

Basic Training Bible Ministries

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Book of Habakkuk

“The just shall live by faith.” Hab 2:4

Author

Habakkuk comes from the Hebrew word for “embrace” (*habaq*). Rabbinical legend made him the son of the Shunamite woman, due to the use of this word in 2Ki 4:16, “*You shall embrace a son.*” However, this would place him 100 years too early in history. Jerome gave the meaning of “wrestler” due to his struggle in reconciling the presence of evil with the existence of God. Since chapter 3 is written as a hymn (Hab 3:1, 19), it has been assumed that Habakkuk was a priest or part of the Levitical choir.

Date

Written late in the 7th century B.C. The Assyrian city of Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C.; the good king and reformer, Josiah, died in 609 (see 2Ki 22–23 for his reforms). The sin and corruption mentioned by Habakkuk (1:2–4) fits better in the reign of Jehoiakim, whose reign began in 609 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar began his attack on Jerusalem in 606, and took the city in 605, so the events of this book would fall between the death of Josiah and the coming of Nebuchadnezzar's army.

Theme

The prophet grapples with the “mysteries of Providence,” and the age-old dilemma of reconciling the presence of evil with the existence of a good and all-powerful God. This is called “theodicy,” the “vindication of the justice and goodness of God in spite of the existence of evil in the world” (Webster’s Dictionary). Habakkuk clearly declares that the ultimate resolution of the dilemma is found only by a living faith (Hab 2:4) in a loving God (Hab 3:13).

An extended quote from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia is fitting:

“This short book offers a glimpse of the theological and philosophical inner life of the poet dressed in the form of a short but gripping dialogue ... the prophet asks some of the most penetrating questions in all literature, and the answers given are basic to a proper view of God and His relation to history ... The faith prescribed ... is still called for as a basic response to the unanswered questions in today’s universe. This theology for life both then and now stands as Habakkuk’s most basic contribution. That this faith or faithfulness is related in NT theology to the objective salvation provided by the work of Christ is both to be expected, and a natural development in the progress of revelation from the dark days of the late 7th century before Christ to the full light of God coming in the Person of His Son.” (vol. 2, p. 585)

Key Verse

The statement of Hab 2:4b is not only key to this book, but lays the foundation for all NT theology, as seen in Rom 1:16–17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:37–38. These verses, in context, reveal that

biblical faith is objective in nature, and its only fitting object is the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Person and the victory of His finished work on the cross.

Outline (3 sections, 7 stages)

I. The Perplexing Problem of Evil, Chapter 1

- A. The prophet's first complaint, Hab 1:1–4
The problem of theodicy: the presence of evil versus a good God
- B. The divine response, 1:5–11
In essence (v. 5), you would not understand nor believe. This verse is quoted in Act 13:41 as being fulfilled in the cross of Christ.
- C. The prophet's second complaint, 1:12–17
How can God use a nation more wicked than Israel to chasten His people? His original dilemma is now even more confusing.

II. We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight, Chapter 2

- A. God's second response, Hab 2:1–4
The key to the book, "The just shall live by his faith," (2:4). In essence, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,"* Heb 11:1. *"We walk by faith not by sight,"* 2Co 5:7
- B. Five predictions of doom on the Chaldeans, 2:5–20.
These five "woes" parallel Isa 5:8–23; Mat 23:13–33; Luk 11:42–52.

III. Analysis of the Faith-Rest Life, Chapter 3

- A. A Psalm of praise for God's past dealings, Hab 3:1–15
As Paul points out in 2Co 1:10, what God has done in the past, He will do in the future. We can trust in His faithfulness (Heb 13:8). The immutability of God is the security of the believer!
- B. The victory of faith-rest in the soul of the prophet, 3:16–19.

Study Approach

We will build our study around six key verses in the text. These verses not only summarize the context, but show the flow of the truth revealed to Habakkuk and the doctrines which will sustain us in similar dilemmas and perplexity today.

