

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
10-24-18

Habakkuk 1

Habakkuk's Complaint - Verses 1-4

¹The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received. ²How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? ³Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. ⁴Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

1:1 Habakkuk lived in Judah during the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:36-24:5). He prophesied between the fall of Nineveh (the capital of Assyria) in 612 B.C. and the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 588 B.C. With Assyria in disarray, Babylon was becoming the dominant world power. This book records the prophet's dialogue with God concerning the questions, "Why does God often seem indifferent in the face of evil?" and "Why do evil people seem to go unpunished?" While other prophetic books brought God's word to people, this book brought the people's questions to God.

1:2-4 Saddened by the violence and corruption he saw around him, Habakkuk poured out his heart to God. Today injustice is still rampant, but don't let your concern cause you to doubt God or rebel against him. Instead, consider the message that God gave Habakkuk and recognize God's long-range plans and purposes. Realize that God is doing right, even when you do not understand why he works as he does.

The LORD's Answer - Verses 5-11

⁵"Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. ⁶I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwellings not their own. ⁷They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. ⁸Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour; ⁹they all come intent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. ¹⁰They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; by building earthen ramps they capture them. ¹¹Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—guilty people, whose own strength is their god."

1:5 God responded to Habakkuk's questions and concerns by stating that he would do amazing acts that would astound Habakkuk. When circumstances around us become almost unbearable, we wonder if God has forgotten us. But remember, he is in control. God has a plan and will judge evildoers in his time. If we are truly humble, we will be willing to accept God's answers and await his timing.

1:5-11 God told the inhabitants of Jerusalem that they would be utterly amazed at what he was about to do. The people would, in fact, see a series of unbelievable events: (1) Their own independent and prosperous kingdom, Judah, would suddenly become a vassal nation; (2) Egypt, a world power for centuries, would be crushed almost overnight; (3) Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, would be so completely ransacked that people would forget where it had been; and (4) the Babylonians would rise to power. Though these words were indeed amazing, the people saw them fulfilled during their lifetime.

1:6 The Babylonians, who lived northwest of the Persian Gulf, made a rapid rise to power around 630 B.C. They began to assert themselves against the Assyrian Empire and by 605 B.C. had conquered Assyria and Egypt to become the strongest world power. But they were as wicked as the Assyrians, for they loved to collect captives (1:9), were proud of their warfare tactics (1:10), and trusted in their military strength (1:11).

1:11 Babylon was proud of its military might, strategies, armies, and weapons. With no regard for humanity, the armies brought home riches, plunder, prisoners, and tribute from the nations they conquered. Such is the essence of idolatry—asking the gods we make to help us get all we want. The essence of Christianity is asking the God who made us to help us give all we can in service to him. The goal of idolatry is self-glory; the aim of true faith is God's glory.

Habakkuk's Second Complaint - Verses 12-17

¹² LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, LORD, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish. ¹³ Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves? ¹⁴ You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler. ¹⁵ The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks, he catches them in his net, he gathers them up in his dragnet; and so he rejoices and is glad. ¹⁶ Therefore he sacrifices to his net and burns incense to his dragnet, for by his net he lives in luxury and enjoys the choicest food. ¹⁷ Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?

1:13 Judah's forthcoming punishment would be at the hands of the Babylonians. Habakkuk was appalled that God would use a nation even more wicked than Judah to punish Judah. But the Babylonians did not know they were being used by God to help Judah return to him, and Babylon's pride in its victories would be its downfall. Evil is self-destructive, and it is never beyond God's control. God may use whatever unusual instrument he chooses to correct or punish us. When we deserve punishment or correction, how can we complain about the kind of discipline God uses on us?