

**Habakkuk:**  
**He Asked God Why and Was Answered**  
**Lesson 7**

**Key Verse**

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

—Romans 1:17

**Key Verse Thought:** Read the key verse, and understand the “faith to faith.” The first faith is believing in Jesus and He saves you. The second is living a life obeying Jesus and his commands. For as we will learn today (as it is written), the just (those who conform to God’s standard and authority) shall live by faith.

**Emphasis:** We must learn to seek the Lord, learning to live a life of faith. It is then we realize we can take our burdens to God – for He will answer!

**Lesson Summary:** In this lesson, we will continue our break from the kings of Judah to study a minor prophet, Habakkuk, keeping in mind that we will study them as close to where they belong in Judah’s history as possible. Remember the last kings about whom we learned: King Manasseh and King Amon. Both of them were bad kings – actually King Amon continued in his wickedness and never humbled himself before God. Therefore, we are to remember that the nation of Judah was in a deplorable condition.

As we learn about Habakkuk this week, we will find he was a unique prophet because he recognized the condition of God’s people, and it disturbed him. When something troubled him, he took his trouble to God. He was a prophet who asked God a question, and God answered him. God knew the problem, and He would deal with it. God was going to do such a mighty work among His people; they would hardly be able to believe it. Probably the most important verse in Habakkuk is Habakkuk 2:4, where it says: “Behold, his soul *which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith*” (Habakkuk 2:4). We will discover that Habakkuk learned to have faith in God. We also should be as bold as Habakkuk – when we have a problem, we should know to take it to God first!

As we learned Zephaniah’s message last week, we find much of the same message for God’s people from Habakkuk this week: Both warned the people of God’s coming judgment, but both prophets left the nation with the hope that God promised to restore His people.

**Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson**

- Monday: Habakkuk 1
- Tuesday: Habakkuk 2
- Wednesday: Habakkuk 3
- Thursday: Habakkuk 1

**Habakkuk:**  
**He Asked God Why and Was Answered**

1. Habakkuk Asks God (Habakkuk 1:1-4)
  - Habakkuk's burden
  - The sin of Judah
2. Habakkuk's Sorrow (Habakkuk 1:5-17)
  - God answers Habakkuk
  - Habakkuk's confusion
3. God Answered Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:1-20)
  - Habakkuk's wait
  - God's response
4. Habakkuk's Song (Habakkuk 3)
  - A prayer
  - A song

**Note:** A couple of lessons ago, we learned about King Manasseh and King Amon, kings' numbers fourteen and fifteen of Judah. The state of the nation Judah was deplorable. Manasseh was very wicked, and although he humbled himself before God and took away the strange gods from the land, his son Amon restored them once he was king, becoming worse. He died after only being king for two years, and his son, Josiah, became king of Judah. We will study King Josiah's reign in our next lesson.

### 1. Habakkuk Asks God (Habakkuk 1:1-4)

Have you ever wondered why God allows some things to happen? When Habakkuk did not understand what was going on in Judah – He asked God!

“**The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see**” (Habakkuk 1:1). The first we can understand from this verse is that Habakkuk had a “burden.” **Burden** here means “*a burden; a longing or yearning.*” Many prophets had a burden – until it was expressed. **See** in that verse means “*a vision presented to the mind of a prophet; a revelation.*” Habakkuk saw something that troubled him. Consequently, he took his trouble to God. “**O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!***” (Habakkuk 1:2).

Habakkuk saw God's people living godless lives, lives in which God was greatly displeased. These people suddenly became very overt to him. When this realization came to him, it troubled him greatly. “**3. Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention. 4. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth**” (Habakkuk 1:3-4). Habakkuk did not understand how God could allow this iniquity to continue. See the following to help understand some words from this verse to grasp why Habakkuk was so troubled:

- **iniquity:** *vainness, falseness, idolatry, wickedness; the word focuses on the planning and expression of deception – it also pointed to the consequences of that sin; this is a major Hebrew word for sin;*
- **grievance:** *trouble, misery, distress, sorrow*
- **spoiling:** *oppression of the weak; havoc; destruction; mainly refers to social injustices*
- **violence:** *wickedness, wrong, unrighteous gain; also remember that man's violence was one of the main reasons for the flood (see Genesis 6:11 & 13)*
- **strife:** *to quarrel, to contest (personal or legal); contention; controversy; disputes*
- **contention:** *brawling; strife; discord*

Can you better understand why Habakkuk was disturbed over what he was seeing in his world? Remember that it was this kind of living that caused God to decide to destroy the world by flood. “**11. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. 13. And God said unto**

Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6:11-13).

