

Living by Faith When Life Doesn't Make Sense

Faith that Waits

Habakkuk 1:12-2:1

In the first message of this series, we met the prophet Habakkuk crying out to God in prayer. The fading memory of King Josiah's reforms only intensified his anguish, highlighting just how far Judah had fallen. No longer were the people allowing the law of the Lord to guide their lives. Instead, they had chosen to walk in the ways of the surrounding nations—embracing idolatry, corruption, and self-interest. Power had shifted into the hands of the strong and the clever, resulting in fraud, exploitation, and violence against the weak and vulnerable. Seeing this moral collapse, Habakkuk pleaded with the sovereign God for justice, mercy, grace, and—above all—reformation among His people.

God did respond to Habakkuk's cry—but in a way that was both unexpected and deeply unsettling. The Lord had not been silent, as Habakkuk feared. Rather, He was already raising up a solution to Judah's covenant-breaking ways. A fierce and dreaded nation was coming—one whose horses were swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk, who would swoop down like eagles, sweeping across the land like the desert wind. They would conquer, destroy, and carry many away into exile. One can almost feel the prophet's shock and horror as God revealed His plan. Habakkuk longed for reform and justice, but this seemed unbearably severe—judgment that would leave his people exiled in a foreign land for seventy years. Perhaps, he thought, God's silence had been easier than hearing this truth.

Habakkuk had approached the Lord with reverence, fully aware that God's ways are infinitely higher than his own. He expected discipline—yes—but what staggered him was the instrument of God's judgment. Babylon was a law unto itself, driven by pride, exalting its own strength, and worshiping power as its god. How could a holy God, whose eyes are too pure to look upon evil, choose such a wicked nation to discipline His own people? The prophet could not reconcile this, so once again he turned to God in prayer.

Today's message brings us to Habakkuk's second complaint before the Lord—a prayer marked by reverence and faith seeking understanding. As Habakkuk waits upon God, we learn a hard but vital truth: God often calls His people to patience amid afflictions. So, picture the scene—this lone prophet standing watch upon the towers of Judah's defenses, calling out to God, waiting, listening, and trusting that the Lord will yet reveal more of His ways.

Faith Reaffirms God’s Character When His Ways Confuse Us

Habakkuk begins his second complaint not with accusation, but with theology. Before wrestling with what God is doing, he anchors his heart in who God is. In the face of confusion, he does not abandon his faith—he reaffirms the unchanging character of the Lord. Listen as the prophet begins his prayer by confessing what he knows to be true about God:

“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.
Your eyes are too pure to look on evil;
You cannot tolerate wrongdoing.”

Habakkuk 1:12-13a

Habakkuk appeals to God’s eternal and holy nature. By calling the Lord “from everlasting,” the prophet affirms that God has always existed—and therefore His purposes are never impulsive, reactive, or inconsistent. What God is doing in the present must be fully aligned with who He has always been. Unlike man, who “should lie” or “repent” in weakness (Numbers 23:19), God is unchanging—“the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). He does not shift with the sands of culture, nor does His love fade, even when expressed through discipline. As the psalmist declares, “there is no unrighteousness in him” (Psalm 92:15).

Because of this, Habakkuk holds fast to hope. Though Judah would soon endure seventy years of painful exile for covenant unfaithfulness, the prophet trusts that judgment would not have the final word, believing that God would yet bring restoration—and ultimately, the promised Son would reign forever upon the throne of David, establishing a kingdom of righteousness and peace without end (Isaiah 9:6–7). Faith may question God’s ways, but it never questions His character!

Habakkuk next turns to God as the Rock—the firm and unshakable foundation upon whom His people depend for support and stability.¹ By addressing the Lord in this way, the prophet acknowledges God’s sovereignty and His unquestioned right to appoint Babylon as an instrument of judgment against Judah. After all, Scripture declares, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The God who brought all things into existence also rules over all things. As the Lord Himself proclaims through the prophet Isaiah:

¹ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [*Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 192.

“I am God, and there is none else, I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure”

Isaiah 46:9-10

Habakkuk acknowledges that judgment is deserved, yet he struggles to understand how God’s chosen means of judgment can be just. He recognizes that many in Judah had broken God’s law, exploited others for personal gain, and oppressed the vulnerable—and that such sin deserved correction. But the prophet cannot ignore a troubling question: What of the righteous who will suffer alongside the wicked? What of the downtrodden, the violated, and the faithful remnant who would also feel the crushing weight of Babylon’s invasion? Would they too be swept away into chaos, pain, and further injustice? Had not the Lord once promised Abraham that He would spare Sodom for the sake of ten righteous souls (Genesis 18:31)? Surely the Judge of all the earth would still do right. Habakkuk clings to the hope that Judah’s Rock would not abandon the innocent. Though he cannot yet see how justice and mercy will meet, he trusts that God’s character will not fail His people.