1. Hab 1:5: The comfort of divine providence
2. Hab 1:12: The stability of the essence of God
3. Hab 2:4: The power of objective faith
4. Hab 2:14: The assurance of the Lord's ultimate victory
5. Hab 3:13: The hope of God's redemptive plan in history
6. Hab 3:16: The joy and peace of the faith-rest life

I. The Comfort of Divine Providence, Hab 1:1–11

This section includes the initial problem of Habakkuk and the divine response. The purpose of the prophet is to record the vision he was given in response to his prolonged intercession for his nation (1:1–2). God answers Habakkuk’s complaint regarding the corruption rampant in his nation (seven evils cited) and the question of how the Lord could tolerate it, by revealing His plan to bring chastening on Israel by using the Chaldeans as His scourge (1:5–11). This will present Habakkuk with a whole new dilemma!

Historical Parallels

For reasons we will discover, the book of Habakkuk specifically relates to three generations in history:

- First, that of the prophet;
- Second, the generation of Jesus; and
- Finally, our own generation.

For all who pray for our nation, as we have been commanded to do (1Ti 2:1–6), there is much instruction and warning in this book.

The Providence of God and the Dilemma of Good and Evil, 1:5

“I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you.” – Hab 1:5

“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” – Joh 3:12

1. Job learned (Job 38 and following) that God does not explain Himself to His creatures.
2. God is at work behind the scenes in history (Deu 29:29) and all His works are good (Gen 1:31; Joh 5:17, 19).
3. The presence of evil in the world is the work of the devil and the choice of man—not the fault of God (Gen 2:17, 3:6–7).
4. God is light (1Jo 1:5) and love (1Jo 4:8, 16), therefore to depart from Him is to move into darkness and malice, resulting in the corruption of evil.
5. Sin is both the cause and result of spiritual death (Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1–3). The affliction and suffering brought by evil in the world, like the invasion of the Chaldeans, is both a rebuke and a chastening to us for our own evil doings.
6. Like Habakkuk, we deplore the evil around us, but do not deal with the evil within us. *“Everyone wants to change the world, but no one wants to change himself.” – Tolstoy*
7. The providential work that God is doing (1:5) is inscrutable to mankind. Yet, He makes even evil His servant (Psa 78:10) to work good to those who will come to Him in faith (Rom 8:28–30).
8. The ultimate meaning of this verse is found by Paul in Act 13:41 (Paul must have been quite a student of Habakkuk!). Only when we understand what eternal good God has done through the evil of the cross of Christ, will our doubts of God’s goodness and our questioning of His ways be put to rest.
9. The first exposition on providence is found in Gen 22, where we discover five great truths:

- A. Trusting God is the essence of true worship, Gen 22:5.
 - B. God’s providential work is Christ-centered, Gen 22:8, Hab 3:13.
 - C. We enter its blessings by faith and obedience, Gen 22:9–12; Heb 11:17–19.
 - D. Apart from faith, we do not “see” God’s provision, nor come to know Him as He is, Gen 22:13–14; Eph 1:17–20.
 - E. The essence of divine providence is distilled in the Gospel message, Gen 22:18; Gal 3:16.
10. Ultimately, the mysteries of providence are more satisfying, to the believing soul, than would be any answers or explanations (Job 42:1–6).

*“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!
... For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom
be glory forever. Amen.” – Rom 11:33, 36*

Applications

We often question how our liberal leaders and “representatives” can continue to support terrorists and tyrants, and legislate against freedom? The answer is simple. Having rejected the premise of absolute truth, they have rejected God and Christ. They can only move deeper into the darkness of evil, apart from outright repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. For further study see: Isa 28:16 with 1Co 3:11 and 1Pe 2:6. Isa 55:8–11 with Rom 11:33–36. Jer 9:23–24 with 1Co 1:26–31. Psa 118:22–24 with Acts 4:11–12.

