

Habakkuk: From Protest to Praise – God, Don't You Care?!

Habakkuk 1:1-11

INTRODUCTION

Please take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of **Habakkuk**. **Habakkuk** is unlike the other prophetic books (major or minor) in that it records a dialogue between one man and God. Whereas Isaiah contains a **message from** God, **Habakkuk** records a **conversation with God**. If you've ever felt like you had a few questions for God, this is the book for you.

Here's a bit of the background. The year is 605 BC or thereabouts. We can't be sure of the precise year but that's a good guess. After good king Josiah died in 609 BC, the nation of Judah plunged headlong back into the cesspool of corruption, immorality and idolatry that had plagued it for so many generations. **This time the people seemed hell-bent on their own destruction. Instead of edging toward the cliff, they seemed determined to plunge over it going full speed.** It was as if the nation had a death wish and no use for God at all.

And in the midst of this mess, enter **Habakkuk**. **Habakkuk** was a unique prophet because he did not speak for God to the people but rather spoke to God about His people. Most Old Testament prophets proclaimed divine judgment. **Habakkuk** pleaded for divine judgment.

Habakkuk 1:1 reads: *“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.”* “or *“The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.”* (NIV) Only three prophets in the Old Testament specifically identify themselves as prophets at the beginning of their books. **Habakkuk** is one of them; the other two are **Haggai** and **Zechariah**. **Habakkuk** identifies himself as a prophet, and he identifies the book that follows as *“the prophecy he saw (or the oracle that he received).”*

An **oracle** is another word for **prophecy**. **Habakkuk** is saying from the very start that the message in this book is not a message of his own devising. Rather, it is prophecy. It is a message from the Lord.

Notice that **Habakkuk** *“received”* this oracle. This particular word *“received”* in the Hebrew also means *“to see or perceive,”* and so it is possible that **Habakkuk** received this message as part of a vision. Either way, this points us once again to God as the source of the message. The prophet **Habakkuk** was only the channel through which God brought His word. The apostle Peter says the same thing about prophecy in the New Testament book of **2 Peter**: *“Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* (2 Peter 1:19-20) This is the oracle that **Habakkuk** the prophet received from the Lord.

Verses 1-11 form the first section of the oracle. *And this first section contains two parts:*

I. Habakkuk's (first) _____: God, don't you care?! How long must I call for help?! (1:1-4)

The prophet laments the situation at hand. The prophet laments; he does not complain. I don't mean to split hairs, but I do want to show a difference that makes all the difference. **What's the difference?** Take this home with you: ***“The difference between complaining and lamenting is this: complaining is a cry against God; lamenting is a cry for God.”*** The lament before us reminds us that we sometimes think that God does not care. **Why do we sometimes think that God does not care? The answer is found in verses 2-4.**

A. We _____ but do not see God's answer right away (1:2a)

Look at the beginning of **verse 2**. **Habakkuk** cried out to God: *“O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?”* (**Habakkuk 1:2a**) Apparently **Habakkuk** had been praying to God for quite a long time, but he did not see any answer coming. He began to wonder if God was even listening.

Do you ever wonder if God is listening when you pray? When God does not answer our prayers right away, we sometimes think that God does not care. We conclude that not acting means that not hearing.

Why do we sometimes think that God does not care?

**B. We are in trouble and God does not _____
us right away (1:2b)**

Why do we sometimes think that God does not care?

**C. We see the wicked _____
over the righteous (1:3-4)**

Habakkuk was writing at a time when the people of Judah had almost completely abandoned their loyalty to God and God's laws. Habakkuk was surrounded by violence, destruction, conflict and strife. He could not look to the leaders of the nation for help because the leaders were equally corrupt. The law was virtually paralyzed in this situation, and justice hardly if ever prevailed. The wicked not only outnumbered the righteous. They surrounded the righteous few, hemming them in, cutting them off, twisting and distorting justice until justice was no longer recognizable. And so Habakkuk cried out, "*Why? Why do make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Lord, don't you care?*"

Do you ever ask God the "*Why?*" questions? Do you ever wonder why God allows evil in the world? Do you ever wonder why people who have no concern for God and His laws seem to prosper and get ahead? Meanwhile, you are doing your best to serve God, and you feel like you are falling behind. And you begin to wonder if it is all worth it. ***Does God really care?*** These are some of the same questions **Habakkuk** was struggling with at the beginning of his journey from doubt to faith.

Well, the prophet presents his lament, what happens next?

Please note...

**II. The Lord's _____: yes, I do care and
My answer is on the way. (1:5-11)**

In **verses 5-11** God responds. And in answering Habakkuk's questions, God showed Habakkuk, and He shows us, that yes, He does notice, yes He is concerned, yes HE does care.

**A. God _____ us that He hears
our every prayer (1:5)**

We might paraphrase the first part of God's response this way: "*Take a good look around you, Habakkuk, and you keep your eyes open. I am already at work, raising up the Chaldeans (the Babylonians). The problem is not that I am doing nothing, but that what I am doing is so beyond your grasp you would not even believe it if I revealed it to you.*"

How do we know God does care?

B. God's _____ to our prayers are not always what we expect but they are always in line with His sovereign will (1:6-11)

The wheel of God's judgment may turn slow, but it grinds exceedingly fine. Romans 2:4-5 says this: "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." Make no mistake, God does care about sin and evil, and He affirms that He will judge all evil in the world.

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? As the book opens, Habakkuk is confused and agitated. Three issues are presented:

- Issue # 1: Unanswered prayer**
- Issue # 2: Uncontrolled perversity**
- Issue # 3: Unexpected answer**

Three practical insights for our walk with the Lord:

1. We see only a _____ of the picture.

How do we know God does care?

C. God _____ that He will judge all evil in the world (1:11)

Habakkuk asked God, "*Why do you tolerate wrong?*" God answered **Habakkuk**, "*I don't, and I won't. Judah will be judged for her sin.*" When we see injustice in the world, when we see the wicked triumphing over the righteous, we may sometimes think that God does not care. But God affirms that He will judge all evil in the world. **Ecclesiastes 3:17** says that "*God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.*"

2. God isn't _____ to what we think He ought to do.

3. We need a _____ God.