

Living by Faith When Life Doesn't Make Sense

Faith that Worships

Habakkuk 3:1-3:19

Last week we left the prophet Habakkuk standing watch upon the city wall—listening as the Lord answered his second complaint. God had already responded to Habakkuk's first cry by revealing a difficult and unsettling truth: He was raising up Babylon, a fierce and ruthless nation, to serve as His instrument of discipline against Judah. Their injustice was not the root problem - it was the symptom of something far deeper. Their love for the Lord had grown cold. They had turned from God's Word to follow their own paths and had begun seeking wisdom from idols that cannot speak, cannot hear, and cannot save. God had warned them and called them to repentance repeatedly. Yet they refused to turn. And now, discipline was the only means left to awaken their hearts.

Habakkuk struggled with this revelation. How could a holy God use a nation more wicked than Judah to bring judgment upon His own people? Surely God's purity would not permit such injustice. But the Lord made it clear that Babylon's pride had not escaped His notice. Their confidence in their own strength, their military might, their dragnet, and their false gods would soon become their undoing. The very nation God used as His rod would, in time, be forced to drink from the same cup of His wrath.

Still standing on the wall, the prophet wondered when justice would come. God's answer was firm and final:

“The revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false.”

Habakkuk was told to write it down—to make it plain—that the day would come when the conquered would rise as creditors, and the oppressor would become the oppressed. Babylon would cry out to its gods, but no answer would come. For what idol, formed by human hands, can speak? What carved image can give wisdom? And what false god can deliver from the judgment of the living God?

As chapter two closes, the reader is left in suspense. How will the prophet respond? Will there be another complaint? Another question? Another protest?

Instead, something remarkable happens.

Habakkuk began this book with questions—but he will end it with worship. Faith cries out. Faith waits. Faith learns to live by obedient trust. And ultimately, faith bows in joyful reverence before a sovereign God.

Habakkuk's reverent complaints did not produce the resolution he longed for, nor was he given a timetable for God's redemptive plan. Yet rather than growing bitter or withdrawn, the prophet falls to his knees in prayer. He asks not for changed circumstances, but for a changed heart—a heart that would tremble before God's holiness and rest in His sovereign will. Faith that seeks understanding may not receive every answer it desires. But true faith never loses its foundation. It ends where it always must end in worship before the throne of grace.

Faith that Worships Cries out for Mercy

When faith can no longer demand answers, it learns instead to bow in reverent fear before the holiness of God. That posture is exactly what we find as chapter three opens – not a complaint, but a prayer.

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On shigionoth.

LORD, I have heard of your fame;

I stand in awe of your deeds, LORD.

Repeat them in our day,

in our time make them known;

in wrath remember mercy.

Habakkuk 3:1-2

The Lord's promise to act in Habakkuk's day would have stirred the collective memory of Israel within the prophet's heart.¹ In deep humility, his focus shifts—from Judah's corruption and Babylon's cruelty—to the awesome might and sovereign power of God Himself.² Habakkuk had heard, from generation to generation, how the Lord brought Egypt to its knees through the ten plagues, parted the Red Sea, sustained His people with manna and quail in the wilderness, and even caused the sun to stand still so that Joshua might secure victory. He remembered how God delivered Israel through unlikely instruments—Gideon with only three hundred men, Samson against the Philistines, and David over the giant Goliath. And who could forget the angel of the LORD striking down one hundred eighty-five thousand Assyrians in a single night?

These mighty acts of divine deliverance filled the prophet with hope—but they also caused him to tremble. For the same God who saves with overwhelming power also disciplines

¹ 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), 79–80.

² James Montgomery Boice, [The Minor Prophets: An Expository Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 419.

with holy authority. That power was now coming against Judah. And so Habakkuk begins his prayer not with protest, but with reverent fear—pleading that in judgment, God would remember mercy, and that His people would not be utterly consumed.³

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective when it flows from humility and a deep awe of God’s sovereign right to rule. We do not come into God’s presence demanding outcomes, as though invoking the name of Jesus obligates heaven to comply (John 14:13–14). God is not a genie to be summoned, but our sovereign Potter—shaping and molding the clay according to His will, His character, and His eternal purposes (1 John 5:14–15). The Lord invites us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17), not to wear Him down, but to deepen our faith and draw our hearts into alignment with His pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1–2). And when God, in His wisdom, answers our prayers with a “no,” faith responds with trust—resting in the truth that His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Like apostle Paul, we learn to rejoice even in affliction, knowing that God’s grace is sufficient and that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:8–9). There is no greater reward—on earth or in heaven—than to kneel before our Master in reverent surrender and say, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Matthew 26:39).

Faith that Worships Stands in Awe of God’s Power

Having remembered what God has done and pleaded for mercy, Habakkuk now lifts his eyes to behold the overwhelming power of God Himself.

God came from Teman,
the Holy Ones from Mount Paran.
His glory covered the heavens
and his praise filled the earth.
His splendor was like the sunrise;
rays flashed from his hand,
where his power was hidden.
Plague went before him;
pestilence followed his steps.