II. The Stability of the Essence of God, Hab 1:12–17

God’s answer creates an even greater problem for Habakkuk. He is stunned by the revelation that God will chasten His people by the heathen Chaldeans. Yet the basis he uses for his argument (v 12) actually contains the answer to his dilemma. His question is, “How could an eternally holy and righteous God use the heathen to punish the righteous (believers)?” We will see God’s “answer” in chapter 2.

Historical Parallel

Today we see Russia aiding Iran to get a nuclear weapon, while China is our creditor and greatest military competitor—building their arsenal from the profits of American “consumerism.” These nations, and others, will ultimately fulfill prophecy by destroying America (Rev 18:8, 10, 17, 19).

How could a just and holy God allow these “ungodly” nations to destroy “godly” America? The answer may lie in the words of Jesus in Luk 12:48:

“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required.”

The Implications of the Essence of God, 1:12

*“He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice,
a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.” – Deu 32:4*

1. The foundation of all faith is the faithfulness of God, 1Co 1:9; 1Th 5:24; 2Ti 2:13; Heb 10:23; 11:6, 1Pe 4:19.

2. Psalm 139 presents the essence of God in connection with the presence of evil and the believer's need for self-examination and correction. Here we find:

Sovereignty	Omniscience
Righteousness	Omnipresence
Justice	Omnipotence
Love/Mercy	Immutability
Eternal Life	Veracity
3. In Hab 1:12, all of these elements can be found or surmised. Where faith would conclude that a God of this nature could not violate His own character, and in that find rest, Habakkuk takes the path we often take—of doubting the goodness of God.
4. The biblical background for Habakkuk is found in Deu 32–33.
 - a. All of God's works reflect the perfection of His character, Deu 32:3–4.
 - b. It is always helpful to reflect on God's past works, Deu 32:7, 8.
 - c. God's chastening has a blessed intent, Deu 32:10–11.
 - d. Prosperity and plenty tend to lead toward spiritual apathy, Deu 32:15–18.
 - e. Therefore, God lets us eat the fruit of our ways, Deu 32:19–21; Gal 6:7.
 - f. The wounds of chastening bring us to healing, Deu 32:39.
 - g. With repentance and faith comes restoration and victory, Deu 33:26–29.
5. When Habakkuk says, "*We shall not die,*" he draws a hopeful conclusion from his musings on the essence of God. See David's conclusion in Psa 118:16–18, along with its ultimate implication in Joh 11:25–26; 14:19.
6. The prophets David, Isaiah, and Ezekiel offer great hope and comfort to those believers in time of national collapse, provided they maintain a right relationship and fellowship with God throughout, Psa 91:1–16; Isa 3:10; Eze 18:21–23, 30–32. In His presence there is no harm, only refining!
7. The only proper response of faith is to trust God to do what is right, resting in His infallible promises, Isa 40:28–31.

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand ... for I the Lord your God, will hold your hand, saying to you, "Fear not, I will help you." – Isa 41:10, 13

Applications

However much the course of America at present may grieve all true patriots, our trust in God must not be shaken. Our intercessory prayers for this nation may be answered by God's righteous scourging of this land. In such a time, it is crucial that we commit ourselves to His care (Pro 3:5–6) and be diligent to study and live out His Word (2Ti 2:15) as a warning and a witness to those around us. We were made for such a time as this! Let us not fall short of the grace of God! For further study see: Deu 6:24–25; Psa 31:23, 37:3–8, 23–28, 34, 39–40; Pro 2:8; Isa 49:8, 15–16; Mat 24:13; 2Co 4:7–10; 2Ti 4:18.

III. The Power of Objective Faith, Hab 2:1–4

Habakkuk, unlike most of us, awaits an answer to his prayer (v. 1). [We need to learn to follow our prayers with a time of quiet "listening" for the voice of the Spirit.] Rabbinical tradition makes him the watchman of Isa 21:6, which is chronologically impossible. He expects correction, and he gets it in the form of both a command and a vision. The command is in the

form of a statement, *“The just shall live by his faith,”* and the vision points to the object of faith (v. 3) and its ultimate end (v. 14, to be dealt with in the next section).

