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. 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, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. 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 3:16-19)

1. Habakkuk recognized God's purpose and determined to wait on Him in faith.

The "day of trouble" (3:16) Habakkuk referred to was the day when God would finally judge the evil Babylonians. Habakkuk knew from the Lord that Babylon would bring great violence upon God's people, and then God would strike Babylon down. It was such an overwhelming thought that Habakkuk's body trembled, his lips quivered, and his legs nearly collapsed under him (3:16). Yet, Habakkuk realized that God had a good purpose in it all, and that God's timing is as important as God's will, so he made a choice not to protest or complain, but to "wait quietly" (3:16).

Isaiah 40:31 contains one of God's most beloved promises for times when God calls us to wait on Him: "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." The word "wait" (v.31) means "to expectantly look for." Jacob used the same word as he prepared to die: "I wait [expectantly look for] for your salvation, O Lord" (Gen.49:18). Because the Lord "does not faint or grow weary" (Is.40:28), in Him we can find grace that elevates us like an eagle to soar above our worries victoriously, and stamina to walk with God faithfully: "none who wait for [God] shall be put to shame" (Ps.25:3).

Discuss: Why is waiting on the Lord so difficult to do sometimes?

Discuss: How do promise like Psalm 25:3 and Romans 8:28 help you wait on Him?

Discuss: Habakkuk refused to complain as he waited on the Lord—he determined to "wait quietly" (Hab.3:16). What do these verses teach us about complaining: Numbers 11:1; Philippians 2:14-15; 1 Peter 4:9?

2. Habakkuk rejoiced in the Lord despite the disastrous circumstances he was in.

Habakkuk listed six disastrous consequences of the coming day of trouble:

- The fig tree would not blossom (v.17a).
- The vines would be fruitless (v.17b).
- The produce from the olive would fail (v.17c).
- The fields would yield no food (v.17d).
- The flocks would be cut off from the fold (v.17e).
- There would be no herds in the stalls (v.17f).

Any of these would be devastating if occurring on its own, but when all six occurred at the same time, it was catastrophic. Yet rather than becoming distressed or depressed, Habakkuk said, *“I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation”* (3:18). Joy is the believer’s deep, inner contentment rooted in trust in God—a settled delight in God that abides despite outward circumstances. Note that joy was a choice Habakkuk willed to make: *“I will rejoice”* (3:18). Joy is a choice! We must not allow our feelings or emotions to determine our level of joy in God; rather, we are to choose to be joyful—we are to make the willful decision to rejoice. This is only possible if we place our joy *“in the Lord”* (3:18), not in our health, our bank account, our relationships, our outward circumstance, etc. *“You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound”* (Ps.4:7).

Discuss: How do these verses highlight rejoicing in the Lord: Psalm 32:11; 40:16; 97:12; Philippians 4:4?

3. Habakkuk relied on the Lord as his strength amid great trouble.

Habakkuk not only relied on God as his source of joy (3:18), but also as his source of strength: *“God, the Lord, is my strength”* (3:19). Habakkuk understood what the apostle Paul would later write about in 2 Corinthians 12:9: God’s *“power is made perfect in weakness”* and in Ephesians 3:16: We are *“strengthened with power through his Spirit in [our] inner being.”* Psalm 84:5 states, *“Blessed are those whose strength is in [God]”* and Philippians 4:13 declares, *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”*

We experience God’s strength and power when we fellowship with Him in Bible study and prayer: *“in quietness and in trust shall be your strength”* (Is.30:15).

Discuss: What key words about God’s strength stand out to you in Deuteronomy 33:25; Psalm 18:1-2; 84:7?

Discuss: When have you recently experienced God’s strength in your life?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

“What Does the Bible Say about Strength?” article at gotquestions.org

“What is Passion Week?” article at gotquestions.org



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