³ Eric Redmond, William Curtis, and Ken Fentress, [*Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 207.

He stood, and shook the earth;
he looked, and made the nations tremble.

The ancient mountains crumbled
and the age-old hills collapsed—
but he marches on forever.

I saw the tents of Cushan in distress,
the dwellings of Midian in anguish.

Habakkuk 3:3-7

Cushan and Midian trembled in distress, for the LORD was on the march. The same God who once moved south to deliver His people was now advancing north—ready to hand Babylon the goblet of His mighty wrath for the very sins they themselves embraced: pride, violence, and the worship of false gods.⁴ From Mount Sinai came the presence of God—manifested in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night—radiant with a glory that outshone the sun itself (Exodus 13:21–22). Like the days of Israel’s past, the Creator of the universe—the Ancient of Days—would not be trifled with. In His sovereign power, He commanded plagues and disease to discipline the rebellious, waves to drown Pharaoh and his armies, the earth to open and swallow the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and fire to rain down upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

This is the God before whom no one may stand casually. “There shall no man see me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). Even those granted a vision of His glory are undone by the contrast between His holiness and their own frailty—Isaiah cried, “Woe is me! for I am undone” (Isaiah 6:5), and John fell at His feet as dead (Revelation 1:17). Before Him go pestilence and plague, and behind Him follows judgment—for the Father has given the Son authority to judge both the living and the dead (2 Timothy 4:1). From a voice that thunders with power and flashes with lightning come words that cause nations to tremble: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Oh, how Habakkuk must have trembled as these memories flooded his heart—remembrances of a God whose power is unmatched, whose holiness is consuming, and whose sovereignty is absolute.

Faith that Worships Trusts God’s Sovereign Power

Having stood in awe of God’s power, faith now learns to trust that this power is never random, but always sovereign and purposeful.

⁴ James Bruckner, [*Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 255.

Were you angry with the rivers, LORD?
Was your wrath against the streams?
Did you rage against the sea
when you rode your horses
and your chariots to victory?
You uncovered your bow,
you called for many arrows.
You split the earth with rivers;
the mountains saw you and writhed.
Torrents of water swept by;
the deep roared
and lifted its waves on high.
Sun and moon stood still in the heavens
at the glint of your flying arrows,
at the lightning of your flashing spear.
In wrath you strode through the earth
and in anger you threshed the nations.
You came out to deliver your people,
to save your anointed one.
You crushed the leader of the land of wickedness,
you stripped him from head to foot.
With his own spear you pierced his head
when his warriors stormed out to scatter us,
gloating as though about to devour
the wretched who were in hiding.

You trampled the sea with your horses,
churning the great waters.

Habakkuk 3:8-15

As Habakkuk reflects on the seas that part, the mountains that tremble, and the sun and moon that stand still at God’s command, he is confessing a central truth of faith: God is not reacting to history—He is ruling it. The LORD was not angrily lashing out at rivers, streams, or seas; He was wielding creation itself as His instrument of righteous judgment and saving power. Nature does not resist Him—it obeys Him.⁵

In verses 8 through 15, Habakkuk remembers what it has always looked like when God goes to war for His people. When the LORD acts, chaos is subdued, oppressors are shattered, and salvation is accomplished.⁶ Though the prophet knows that God’s decision to use Babylon as an instrument of discipline is fixed, his faith looks beyond discipline to deliverance. He sees ahead to the day when God will once again uncover His bow, when the pride of the wicked will crumble, when the deep will roar, and when even the sun and moon will halt at the command of the divine Warrior. Habakkuk longs for the day when the LORD will again march forth to “save thine anointed”⁷—to vindicate His people and crush the power of evil. And until that day comes, the prophet chooses trust over despair. He worships not because circumstances are favorable, but because a holy and sovereign God always makes things right, in His time and in His way.

We live in a fallen world where uncertainty and injustice touch every life—where, as Scripture reminds us, “time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11). We are living in an age marked by moral confusion, where many no longer agree on basic truths, and where Scripture soberly tells us that God has “given them over to a depraved mind” (Romans 1:28). Like the days of the Judges, “everyone did as they saw fit” (Judges 21:25). The world is increasingly filled with gossip, slander, arrogance, hostility toward God, and hearts that lack fidelity, love, and mercy.

Even more sobering, the witness of the church itself has often grown lukewarm. Rather than shining as a faithful light, many have become comfortable and compromised—“friends with the world” rather than faithful ambassadors of Christ (James 4:4). The church in Laodicea stands as a warning to every generation—busy, prosperous, and active, yet spiritually indifferent (Revelation 3:14–16). Yet while we live in this world, it is not our home. We will face

⁵ James Bruckner, [Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 255.

⁶ James Bruckner, [Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 257.