Having affirmed God’s eternity and sovereignty, Habakkuk now presses deeper by appealing to the Lord’s holiness—the very attribute that makes God’s chosen means of judgment so difficult for him to reconcile. Habakkuk knows God to be holy, transcendent, absolute, and altogether worthy of reverent awe. He is not reasoning in the dark; the Scriptures of Israel had long testified to the holiness of the Lord. Was it not the Lord who commanded Moses, “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5)? And was it not “in the year that king Uzziah died” that Isaiah saw the Lord “sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up,” and heard the seraphim cry one to another,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;

The whole earth is full of His glory?

Isaiah 6:3

It is precisely this vision of God’s holiness that deepens Habakkuk’s struggle. Already burdened by the severity of judgment that would fall upon his people, the prophet is now confounded by the instrument God has chosen. How could a holy God raise up a nation as wicked as Babylon to execute His judgment? How could it be just to use those more corrupt and violent than Judah to punish Judah’s sin?² Was there no one righteous—no more fitting instrument—through whom

² Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [*Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 192.

God might display His righteous wrath?³ These questions do not arise from unbelief, but from a profound reverence for the holiness of the Lord.

Faith Wrestles Honestly Without Crossing into Accusation

Up to this point, Habakkuk has carefully anchored his prayer in who God is—eternal, sovereign, and holy. Yet faith that truly trusts the Lord does not end with confession alone; it dares to bring its hardest questions into His presence. As the prophet continues, his reverence gives way to honest struggle, and his prayer moves perilously close to accusation—yet without crossing into unbelief. Hear now the words of Habakkuk:

“Why do you tolerate the treacherous?
Why are You silent while the wicked
Swallow up those more righteous than themselves?”
Habakkuk 1:13b

Unlike Jonah, who longed to see the full weight of God’s wrath fall upon Nineveh, Habakkuk desires something far more complex. He longs for justice—but also for mercy, grace, and genuine repentance. If God is to hold His people accountable for their sin, how can it be righteous for Babylon—more wicked, more violent, and more corrupt—to stand as His chosen instrument of judgment? Should not the wicked themselves fall under the weight of divine wrath rather than serve as the arm of God’s justice?⁴ Habakkuk is not denying God’s holiness; he is appealing to it—bringing his confusion before the God whose purity cannot look upon iniquity. Faith does not accuse God of wrongdoing—it pleads with God to act consistently with His holiness.

Faith Accepts that God’s Purposes are Larger than Immediate Relief

The questions have been asked, yet the storm does not pass. Instead of offering immediate relief, the vision widens. Habakkuk is forced to reckon with the reality that God is working on a canvas far larger than the present moment, calling faith to endure even when resolution is delayed. Listen now to the prophet’s words:

³ John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 60.

⁴ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 193.

You have made people like the fish in the sea,
like the sea creatures that have no ruler.
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.
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.
Is he to keep on emptying his net,
destroying nations without mercy?
Habakkuk 1:14-17

When I was a boy, I loved to go fishing. I can still remember jumping into the car for the forty-minute drive to my grandparents' home in the mountains, my mind already far ahead of the road—thinking about my fishing rod, the water, and the fish I hoped to lure with the bait on my hook. Long before we arrived, my imagination was already casting lines into unseen pools. One afternoon, while exploring for new fishing spots, I stumbled upon what felt like a rare discovery. Along the bank of a quiet stream, the water was only about four feet deep, and an old tree had fallen across it, stretching out over the surface. The fallen trunk created the perfect shelter—a place where fish could gather unseen and undisturbed. Curious, I climbed out onto the weathered log, and to my amazement I noticed a hollowed section in the trunk. Peering through it, I could see directly into the deepest part of the water below—and there, clustered together, was a school of beautiful trout.

Hidden above them, unseen and unthreatened, I had a clear advantage. One by one, I baited my hook and dropped it into the water, watching as the larger fish took the lure. With ease, I pulled them out—time after time—never once noticed until it was too late. What was safety to them had become vulnerability, and what felt like skill to me was simply position and power.