Can you better understand why Habakkuk was so very troubled?

**A Deeper Path:** God hears the troubles of His people. Read the following verses from Psalms to help in the understanding of this:

- “The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee” (Psalm 20:1).
- “*The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles*” (Psalm 34:17).
- “1. O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee: 2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; 3. For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave” (Psalm 88:1-3).

Just as Habakkuk was frustrated seeing all of the injustices happening in the land (man sinning against man in Habakkuk 1:3-4), we can think of others in the Bible who seemed to feel that way. Think of Lot, Abraham’s nephew from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. “7. And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8. (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds)” (2 Peter 2:7-8). Also, think of the many times we read of David as he fled from King Saul. Can you think of others?

Remember an instance recorded in the Psalms. “2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3. For I was envious at the foolish, *when I saw the prosperity of the wicked*” (Psalm 73:2-3). The writer was becoming envious of sinners who prospered, without any apparent judgment (see Psalm 73:4-15). It seemed as if they were getting away with their sin. Then read what he discovered: “16. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. 18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. 19. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors” (Psalm 73:16-19). Remember something we have learned. God sees all, and your sin will find you out! “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23).

## 2. Habakkuk’s Sorrow (Habakkuk 1:5-17)

As we continue, recognize that God answered Habakkuk. “5. Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for *I* will work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*. 6. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces *that are not theirs*” (Habakkuk 1:5-6). God saw. God knew. God had a plan.

God told Habakkuk to look among the heathen (Israel's enemies). Habakkuk was to get ready for God to do a mighty work among His people – one that will be almost impossible to believe. God was going to raise up the Chaldeans (Babylon), to come into Judah and possess the land that did not belong to them. Did you notice how God described the Chaldeans? He described them as bitter and hasty. **Bitter** means “*fierce; violent; wild.*” **Hasty** means “*rash; swift (implying swift destruction).*” We will learn that God used this land of multiple false gods to cure the Israelites of their practice of idolatry – forever. Only God could work that mighty act. See how Habakkuk described this mighty people, the Chaldeans:

**Habakkuk 1:7-11:**

- “7. They *are* terrible and dreadful:
- their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.
- 8. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves:
- and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far;
- they shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat.
- 9. They shall come all for violence:
- their faces shall *sup* up *as* the east wind,
- and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.
- 10. And they shall scoff at the kings,
- and the princes shall be a scorn unto them:
- they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.
- 11. Then shall *his* mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, *imputing* this his power unto his god.”

Nevertheless, Habakkuk was confused about God's method. He understood what we can read: “4. For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. 5. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psalm 5:4-5). God is displeased with wickedness, yet He was going to use these wicked people to discipline God's people. In addition, once again, when Habakkuk did not understand, he asked God. Read his observations: “*Art* thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction” (Habakkuk 1:12). How could God use such a wicked nation to discipline His people?

Habakkuk continued his complaint for the rest of chapter one. He compared this destruction to a fisherman taking fish from the sea. He saw a wicked nation taking and destroying God's people, but he could not see the end of destruction by this wicked people. “*Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?*” (Habakkuk 1:17).

God had showed Habakkuk something that had greatly troubled him.

We (who have looked into God's Word, beginning to discover His plan) now understand that God used this land of multiple false gods to cure the Israelites of their practice of idolatry – forever. Keep in mind that Habakkuk did not know this.

**A Deeper Path:** The following is something important to remember about discipline – especially discipline from God. “5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?” (Hebrews 12:5-7). God disciplines His children. Remember that the Israelites were God's people in the Old Testament.

### 3. God Answered Habakkuk (Habakkuk 2:1-20)

As we open chapter two of Habakkuk, read how it begins. “I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved” (Habakkuk 2:1). Habakkuk did something very important. He committed to wait until God answered him. Many times Christians ask God a question, yet do not stop and wait for an answer. Habakkuk understood the importance of stopping and waiting upon the Lord.

