

# Habakkuk's 2nd Concern

## Chapter 1:12-2:4

### I. Habakkuk's 2nd Complaint God's Fairness

**Art thou not from everlasting:** although this may seem to be a question, Habakkuk is reaffirming his confidence in God.

**My God, mine Holy One:** Habakkuk's thought surely a holy and loving God would protect His people. He is pleading with God to act in a manner that is consistent with His nature.

### II. Habakkuk's conflict with God.

Habakkuk's problem stemmed from seeing a conflict in God. If God cannot look upon sin and evil (which is true) then how could He use the Babylonians (whose sins were far greater) to judge Judah.

### III. The feebleness of the people.

After presenting his case to God concerning His holiness Habakkuk now presents the helplessness of his people. That they would not be able to stand against the savage Babylonians.

**Angle:** a fishing hook. In Amos 4:2 the Lord speaks of leading His people away with fishhooks.

### IV. The arrogance of the enemy

**The angle, the net and the drag** are symbols of their military arms. Habakkuk is pointing out that the Babylonians' trusted their military might and worshipped the gods of power and violence. (11)

Habakkuk was struggling with God allowing them to fill their nets with victims while the Babylonians were emptying the net by destroying one nation after another.

### V. Habakkuk waits for an answer

Some translations use the phrase "watchtower" or "guard post." it describes some sort of wooden tower that the prophet built.

There alone he would watch and wait for God's answer to come.

### VI. Habakkuk instructed to write.

**Write the Vision:** the prophet saw himself as a watchman waiting a message from God to give to the people.

The message came:

**make it plain**-so that everyone will be able to understand it.

**May run:** seems to indicate to be in a public place, that if someone ran by, he was able to see and read it.

**An appointed time:** the time is set for a future time.

**12 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.**

**13 Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?**

**14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?**

**15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.**

**16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.**

**17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?**

**Hab 2:1 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.**

**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.**

**4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.**

The problem now with Habakkuk is equal or greater than the original outcry. God's response to his first concern left Habakkuk confused. How could God use a heathen, vicious nation to bring judgement to His chosen people.

Habakkuk's faith is faltering. What he needed was a good dose of theology so Habakkuk is rehearsing his faith before God. He is going back to the fundamentals of the faith in **who God is.**

Habakkuk was trying to wrap his mind around what he saw as a contradiction with God. There are no contradictions with God, but it is true that He does things that seem to us to be inconsistent.

We simply don't know why God does the things that He does the way He does.

Habakkuk pictures the chaos that will be left in the wake of the invading army as men reduced to the lowest forms of creation.

The enemy gathers in nations as fishermen gathering their catch.

How could God allow His weak people to be overtaken by such a godless people? Jeremiah had preach to the people for 40 years warning them to turn back to God or judgement was coming. They refused to listen now judgement was nigh.

Habakkuk was seeing how the Babylonians were advancing and that no one was able to stop them. If they wanted a city they took it. If they wanted what you had, they took it. If they captured you, they would probably kill you. To them men were like fish, they had the net, and were reeling in one nation after another.

Someone said, "Guess who they are fishing for now." Judah!!!!

The final verse of chapter one shows the discouragement of the prophet. In 2:1 the prophet demonstrates that he believes that God has an adequate explanation because he has confidence that God will answer.

"The image of the watchman carries a spiritual lesson for us today. As God's people, we know that danger is approaching, and it is our responsibility to warn people to flee from the wrath to come." (Warren Weirsbe "The Weirsbe Bible Commentary OT, Page 1472)

Our deepest problems are not psychological or sociological they are theological.

Can God be trusted?

What kind of God do we have?

Does God care what is happening?

How you answer will determine how big your God is.

# Habakkuk's 2nd Concern

Words are found in  
Habakkuk 1:12-2:4

- ANGLE
- ANSWER
- APPOINTED
- ARROGANCE
- CONFLICT
- CREEPING
- DRAG
- ESTABLISHED
- EVERLASTING
- EVIL
- FAITH
- FAT
- FEEBLENESS
- INCENSE
- JUDGMENT
- LIVE
- LORD
- NET
- ORDAINED
- PLAIN
- PLENTEOUS
- RULER
- SACRIFICE
- SEA
- SLAY
- TIME
- TOWER
- TREACHEROUSLY
- UPRIGHT
- VISION
- WATCH
- WRITE

Y	C	R	E	E	P	I	N	G	R	G	S	D	I	T
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N	O	R	A	L	R	N	A	L	P	A	F	D	S	N
W	A	N	D	G	E	E	E	G	S	L	I	R	E	O
D	A	R	F	M	O	N	H	O	N	R	C	O	V	I
P	A	T	G	L	T	R	E	C	L	E	E	A	I	S
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J	A	U	A	F	A	I	T	H	G	I	R	P	U	L
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E	S	T	A	B	L	I	S	H	E	D	Y	A	L	S
E	T	M	E	A	E	T	I	R	W	T	I	M	E	S

All the words listed are in the puzzle - forward, backward, up, down or diagonally. After you have found all the words, find all unused letters and place in sequence in the blanks below. The unscramble to find to find the mystery statement.