Habakkuk now turns to a vivid metaphor drawn from the world of fishing⁵ to describe the sweeping political and military dominance God has permitted Babylon to wield. Like fish

⁵ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [*Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 193.

without a ruler, the nations are portrayed as helpless before the hook, the net, and the drag.⁶ Babylon captures them with ease, gathering peoples and kingdoms as though they were nothing more than a day's catch. So great is their success that they come to worship their own power—sacrificing to the net and burning incense to the drag—crediting their strength, strategy, and violence as their gods. Oh, the irony. Those who were called to rule over the sea creatures and care for them failed to do so—and now find themselves in the same helpless condition.⁷

This is what troubles the prophet most. How can God allow a nation so ruthless, merciless, and corrupt—more wicked than Judah—to continue capturing nations without restraint? Holding fast to the truth that the Lord is holy and just, Habakkuk asks how long such cruelty will be permitted to go unchecked. The prophet does not yet have answers—only faith that God's purposes, though painfully slow, are larger than immediate relief and will not forever tolerate injustice.

Faith Chooses Watchful Waiting Instead of Walking Away

Habakkuk's questions do not yet receive an answer, but they do produce a decision. Instead of walking away in disappointment, the prophet chooses to remain—to watch, to wait, and to stay before the Lord. Hear now the posture of faith Habakkuk deliberately adopts:

I will stand at my watch
and station myself on the ramparts;
I will look to see what He will say to me,
and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

Habakkuk 2:1

Knowing full well that he cannot compel a response from God or demand an answer on his own timetable,⁸ Habakkuk brings his questions of injustice before the Lord and waits. He stations

⁶ John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 64.

⁷ John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, [Minor Prophets II](#), ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 64.

⁸ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 195.

himself upon the fortified walls of the city⁹—not to escape, but to remain attentive. Like a watchman, he stands alert and expectant, ready to hear from God and ready to speak when commanded. In this moment, Habakkuk shows us what genuine faith looks like: standing instead of fleeing, watching instead of numbing, listening instead of demanding. Faith does not abandon God in the silence; it remains in His presence, confident that the Lord who has heard will speak in His time.

When we read of Habakkuk’s faith, we cannot help but recognize how difficult it can be to live out the often-quoted words of Proverbs:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

It is easy to trust God when His plan is clear, and His providence lifts us to mountaintops of blessing. But when life grows chaotic and is filled with trial and uncertainty, trusting the Lord becomes far more costly. It is in the dark valleys of life that we discover God’s Word to be “a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). A lamp does not reveal the entire road ahead—it gives light for the next faithful step.

Within the pages of this love letter from God, we encounter again and again the testimony of His sovereignty—stories that remind us He is able to move mountains of fear, tyranny, pain, and injustice. And while His timing rarely aligns with our own, we must never interpret God’s silence as indifference. From the vantage point of the cross—where Christ gave His life a ransom for many—the words of the apostle Paul ring true:

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:28

So, we stand when we can, lie down when we must—but always lift our eyes to the One who redeems, resting in the glorious assurance that the Good Shepherd still knows His sheep and calls them by name.

⁹ Carl E. Armerding, [“Habakkuk,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 509.

Conclusion

Habakkuk's story does not end today with explanations, timelines, or relief. It ends with a posture. The prophet stands on the wall—not because the danger has passed, not because his questions have been answered, but because he knows where he must remain. Faith, when life does not make sense, does not run from God; it stays before Him. It watches. It waits. It listens. Many of us know exactly what Habakkuk felt. We believe God is eternal, sovereign, and holy—yet we look at our world, our families, our health, our churches, and our future, and we ask, “Lord, how can this be right?” Scripture does not shame us for those questions. Instead, it invites us to bring them honestly into God's presence—without accusation, without bitterness, and without walking away.

Habakkuk teaches us that faith is not proven by how quickly our circumstances change, but by how firmly we remain when they do not. God's silence is not absence. His delay is not denial. And His purposes—though often hidden—are always larger than our immediate relief. And ultimately, Habakkuk's waiting points us forward to Christ. For at the cross, we see the clearest answer to faith's hardest questions. There, the truly righteous One was swallowed up by wickedness—not because God was absent, but because He was accomplishing salvation. What looked like silence was mercy in motion. What felt like delay was redemption unfolding.

So, if today you find yourself on the wall—tired, confused, and waiting—stay there. Trust the character of the God you know, even when you cannot trace His hand. Let His Word be a lamp for the next step. And remember: the just shall live by his faith.

Faith that waits is not weak faith.

It is faith that refuses to walk away.