Historical Parallel

The calling of the believer today is no different from that of Habakkuk 2700 years ago. Either we trust God or we don't. There is no middle ground. And if we trust, then our lives are to be a living demonstration of that faith. As we will discover, to turn back from faith to doubt and complaining will bring upon us the same results as it did for the Exodus generation, and we will taste God's rod rather than His staff of comfort.

“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.” – Heb 12:12–13

Faith, the Foundation of the Spiritual Life, 2:4

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” – Heb 11:6

On November 23, 1984, I was in Jerusalem and found a unique old bookshop. I discovered a modern English version of the Old Testament, translated from the Hebrew Masoretic text by Jewish scholars. In it, Habakkuk 2:4 reads as follows:

“Lo, his spirit within him is puffed up, not upright, but the righteous man is rewarded with life for his fidelity.”

The significance of this, along with the Greek version (Septuagint) will become clear as we proceed. As I have pointed out in section II, how we live in time of historical crisis will largely determine how we come through it.

1. As illustrated by the Apostle Paul, as well as James, Abraham is the biblical standard of faith and faithfulness, Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6-9; Jam 2:21–24.
2. Abraham not only believed God, but he continued to *“live by faith,”* Rom 4:12–22; Heb 11:8–10, 17–19.
3. The life of faith is a continual pursuit of spiritual insight and blessings resulting from the discovery and fellowship of God Himself, Heb 11:1, 6.
4. By faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into eternal life, but as we move *“from faith to faith,”* eternal realities become present possessions, Joh 3:36; Rom 1:16–17; Eph 2:8–10; 1Jo 5:11–13.
5. In combination with Gen 15:6, this verse lays the foundation for the total theology of the Apostle Paul and those he instructed.
 - a. Paul quotes it in Rom 1:16–17 to show that the justifying faith in Christ is to move *“from faith to faith”* into the sanctifying faith in life.
 - b. Again, in Gal 3:11, he supports his argument in Rom 2:26 that no one is justified by the works of the Law, but only by objective faith in Jesus Christ. Christ is the effective, working object of faith. Faith in any other object (i.e., the Law) is powerless.

- c. Finally, we have the quote of Heb 10:37–38, which is from the Septuagint version of Hab 2:3–4. Amazingly, the writers of the Septuagint changed the focus of v. 3 from “vision” to the “person” of the Messiah:
“Though He tarries, wait for Him; for He will surely come and will not tarry.”
 Thus, the inspired quote of Heb 10:38 makes this prophecy point to the return of Christ. In the face of impending judgment in 70 A.D., the believer must endure in faith (Heb 10:35–36) or share the judgment of unbelievers (Heb 10:39, 11:6, 12:14–17).
6. The five warning passages of Hebrews are directed to believers who, in a time of historical crisis, “*drift away from*” the life of faith: Heb 2:1–4, 4:1–3, 6:4–8, 10:26–31, 12:25–29.
7. In the time of Habakkuk, the invaders were the Chaldeans. In the time of the recipients of the book of Hebrews, it was the Romans. Who it may be in our time is not the issue. The same God requires the same steadfast faith as a testimony to His faithfulness. The outcome for us is for Him to determine in His providential plan.
8. In 1Jo 5:9–16, we see the elements and evidences of living by faith.
 - a. Conviction of the truth of the biblical witness about Christ, v. 9
 - b. Personal assurance from the indwelling Spirit of God, v. 10
 - c. Conscious possession of eternal life in Christ, vv. 11–12
 - d. Endurance and witness in a consistent life of faith, v. 13
 - e. Powerful and effective prayer, interceding for others, v. 14–16

Applications

We are living in a time of historical crisis. Due to the evil and deception of our time, many will grow cold in their love for Christ and will fall away into reversion (Mat 24:12; Heb 10:38–39). Already we see on every hand believers under unprecedented pressure, some being amazingly refined in their faith, while others are becoming disillusioned, doubtful, and caught up in the mindset, “*eat, drink, and be merry ... for tomorrow we die*” (Luk 12:19; 1Co 15:32). Where will you stand? The outcome of the days ahead is not determined by circumstances beyond your control, but by whether you choose to “*live by faith*” or not.

