

Habakkuk-by Rick Stark

Chapter 1

My Angst (1-4) – Angst seems a common theme – then and now: *Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning of history? What is God's involvement in history? Why doesn't God do something?* Habakkuk has seen and experienced the glory days of Josiah's reforms, but what now? Judah's disillusionment and rebellion had returned; it's all unraveling. Sound familiar? Here is the anguish cry from one who loved justice and hated evil. It begs the question – Is that true of me? Habakkuk waits. Do I? *God's Answer (5-11)* – Four lessons emerge: 1) history is under God's control; 2) history follows a divine plan; 3) history follows a divine timetable; 4) history is bound up with the divine kingdom. *"Therefore, let us not stumble when we see surprising things happen in the world"... but say, 'What is God teaching me?... Correcting in me?'"* (*From Fear to Faith*, Martin Lloyd-Jones) We just may discover God is bigger and more believable than ever before, even if we don't understand all He is doing (2:4; Rom.1:17; Gal.3:11; Heb.10:38). *Another Question (12-2:1)* – Experiencing great disappointment as Habakkuk does, so too we would protest: "But why God... that You tolerate the treacherous? Silent while the wicked win? Don't You care?" God is big enough and gracious enough for our complaints; but even before He answers, one can already see truth stir and salve the prophet: (*"everlasting, Lord, Holy One, ordained, Rock, purer, creator"*)... even the expectation God is personal with His answer. Basic and right theology (*"first principles"*) as context and applied to a problem is always the way forward. We might do well, as Habakkuk, to persist (active waiting & watching) in our expectation to hear from the Lord.

Chapter 2

Living by Faith (2-4) – Here lies the central revelation, God's answer to the question – regarding His silence over Judah's decadence, but also and more troubling, His intention to use unrighteous Babylonians to discipline His people. *Is God doing right?* The fuller answer is that just because the foreign army would take pride in its strength and glory in a moment of temporary triumph did not mean the Babylonians were by any means justified in God's sight. There's a payday, someday; judgment will fall mercilessly upon them. *"The wonderful thing about the chapter is not the large part on judgment of the Babylonians (6-20), but rather the one verse (4) that speaks of the life of the believer in a time of crisis."* (Boice) To understand this is to grasp the meaning of the gospel and of the Christian life (Rom.1:17; Gal.3:11; Heb.10:38): that is, God's declaration of undeserved righteousness as a gift to us in Jesus Christ, received "by faith" and resulting in a particular "life" (to "live," both in the now and the life to come). This becomes the only lens by which we see and understand (profound humility) anything about what God does and when God does and why God does His work His way. *Taunted by Song (6-20)* – Scholars say this is the kind of song once-oppressed people might direct against their oppressors. There are five "woe" stanzas, each describing problematic sins and God's judgment: *"greed, injustice, violence, seduction, and idolatry."* Sound familiar? The echo of such tunes ought to be instructive and alarming even to the believer.

Chapter 3

Prayer (1-3) – What is prayer? *"Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."* (WSC #98). It is a pouring out of one's soul to God; not in overcoming His reluctance but grabbing hold to His willingness. There's been a shift in the heart of the prophet. He would not align with the puffed-up but the filled-up (2:4). Note here Habakkuk's response (directional cues: prayer & praise) in view of the current calamity and God's answer. As the old adage goes, *"it's not how you start but how you finish"*; so here – from

fear to faith, from wrath to mercy, from complaint to praise (2). God is at work. We forget He orchestrates and holds all things together. But this changes everything! With profound humility, Habakkuk knows what is important and what God alone offers. May that be true of me, too, Lord! Do it again in me... in us! *Victory over Weakness (4-19)* – Recounting the perplexing answers and ways of God, Habakkuk trembles (16); in spite of and because of God's greatness, he senses his own weakness in getting his head and heart around all of this. (been there, done that!) Maybe like Mrs. Beaver's response to Lucy (*Chronicles of Narnia*) when Lucy asked, "Is Aslan safe?" "Safe, of course not; he's a lion. But He is good!" Thank you, Lord, for Habakkuk's example, whereby confessing his weakness and fear, he turned to You not away from You, and confesses also Your goodness and providence and power and grace. Faith indeed produces uncontainable joy (17-18). This is entirely different than the world's response, which is either in resignation or detachment or bravado. No, the Christian response in facing our own fears and weaknesses is not toward one's own resources but a sincere faith (a mighty God who acts faithfully, powerfully and effectively on our behalf) leading to victorious joy. "God inhabits the praise of His people." (Ps.22:3, KJV)

-Reflecting on Habakkuk-

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible, take some time today to reflect on what we've read in Habakkuk. Perhaps re-visit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day to finish Habakkuk before we move forward?

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. John 15.26