## Mystery Statement

Place unused letter in sequence here.

\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ .

Unscramble the letters to find the mystery statement.

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Y	C	R	E	E	P	I	N	G	R	G	S	D	I	T
F	L	R	E	A	N	G	L	E	N	N	A	E	N	O
E	E	S	U	W	O	I	L	Y	E	I	C	N	C	W
L	C	E	U	L	S	U	A	P	T	T	R	I	E	E
C	O	N	B	O	R	N	T	L	P	S	I	A	N	R
N	O	R	A	L	R	N	A	L	P	A	F	D	S	N
W	A	N	D	G	E	E	E	G	S	L	I	R	E	O
D	A	R	F	M	O	N	H	O	N	R	C	O	V	I
P	A	T	G	L	T	R	E	C	L	E	E	A	I	S
G	S	D	C	E	I	E	R	S	A	V	R	V	L	I
A	U	E	O	H	L	C	Y	A	S	E	E	R	I	V
J	A	U	A	F	A	I	T	H	G	I	R	P	U	L
R	S	D	E	T	N	I	O	P	P	A	H	T	A	F
E	S	T	A	B	L	I	S	H	E	D	Y	A	L	S
E	T	M	E	A	E	T	I	R	W	T	I	M	E	S

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R U O Y   L P N A   &   G S D ' O   N P L A   E R A   L Y E R A R   H E I   M E A S

Unscramble the letters to find the mystery statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer will be shared next week!!!!

Last weeks answer: God's ways are often mysterious.

Habakkuk 1:12-2:4

What do you do when you've prayed to God and you don't like the answer you've received?

\*You applied for the college of your dreams, but they said no.

\*You interviewed for a new job, but they found someone more qualified.

\*You asked God for healing, but the doctor says the chemo didn't work.

\*You prayed and prayed to find a husband, and after all these years he has not yet found you.

\*You asked her to marry you, and she said no.

\*You sunk your life savings into a new business only to see it fail within a year.

\*You moved across the country to take a new job, but it didn't work out, and now you are unemployed—again.

\*You never intended to end up divorced, but here you are.

\*You planned on having more children, but it isn't happening for some reason.

\*You volunteered to serve on the worship team. They said they'd get back to you. Evidently they lost your number.

We've all been there, most of us many times because that's the way life is. You have your dreams, you make your plans, you sincerely seek to do God's will, you pray to the Lord, and when the answer comes, it's not what you wanted. What do you do then? We don't talk about this very often but we should.

### **Your plan and God's plan are rarely the same**

Live long enough and you'll discover that God's plan and yours often are not the same. We all know that we should pray "Your will be done," and most of us do, but it still jolts the spirit when we discover that God has a completely different plan in mind. That's Habakkuk. He doesn't like the answer he received. First, he thought God was ignoring Judah's sin. Second, he thought God would never use Babylon to judge Judah. Wrong both times. What do you do when God doesn't live up to your expectations? How do you respond when the Lord's answer isn't what you wanted? Habakkuk was troubled by something that troubles all of us. He couldn't reconcile his view of God with the injustice he saw all around him. Several years ago pollster George Barna asked Americans this question: "If you could ask God one question and know that you would receive an answer, what would you ask?" By far the number one response was: "Why is there pain and suffering in the world?" That's makes sense because we see suffering on every hand, and we wonder where it comes from and why God allows it. C. S. Lewis remarked that the problem of suffering is atheism's greatest weapon against the Christian faith.

### **Why are Christians being massacred in Iraq?**

Why did the tornado land here and not there? Why was this girl kidnapped and that one escaped?

Why would God allow a child to be born with a disability?

Why are Christians being brutally massacred in Iraq?

The list of questions seems endless.