IV. The Assurance of the Lord’s Ultimate Victory, Hab 2:5–20

In this passage, Habakkuk is given a vision of the coming wrath of God on the Chaldeans. They will also reap the harvest of their own evil and violence. The section unfolds in a series of five “woes” that announce the reasons for the coming “wrath of God.” Compare other “woe” passages such as; Isa 5:8–23; Mat 23:13–33; Luk 6:24–26; Luk 11:42–52; Rev 9:12, 11:14, 12:12. Perhaps the most awful of these is the doom announced by Jesus on Judas in Mar 14:21, “*Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.*”

Historical Parallel

The above cited passages are all especially relevant to our degenerate generation. The word “woe” is pronounced often with a note of pity and compassion, often with the hint of wrath, but always with the sense of ultimate doom. It is an awful word, and is used sparingly in Scripture, and then only by those authorized with a message from God. Surely, “woe” is the Word of the Spirit of God on our corrupt, self-serving leaders and our “consumer” mentality. Take note of the all-too-common grounds for this warning of the wrath of God:

1. The woe for greed, dishonest gain, Hab 2:5–8
2. The woe for covetousness and self-exaltation, vv. 9–11
3. The woe for making gain violently, vv. 12–13
4. The woe for coercion and manipulation, vv. 15–17
5. The woe for idolatry against God, vv. 18–20

The Glory of His Coming Kingdom, 2:14 (Read Psa 2)

“Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! and let the whole earth be filled with His glory.” – Psa 72:18–19

1. The law of just recompense is at work in every phase of history, Rom 2:6; Gal 6:7–9.
2. God has set before mankind the choice of obedience and blessing, or disobedience and cursing, Deu 11:16, 26–28 (developed in Deu 27–28).
3. If we choose life through faith, the outcome is good. If we choose death by unbelief, the end is evil and sorrow, Deu 30:15–20.
4. For those of us who choose to follow the Lord, He uses our trials to teach us to fly like the eagle, Deu 32:10–12. Again, too much prosperity is a positive disadvantage (see v. 15).
5. To those who choose unbelief, only the vengeance of God remains, Deu 32:35; Rom 12:19. The wrath of the Son will soon be kindled, Psa 2:12.
6. God is working in history toward the coming of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, Hab 2:14. See also Num 14:21; Psa 72:19; Isa 6:3, 11:9.
7. This is the ultimate vindication of Jesus’ prophecy regarding the Church (Mat 16:18) and is the victory of the Great Commission (Mat 28:18–20).

Applications

The redemptive plan of God is at work in this present generation. God is bringing life out of death and good out of evil. His kingdom will ultimately prevail. The hardship and afflictions which we will soon face are designed to refine the faith of believers and to bring conviction to the unsaved of their need for Jesus Christ. The question for us is: Are we actively involved on behalf of Christ in the current battle?

Consider also Psa 62:11–12; Pro 24:11–12; Mat 16:26–27.

V. The Hope of God’s Redemptive Plan in History, Hab 3:1–15

The third chapter is one of the most beautiful poems in Scripture. It is dedicated as a “*Psalm of Praise*” (v. 1, *Shigionoth*), and concludes with a dedication “*to the Chief Musician*” (v. 19b). From this, some have assumed Habakkuk was possibly a priest, or at least a Levite in the choir. Here the prophet reviews the redemptive work of God for Israel in past history. It is always good to look back to God’s past deliverances, in order to gain assurance of His deliverance in the present and future (2Co 1:10).

