



HABAKKUK

Read Habakkuk 1:1–11

This book begins with two complaints that have the same structure: the prophet raise his concern to God and then God answers. In the first passage, Habakkuk complains that God's inactivity results in lawlessness and injustice. God assures Habakkuk that divine action is forthcoming: God will send the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to punish the wicked.

Reflect: The prophet has such confidence in his relationship with God that he can be blunt, even accusatory, in his prayer. In my prayer, am I “too polite,” saying things I think God wants to hear? How can I be more honest in my prayer?

Pray: I will pray for the grace of integrity: the ability to come before God just as I am.

Act: Habakkuk brought his observations about the world to his prayer. I will be more attentive to the world around me and bring my concerns for the world to God in prayer.

1 The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

The Prophet's Complaint

- 2** O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you “Violence!”
and you will not save?
- 3** Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.
- 4** So the law becomes slack
and justice never prevails.
The wicked surround the righteous—
therefore judgment comes forth perverted.
- 5** Look at the nations, and see!
Be astonished! Be astounded!
For a work is being done in your days
that you would not believe if you were told.
- 6** For I am rousing the Chaldeans,
that fierce and impetuous nation,
who march through the breadth of the earth
to seize dwellings not their own.
- 7** Dread and fearsome are they;
their justice and dignity proceed from
themselves.
- 8** Their horses are swifter than leopards,
more menacing than wolves at dusk;
their horses charge.

Read Habakkuk 1:12—2:5

In the second passage, Habakkuk complains that the Chaldeans are more wicked than those God intends to punish. Habakkuk resolves to wait patiently until God addresses his complaint (1:12—2:1). God assures the prophet that God's plan, though seemingly delayed, will unfold at the appointed time and then the proud and arrogant will be punished. In the meantime, however, the righteous must live by faith, trusting that God will indeed act.

Reflect: Habakkuk resolves to wait patiently and to listen attentively for God's response. Am I impatient in prayer, demanding results now? Do I live with faith and confidence that God hears and will respond?

Pray: I will not fill my prayer with a flood of words. Instead, I will make time in my prayer for listening attentively.

Act: I will practice the patience prayer requires by being more patient with those who may annoy me.

- Their horsemen come from far away;
they fly like an eagle swift to devour.
- 9 They all come for violence,
with faces pressing^a forward;
they gather captives like sand.
- 10 At kings they scoff,
and of rulers they make sport.
They laugh at every fortress,
and heap up earth to take it.
- 11 Then they sweep by like the wind;
they transgress and become guilty;
their own might is their god!
- 12 Are you not from of old,
O LORD my God, my Holy One?
You^b shall not die.
O LORD, you have marked them for judgment;
and you, O Rock, have established them for punishment.
- 13 Your eyes are too pure to behold evil,
and you cannot look on wrongdoing;
why do you look on the treacherous,
and are silent when the wicked swallow
those more righteous than they?
- 14 You have made people like the fish of the sea,
like crawling things that have no ruler.
- 15 The enemy^c brings all of them up with a hook;
he drags them out with his net,
he gathers them in his seine;
so he rejoices and exults.
- 16 Therefore he sacrifices to his net
and makes offerings to his seine;
for by them his portion is lavish,
and his food is rich.
- 17 Is he then to keep on emptying his net,
and destroying nations without mercy?

God's Reply to the Prophet's Complaint

- 2** I will stand at my watchpost,
and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what he^d will answer concerning my
complaint.
- 2 Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.
- 3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Ancient Heb tradition: MT We

^c Heb He

^d Syr: Heb I

Read Habakkuk 2:6–20

This passage is a series of five “woes” that describes various crimes and their appropriate punishment. Habakkuk indicts those who plunder, those who obtain gain through evil means, those who build towns by bloodshed, those who humiliate others, and those who trust in idols. Standing above and against all this evil is the Lord, whose holy presence reduces all peoples to silence.

Reflect: Even in the midst of a world riddled with evil-doing, the Lord does not abandon his dwelling on earth. Do I give in to hopelessness or despair at the state of the world? Does contemplating the injustice and oppression in the world bring me to reverent silence in God’s presence?

Pray: In prayer, I will quiet myself and allow a sense of reverence for God to still my inner restlessness.

Act: I will resist hopelessness and anxiety by reflecting on my reasons for hope and trust in God.

- 4 Look at the proud!
Their spirit is not right in them,
but the righteous live by their faith.^a
- 5 Moreover, wealth^b is treacherous;
the arrogant do not endure.
They open their throats wide as Sheol;
like Death they never have enough.
They gather all nations for themselves,
and collect all peoples as their own.