In my first message from Habakkuk I talked a lot about the world situation, both in Habakkuk's day and in our own day. That was necessary to set up this series called "Strong Faith in Confusing Times." In this message we move to a deeper level. When we consider the sadness we see all around us, we can sit around and offer all the commentary we want. At some point we've got to deal with God. And that brings us back to the little book of Habakkuk. Written in approximately 605 B.C., this is the story of one man who wrestled with God about the hard questions. In three short chapters he brings us face to face with the deepest mysteries of life.

Here's a simple outline:

Chapter 1: Faith Tested

Chapter 2: Faith Taught

Chapter 3: Faith Triumphant

When we read this book, perhaps the most striking thing is the change that takes place inside Habakkuk.

In three chapters he moves from . . .

Fear to faith,

Burden to blessing

Perplexity to praise,

Confusion to confidence,

And Worry to worship.

It all boils down to this one fact. "The Babylonians are coming, and you can't stop them. When they reach Jerusalem, they will conquer it and eventually they will destroy it. I am using them to judge Judah for her sins."

### **The Babylonians are coming!**

When Habakkuk heard this, he objected vehemently: "God, how can you do this?" That's the key to the book. It's a dialogue between a frustrated man of faith and a God whose ways he cannot understand. We can frame the book this way: The issue is not Judah and her sin. The issue is not Babylon and its evil. The issue is not Habakkuk's doubts. The issue is God. We all end up there eventually. All our questions lead back to God because he is the one with whom we have to deal. All smaller issues lead us back to the one who sits on the throne of the universe. In the last half of Habakkuk 1 the prophet has three questions for God. After asking those questions, he will make a decision that shapes everything else in the book.

### **Question # 1: Who Are You?**

"O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish" (v. 12).

What do you do when God makes no sense? Either you walk away from your faith or you remind yourself of who God is. Sometimes what we need is a good dose of theology to strengthen our faltering faith. When faced with the news that the hated Babylonians would soon invade Judah and nothing could stop them, Habakkuk goes back to what the theologians call the "first principles." Look what he calls God:

Everlasting—You are sovereign.

Lord—You are the personal God of Israel.

God—You are the strong one, the Creator, the majestic ruler.

Holy—You are in a class by yourself and set apart from sin.

Rock—You are the only safe place.

If you remove God's sovereignty, you will forever question his wisdom

These are not small points. As Habakkuk tries to get his mind around the shocking truth that God is about to use Babylon to judge Judah, he goes back to what he knows to be true about God. This is a vital first step for all of us. Consider it this way: If you remove God's sovereignty, you will forever question his wisdom. If you remove God's loyal love, you will forever question his faithfulness. If you remove God's majesty, you will forever question his power. If you remove God's holiness, you will forever question his fairness. If you remove God's protection, you'll forever question his goodness. The question is not, "Do I believe in God?" but rather

“What sort of God do I believe in?” That’s a key question we all have to answer. Many years ago I did a radio interview in connection with one of my books. At one point the host asked listeners to call in with their questions. The very first call came from a man who was obviously burdened with many cares. He wanted to know how I could be so confident with my answers. That’s a fair question. I told him that I first came face-to-face with the unanswerable questions of life when my father died very suddenly when I was 22 years old. Three months earlier he had been the best man at my wedding. Somehow he came down with an infection the doctors couldn’t treat, and he died after spending a few days in the hospital. As I write these words, forty years have passed since Dad left us. As I reflect on my life, I realize that I have learned a great deal in the four decades since then. I think I have a better understanding of God now. But if I am being honest, I can say that I don’t know anything more about why my dad died than I did the day he passed away in a hospital in Birmingham, Alabama. It was a mystery then and it remains a mystery now. I don’t know why such a good man would have to die at the young age of fifty-six, leaving my mother and her four sons without a husband and a father. It doesn’t make any more sense to me now than it did then. But I have learned that faith is a choice you make. Sometimes you choose to believe because of what you see; often you believe in spite of what you see.

### **Faith is a choice**

As I look to the world around me, many things remain mysterious and unanswerable. But if there is no God, and if he is not good, then nothing at all makes sense. I have chosen to believe because I must believe. I truly have no other choice. If I sound confident, it is only because I have learned through my tears that my only confidence is in God and God alone I have tried to do in my own way what Habakkuk is this verse. Time and again when faced with mysteries I cannot explain, I go back to the First Principles of life: God is good. God is holy. God is just. God knows all things. God is love. God makes no mistakes. The Bible is true. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven. Someday he will return to the earth. The Holy Spirit is real. I am sealed with the Spirit. God is always with me. All things work together for my good and God’s glory. God will complete his work in me. Just writing those sentences brought faith to my heart. That’s what I mean by going back to the first principles. of us know the antiphonal chant between the pastor and the congregation that goes like this: Pastor: God is good. Congregation: All the time. Pastor: And all the time. Congregation: God is good.