1. The prophet’s plea for mercy, vv. 1–2 (see Isa 3:10 with Psa 128:1–2)
2. The majestic coming of God to deliver Israel from Egypt, vv. 3–7
3. His parting of the Red Sea and Jordan River, vv. 8–10
4. The victory He gave to Joshua in Canaan, v. 11, cf. Jos 10:12–14
5. The final victory over all the nations, vv. 12–15

The Lord of Armies Fights for His People, 3:13

“I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! ... the Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation: He is my God, and I will praise Him ... the Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name.” – Exo 15:1–3

This verse (Hab 3:13) is the explanation for all the dilemmas of this book and a commentary on the truth of Rom 8:28–30, 37. God is constantly at work on behalf of His children. And the greatest undertaking is through His “*Anointed*,” the Lord Jesus Christ. The entire book of Hebrews is a vindication of this truth. Jesus Christ, our High Priest, is seated and reigning in glory and power, and will fulfill all His promises. Those believers who choose to “*live by faith*” will share His victory in this generation and will also share in His coming reign (Rom 8:17; 2Ti 2:12). What are some of the virtues called for if we are to share in His victory?

1. Faith with confession, Rom 10:8–13
Every Christian in Rome knew the implications of saying “Jesus is Lord.” To cower was to gain the approval of Rome. But to boldly claim Christ as Lord was to win the approval of the King of kings.
2. Endurance in the life of faith, Mat 10:22, 24:13
The word “*saved*” here is speaking about temporal victory, not eternal salvation. That most believers do not “persevere in the faith” is evident from every epistle of Scripture.
3. Growth and purification of life, 2Ti 2:15, 21–22; Jam 1:21; 2Pe 3:18
Where there is no transformation and conformity to Christ, there is no growth (Rom 12:1–2; 2Co 3:17–18). To “*live by faith*” is to “*walk by faith*” (2Co 5:7) and to “*walk in the Spirit*” (Gal 5:16). The result is that the “inner man” becomes dominant while the “old man” is made subject. As John the Baptist said, “*He must increase, I must decrease*” (Joh 3:30). So it is for each of us.
4. Evidence of overcoming/victory over sins and trials, Rom 8:37; 1Jo 5:4–5
Those who are “*overcomers*” will share in the reign of Jesus Christ. Look at the promises given to the overcomers in the seven churches of Asia (Rev 2–3). In Rev 12:11, we see that overcoming is a matter of:
 - a. salvation – “*the blood of the Lamb*”
 - b. study/growth – “*the word of their testimony*” and
 - c. sacrifice – “*they did not love their lives to the death*”

This does not necessarily mean they were all martyrs, but that they “denied themselves” (Luk 9:23) throughout the duration of their lives.

5. Spiritual fruit-bearing, Mat 13:8; Joh 15:1–8; Eph 2:10; Tit 2:11–14, Tit 3:14
The believer is to be a channel of God’s grace to this dark world. Drawing our resources from the “*vine*,” Jesus Christ, we bear “*much fruit*” and so the Father is glorified and Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf is vindicated. Absence of fruit is not always a sign of no salvation. But it is always a sign of no love, Joh 14:15, 15:10.

Applications

God is at work in mighty ways in this present generation. Each of us must decide whether, and to what degree, we will be “*God’s fellow-workers*” (1Co 3:9). Every command of the Bible is impossible for us to fulfill. “*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*”

(Mat 19:26). In fact, each and every command is a test of whether we will seek to fulfill it in our own strength, resulting in ultimate failure. Or, whether we will utilize prayer, calling on God to do what He alone is able to do in us. For further study, look at Psa 27:1, 37:39; Isa 12:2, 25:9; Zep 3:17.

VI. The Joy and Peace of the Faith-Rest Life, Hab 3:16–19

The first response of Habakkuk to the vision and message of judgment for his day was absolute terror. More than likely, if we knew what is coming in our day, we would have the same response. However, he quickly chose to enter into the spiritual rest of faith. Nowhere in Scripture can a more beautiful portrayal of the faith-rest life be found.

