

Habakkuk

- The prophet wrestles with God's sovereignty over suffering

A. Historical Context

- Date: 605 BC. Egypt, along with what remained of Assyria, went to battle against the rising kingdom of Babylon.
- Babylon crushed them and now they were marching on Judah & Jerusalem.
- Babylon would lay siege to Jerusalem, destroy it, and take exiles back in 586 BC.
- "Habakkuk": from the Hebrew verb ḥāḇāq, "to fold one's hands or to embrace."
- Contemporary of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zephaniah

B. Outline

1. Habakkuk's Perplexity with Suffering (1)
2. Habakkuk's Problem with Suffering (2)
3. Habakkuk's Praise despite Suffering (3)
 - Chpt 3 is a psalm outside of the psalms

¹ Notes prepared with help of The Master's Seminary BI 501 Bible Survey syllabus.

- Other psalms outside the psalms (e.g., Exod 15, Deut 32, Deborah in Judges 5, Mary's magnificat in Luke 1:46-55)

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

a. Major Themes

1) The Sovereign Ways of God (1:5; 3:2)

- The ways of God - in judgment - are difficult to come to terms with:

1:6, 9 "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that fierce and impetuous people who march throughout the earth to seize dwelling places which are not theirs...⁹" All of them come for violence. Their horde of faces *moves* forward. They collect captives like sand.

3:2 "LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy."

2) Wrestling with Suffering & Affliction (1:1-4, 13-14, 17)

1:2-4 How long, O LORD, will I call for help, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, "Violence!" Yet you do not save. ³ Why do You make me see iniquity, and cause *me* to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; strife exists and contention arises. ⁴ Therefore, the law is ignored, and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore, justice comes out perverted.

✝ What is Habakkuk's complaint in v. 2?

✝ What is his complaint in vv. 3-4?

1:13-14 *Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor on those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?* ¹⁴ *Why have You made men like the fish of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them?*

1:17 *Will they* therefore empty their net and continually slay nations without sparing?

3) The Necessity of the Righteous to Live by Faith in God & His Promises (1:4-5, 13; 2:4; [3:16-19])

2:4 "Behold, as for the proud one, his soul is not right within him; but the righteous will live by his faith."

✝ Context: How could God use the Babylonians since his eyes are too pure to look on evil?

✝ With perplexity, we need faith

✝ What is faith? The Bible does not commend "blind faith"

- † The kind of faith God commends has good reason behind it. For example:

John 20:30-31 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

- † Where faith/belief is the assurance of things hoped for; the conviction of things not seen.
- † Faith-trust does not make perplexity and sorrow disappear, but trusting God restrains perplexity and sorrow from degrading into irredeemable despair

- † End of the book:

3:16-19 I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise *who* will invade us. ¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, *though* the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, Though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ Yet I will exult in the LORD, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' *feet*, and makes me walk on my high places. For the choir director, on my stringed instruments.

- † The only way Habakkuk could say what he says in 3:17-19 is if at least 2 things are true:

- 1) If God will, being in control, make all wrongs right (Gen 18:25, cf. Deut 32:35 (also Rom 12:19) – vengeance is Mine, I will repay):

2:16 “You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your *own* nakedness. The cup in the LORD’S right hand will come around to you, and utter disgrace *will come* upon your glory.”

- 2) There is future restoration; the Millennial Kingdom.

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

- b. Purpose: The righteous will live by faith as Yahweh brings His judgment, awaiting their ultimate salvation.
- c. Bibliography: also see Nahum
 - Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *From Fear to Faith*
 - J. Ronald Blue, *Habakkuk*, Bible Knowledge Commentary
 - John Mackay, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk & Zephaniah: God's Just Demands*, Focus on the Bible