And God answered Habakkuk. “2. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Habakkuk 2:2-3). God would not only tell Habakkuk what He was going to do, but God wanted him to write it down for all to know. Moreover, be sure that if God says it is going to happen, it will!

The following verse is probably the most important thing to read and understand in the book of Habakkuk: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4). Anyone who places their faith in anyone or anything besides God is not “upright” in God. **Upright** means “*ethically; a moral life; to declare right.*” However, the “just” live by faith in God. **Just** means “*lawful; righteous; God himself is the standard for ethics and morality.*” Remember back for a minute to Abraham. “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1). Would you call that living by faith? Remember he left his home and family to walk before God. See what Galatians tells us: “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:9). It is recorded in the New Testament that Abraham was called faithful – and he was blessed. Do you remember the Key Verse for this lesson? “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). God wanted Habakkuk to learn what is important. It does not really matter

*what* man thinks or *how* man thinks, it only matters that Christians live a life of faith in God – making His people just in His eyes.

The rest of Habakkuk chapter two gives a picture of Babylon (Chaldeans), and what will happen with nations that take God's people.

Now do you understand why God's first answer to Habakkuk was to live by faith?

**A Deeper Path:** Remembering what we just learned about walking in faith, read the following verses:

- “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, The just shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11).
- “8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9. Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- “Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38).

Notice that these verses tell us that we cannot be justified (made perfect) by the law in God's sight – we must live by faith. How? By grace, we are saved through faith. It is a gift of God – not anything we can do. Once we are saved through faith, we are to live by faith. If we choose not to, God has no pleasure in us.

#### 4. Habakkuk's Song (Habakkuk 3)

Habakkuk chapter three is a prayer that turned into a song asking God to continue to deal with His people. He proceeded to remember what God had done for His people in the past. He ended by thanking God for leaving His people with hope. He concluded with the following:

17. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fall, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18. Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19. The LORD God *is* my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' *feet*, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

Habakkuk thanked God for his salvation. In this song, we can recognize the growth of Habakkuk in his relationship with God as he learned to trust God. Remember, Habakkuk asked God a question and when he did not understand God's answer, he waited and watched. He learned to live by faith regardless of what was to come tomorrow.



**A Deeper Path:** Remember what David learned. “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1). When God is in control, there is nothing to be feared.

### **Habakkuk 1-3 at a Glance:**

Chapter 1: Habakkuk cried out to God because he did not understand why God would use a wicked nation to judge God’s people; a description of them; an understanding of them “O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and ... established them for correction” (verse 12)

Chapter 2: God answered him; “the just shall live by his faith”; a description of the wicked Babylonians (Chaldeans)

Chapter 3: Habakkuk’s prayer that is a song; asks for revival and mercy in the midst of wrath; remembered what God had done; trusts God for salvation even though it appears His people will fail miserably – He will make God his strength

**Reinforcement:** Both Zephaniah and Habakkuk spoke around the same timeframe. Also, remember that Zephaniah was related to the king. Both of these men received a word from God warning that destruction was imminent for Judah. Each of these men understood that God would pronounce judgment upon the nations God used to chastise His people. Zephaniah called for the people to seek the Lord – seeking righteousness. Habakkuk understood that the just lived by faith (which only comes after one seeks for righteousness from God). Each wanted God’s people to understand they were to trust in God – no matter what; and God knew His people would fail, but God promised restoration and salvation for His people. We should understand that we cannot live a life pleasing to God without saving faith (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Moreover, God will have no pleasure in one who refuses to live by faith (Hebrews 10:38).

Habakkuk recognized God was in control, and He is not accountable to anyone. God is sovereign and perfect in all His doings, never needing to justify His actions to man. Nevertheless, as we can see in Habakkuk, God is often willing to allow man to see and understand his actions – if they will only trust in Him. Recognize that in this time, Habakkuk grew in his faith. He also better understood how to pray for God’s people. That time of prayer turned into a song of rejoicing.

**Closing:** It would be good to close with a short prayer reinforcing today’s lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will learn to seek God, learning to live a life of faith pleasing Him – and to never refuse to live by faith (because we know that displeases God).*