Historical Parallel

Each of us must choose how we will meet the coming calamities of our age. We can “freak out” with each new development, we can panic with the rise and fall of the stock market, we can foolishly trust in “*the arm of flesh*” (Jer 17:5–6), or we can choose the way of faith, hope, and love and be “*like a tree planted by the waters*” (Jer 17:7–8). Our faith will be tested in the days ahead—may we come through like gold refined in the fire (1Pe 1:6–9)!

The Decision and the Dynamics of the Faith-Rest Life, 3:16

*“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ...
But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” – Jos 24:15*

Some translations of Habakkuk 3:16b read, “*Yet I will rest in the day of trouble.*” The root word for “*rest*” is the same as *Noah* (Gen 5:29). The following verses demonstrate Habakkuk’s anticipation of the worst-case scenario and his determination to rejoice and maintain inner peace. We have every reason to do the same, for Jesus said, “*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid ... in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*” (Joh 14:27, 16:33b).

A Synopsis of the Faith-Rest Life

1. It is the result of God’s Word received, believed, and lived out, Psa 94:12–13.
2. Strength leads to victory—victory to rest, Isa 28:5–6, 12.
3. Those who tremble at God’s Word are able to rest in trial, Isa 66:5; Hab 3:16.
4. Jesus alone is the Author of spiritual rest and peace, Mat 11:28–29; Isa 28:12.
5. Here we see the “*rest*” of knowing Christ as Savior (cf. Rom 5:1), and the further rest of knowing His Word experientially by taking His “*yoke*.”
6. No passage is richer in the qualities of the faith-rest life than Heb 4:1–16. Study this passage diligently, ponder over it, and pray for insight and understanding. Look for the contrasts between those who enter His rest and those who fall short. Note again, that we are implored to “*come boldly to the throne of grace*” (v. 16) in order to “*obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*”

Six Steps into the Faith-Rest Life: Book of Habakkuk

The six key verses we have studied through this book show the prophet moving from despair to rest and peace as God guides his thinking away from circumstances to objective truth.

1. Trust in the providential hand of God to fulfill His redemptive purpose, Hab 1:5; Rom 8:28.

2. Review the essence of God as the foundation and standard for all His works, Hab 1:12; Isa 41:10, 13.
3. Determine to live by objective faith, looking away from conditions to the unchanging and eternal Word of God, Hab 2:4; Rom 1:16–17; 2Co 5:7; Heb 10:37–39.
4. Keep in mind the end of the redemption story, Hab 2:14; Tit 2:13; Joh 14:1–3; 1Co 15:50–57.
5. Review the past mighty works of God for His people, Hab 3:13; 2Co.1:10; Heb 13:8, 14.
6. Overcome fear by bold faith and rise up like the eagle, Hab 3:16-19; Isa 40:31; Heb 4:14-16.

Applications

We do indeed live in “perilous times.” These days will be sure to “try the souls of men.” Let’s take the occasion of this conference and study to carefully examine ourselves, to pray for wisdom and understanding, and to find fresh dedication to fully participate in God’s redemptive plan as it works out in our time.

Conclusion

No study that I have done in many years has so impressed me with its relevance as has the study of the book of Habakkuk. This book has a message aimed directly at our time and this generation of Americans. I believe we will witness the fulfillment of the words of this book in our lifetimes, either for cursing or for blessing, depending on what we do with this portion of the living and inspired Word of God. I urge each of us to not hear the Word of God in vain. Discipleship is a radical departure from “life as usual” according to the standard of this world. As the world has invaded the Church, so the Church has lost its power and impact in the world. We live in a time like Elijah, when hundreds of prophets had no impact (1Ki 18:4, 13). Only a willingness to stand alone with Jesus Christ will bring eternal fruit. My prayer is that you and I may be among those who not only choose to stand, but to rest in faith, when our generation is counted!