The Woes of the Wicked

- 6 Shall not everyone taunt such people and, with mocking riddles, say about them,
“Alas for you who heap up what is not your own!”
How long will you load yourselves with goods
taken in pledge?
- 7 Will not your own creditors suddenly rise,
and those who make you tremble wake up?
Then you will be booty for them.
- 8 Because you have plundered many nations,
all that survive of the peoples shall plunder
you—
because of human bloodshed, and violence to
the earth,
to cities and all who live in them.
- 9 “Alas for you who get evil gain for your house,
setting your 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 The very stones will cry out from the wall,
and the plaster^c will respond from the woodwork.
- 12 “Alas for you who build a town by bloodshed,
and found a city on iniquity!”
- 13 Is it not from the LORD of hosts
that peoples labor only to feed the flames,
and nations weary themselves for nothing?
- 14 But the earth will be filled
with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.
- 15 “Alas for you who make your neighbors drink,
pouring out your wrath^d until they are drunk,
in order to gaze on their nakedness!”
- 16 You will be sated with contempt instead of glory.
Drink, you yourself, and stagger!^e
The cup in the LORD’s right hand
will come around to you,
and shame will come upon your glory!

^a Or *faithfulness*

^b Other Heb Mss read *wine*

^c Or *beam*

^d Or *poison*

^e Q Ms Gk: MT *be uncircumcised*

17 For the violence done to Lebanon
will overwhelm you;
the destruction of the animals will
terrify you—^a
because of human bloodshed and
violence to the earth,
to cities and all who live in them.

18 What use is an idol
once its maker has shaped it—
a cast image, a teacher of lies?
For its maker trusts in what has
been made,

though the product is only an idol
that cannot speak!

19 Alas for you who say to the wood,
“Wake up!”
to silent stone, “Rouse yourself!”
Can it teach?
See, it is gold and silver plated,
and there is no breath in it at
all.

20 But the LORD is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep silence
before him!

Read Habakkuk 3

Habakkuk longs for God’s mighty deeds from of old to be renewed in his own day. He then describes the Lord’s coming forth as a mighty warrior. At God’s awesome appearance, nature reels and writhes, enemies are defeated, and the prophet himself is overcome with terror. Nevertheless, Habakkuk concludes his hymn with rejoicing and exultation because God is the God of salvation.

Reflect: Like Habakkuk, we hear of the mighty deeds God worked so long ago. Perhaps we wonder, “Does God no longer work in the world? Why doesn’t God do now what God used to do?” How do I answer such questions for myself?

Pray: Though it may seem that evidence of God’s presence and action is slim (see 3:17), I will pray for strength and courage to persevere in faith.

Act: I will show God’s presence to another by performing an act of

3 A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk according to Shigionoth.

The Prophet’s Prayer

2 O LORD, I have heard of your renown,
and I stand in awe, O LORD, of your work.
In our own time revive it;
in our own time make it known;
in wrath may you remember mercy.

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

4 The brightness was like the sun;
rays came forth from his hand,
where his power lay hidden.

5 Before him went pestilence,
and plague followed close behind.

6 He stopped and shook the earth;
he looked and made the nations tremble.
The eternal mountains were shattered;
along his ancient pathways
the everlasting hills sank low.

7 I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction;
the tent-curtains of the land of Midian trembled.

8 Was your wrath against the rivers,^b O LORD?
Or your anger against the rivers,^b
or your rage against the sea,^c
when you drove your horses,
your chariots to victory?

9 You brandished your naked bow,
sated^d were the arrows at your command.^e *Selah*
You split the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw you, and writhed;
a torrent of water swept by;
the deep gave forth its voice.
The sun^f raised high its hands;

^a Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain
^b Or *against River*
^c Or *against Sea*
^d Cn: Heb *oaths*
^e Meaning of Heb uncertain
^f Heb *It*

- 11 the moon^a stood still in its exalted place,
 at the light of your arrows speeding by,
 at the gleam of your flashing spear.
- 12 In fury you trod the earth,
 in anger you trampled nations.
- 13 You came forth to save your people,
 to save your anointed.
 You crushed the head of the wicked house,
 laying it bare from foundation to roof.^b *Selah*
- 14 You pierced with their^c own arrows the head^d of his warriors,^e
 who came like a whirlwind to scatter us,^f
 gloating as if ready to devour the poor who were in hiding.
- 15 You trampled the sea with your horses,
 churning the mighty waters.
- 16 I hear, and I tremble within;
 my lips quiver at the sound.

Rottenness enters into my bones,
 and my steps tremble^g beneath me.
 I wait quietly for the day of calamity
 to come upon the people who
 attack us.

Trust and Joy in the Midst of Trouble

- 17 Though the fig tree does not blossom,
 and no fruit is on the vines;
 though the produce of the olive fails,
 and the fields yield no food;
 though the flock is cut off from the fold,
 and there is no herd in the stalls,
 18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
 I will exult in the God of my salvation.
- 19 GOD, the Lord, is my strength;
 he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
 and makes me tread upon the heights.^h

To the leader: with stringedⁱ
 instruments.

^a Heb *sun, moon*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Heb *his*

^d Or *leader*

^e Vg Compare Gk Syr: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^f Heb *me*

^g Cn Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^h Heb *my heights*

ⁱ Heb *my stringed*

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