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), 84.

tribulation, persecution, and injustice—but we must not be alarmed or dismayed. The key to surviving—and even thriving—amid suffering is not to rail against human enemies or dark powers, for “our struggle is not against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). Like Habakkuk, we are called to remember that God is sovereign. You have heard of His mighty acts through Scripture, and many of you have witnessed His power at work even in your own lives.

So in difficult days, fix your eyes on this unshakable hope:

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command,
with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God,
and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that,
we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together
with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.
And so we will be with the Lord forever.
Therefore encourage one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Faith that Worships Chooses Joy Before Deliverance

Having trusted God’s sovereign power, faith now makes its final and most costly choice—to rejoice before deliverance comes.

I heard and my heart pounded,
my lips quivered at the sound;
decay crept into my bones,
and my legs trembled.
Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity
to come on the nation invading us.
Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen

and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.
Habakkuk 3:16-18

Because chapter three is not only a prayer but also a song, we can sense a distinct change in tone—almost a shift in key—as Habakkuk stands before the Lord.⁸ Having heard of the devastation Babylon would bring in chapters one and two, and having reflected on the terrifying power of God revealed in His mighty acts of judgment,⁹ the prophet responds with honesty and trembling. He tells us that his heart pounded, his lips quivered, decay crept into his bones, and his legs trembled. Habakkuk is no detached observer of this vision.¹⁰ He is shaken to his core—overwhelmed by the coming reality of a pillaged Judah, barren fig trees and vineyards, empty fields, and livestock slaughtered without regard for the nation’s future (Habakkuk 3:16).¹¹

Yet something remarkable happens. Standing on the wall of a city soon to be destroyed, Habakkuk moves from fear to faith, from trembling to trust, from anguish to joy. And the reader is left to wonder how such a response could possibly be made. How could the prophet rejoice knowing discipline, suffering, and loss were inevitable? How could he trust God when the timing of deliverance was unknown and the severity of judgment unavoidable? And how could he choose joy when vengeance against Babylon would likely never occur within his lifetime?

The answer is this: Habakkuk’s joy is not rooted in outcomes, but in God Himself. His circumstances have not changed—but his posture has. Faith that worships does not wait for relief to rejoice. It chooses joy in advance, anchoring itself in the unchanging character of God rather than the uncertain path ahead.

⁸ James Bruckner, [Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 257.

⁹ James Bruckner, [Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 257.

¹⁰ 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), 85.

¹¹ 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), 86.

Faith that Worships Rests in God as Its Strength

Joy leads faith to its final resting place—not in circumstances, but in the strength of the Lord.

The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to tread on the heights
Habakkuk 3:19

True worship did not change God’s sovereignty, but it transformed the prophet’s posture before it. When the injustice of evil nations threatened everything Habakkuk knew, God did not feed him stones of fear and despair—He gave him strength. Strength not merely to endure, but to stand. Strength to tread upon the high places of pain and loss-and still rejoice, for “you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalms 23:4).

Habakkuk did not know when devastation would come, nor did he know when Babylon would fall. Yet he rejoiced—not because circumstances were improving, but because God was unchanging. He trusted that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28, NIV). His faith was not transactional. God was not a genie to dispense comfort on demand. No—God Himself was his inheritance, his portion now and forever: “God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalms 73:26).

So the question remains for us: Where are you placing your trust?

Conclusion

Habakkuk’s story ends where every story of true faith must end—not with answers, not with relief, and not with changed circumstances, but with God Himself. The fig tree still does not bud. The vines are still empty. The stalls are still bare. Babylon has not yet fallen. Judah has not yet been restored. And yet, Habakkuk stands—not collapsing under fear, not raging in protest—but resting in the Lord as his strength.

That is the faith that worships.

This chapter teaches us that faith is not proven when life makes sense, but when it doesn’t. Faith cries out honestly. Faith waits patiently. Faith stands in awe of God’s power. Faith trusts His sovereign purposes. Faith chooses joy before deliverance comes. And finally, faith rests—not in outcomes, not in timelines, not in explanations—but in the unchanging character of God. Many of us come today standing on our own walls—watching, waiting, wondering when justice will come, when prayers will be answered, when the pain will ease. Like Habakkuk, we may not know when deliverance will arrive. But we do know this: the Sovereign LORD is our

strength. He has not abandoned His people. He has not lost control of history. He has not forgotten His promises.

And for us, this confidence runs even deeper. For the God Habakkuk trusted has revealed Himself fully in Jesus Christ—the One who entered suffering, bore judgment, conquered death, and promised to return in glory. Because of Him, our hope is not wishful thinking. It is anchored in resurrection. It is secured by the cross. It is guaranteed by the faithfulness of God. So wherever you are today—confused, weary, afraid, or waiting—hear the invitation of Habakkuk’s final song:

Stop striving. Stop demanding answers. Stop anchoring your joy to circumstances that cannot hold it.

Lift your eyes. Bow your heart. And rest in the Lord as your strength.

Because faith that worships can say, even when life does not make sense:

“Yet I will rejoice in the LORD... The Sovereign LORD is my strength.”