I am a testimony!

Somewhere I read that that chant started in the churches of Nigeria. When I mentioned that in one of my sermon emails, I got a note the next week from a lady in Lagos, Nigeria who said, “It’s true. We do say that in our churches. But we add something. After we say that chant, everyone then says in unison: ‘I am a witness.’” That’s good. That’s powerful. That’s biblical. Maybe you should stop right now and say those words out loud: God is good . . . all the time. And all the time . . . God is good. I am a witness! That last phrase makes the truth very personal. That’s exactly what Habakkuk is doing in verse 12. Despite his confusion, he’s giving a testimony to his own faith in God. That leads us to the second question.

### **Question # 2. How Can You Do This?**

“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?” (v. 13)

Here we reach the heart of the problem. We all understand that there are moral inequities in the universe. The other day I had a conversation with a friend about this very point. “Some people seem to have it easy,” he said, “while others suffer for years.” I don’t see any way to deny that observation. While we say commonly say that into each life some rain must fall, it seems like some people get a sprinkle while others live with a torrential downpour of trouble. How do we explain this?

Some people seem to get a torrential downpour of trouble

Habakkuk’s particular problem stemmed from a seeming conflict in God. If God cannot tolerate wrongdoing (a true point), how then could he use the Babylonians to judge Judah (also a true point)? Babylon’s sins were far

greater than the sins of Judah. Is this not a contradiction? The answer is no. There are no contradictions with the Almighty, but it is true that he does things that seem to us to be inconsistent. The key here is the little phrase “seem to us.” God’s ways will not always make sense to us, not even when they are viewed with the eyes of faith. Perhaps a better way to put it would be that in the short run (which is all of life for all of us), God’s ways will sometimes not make sense to us. We simply don’t know why things happen the way they do. Sometimes we find out later. Sometimes we will not know until we get to heaven.

God's way will sometimes make no sense to us

Every thoughtful person wrestles with this at some point. Eventually we are forced back on the First Law of the Spiritual Life: He’s God and We’re Not. God is sovereign and we are not. Every mistake we make comes because we forget this basic fact. It’s good for all of us to remember Psalm 115:3, “Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.” Whenever I read that verse, I want to say, “Any questions?” No, not from me.

"Any questions?" No, not from me

At this point, God has not yet answered Habakkuk’s question. That will come in the next chapter. For the moment, let me simply note that any answer must go back to the truth that God is God and we are not. Until we grasp that, we will continually struggle with the Lord.

### **Question # 3. How Long Will This Last?**

“Is he to keep on emptying his net, destroying nations without mercy?” (v. 17)

The “he” in this verse refers to the whole Babylonian army (personified by King Nebuchadnezzar) as one person. He keeps on conquering one nation after another, and no one can stop him. If he sees a city, he takes it. If he wants what you have, he takes it. If he captures you, he will probably kill you. To him men are like fish, and he’s got the net. He keeps reeling in one nation after another. Guess who he’s fishing for now? Judah!

We all want to know when our troubles will finally end

In the face of this crushing evil, Habakkuk wonders when it will all end. Will no one stop Babylon? Will his reign of terror go on forever? Who can stand in his way? This touches the deepest question we have when life crumbles in around us: How long will this last? Most people can stand up under trouble if they know it will eventually come to an end. But if it never ends, how will we survive? So there you have Habakkuk’s three questions: Who are you, Lord? To which Habakkuk supplies his own answer. How can you do this? For which no answer is given. How long will this last? For which no answer is given.

Some questions will not be answered this side of heaven

These are all honest questions, the kind we all ask in times of trouble. We should note that Habakkuk is an utterly honest man who, when he has doubts, does not hesitate to tell them to the Lord. He doesn’t cover up his doubts with pious sayings nor does he rush to give glib answers. He answers the only question he can answer, and he waits for God to answer the other two. He’s confident in God but confused by what God is doing in the world. He’s a believing man with serious questions he can’t answer.

Habakkuk’s Decision

What now? Habakkuk 2:1 tells us what he decided to do:

“I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts.”

Some translations use the phrase “watchtower” or “guard post.” It describes some sort of wooden tower that the prophet built. There, alone, he would watch and wait for God’s answer to come. Habakkuk did not know how the Lord would answer or how long he would have to wait. He just knew that having said all that was on his heart, now it was time to wait on the Lord.

Habakkuk didn’t know how long he would have to wait

Remember, he still doesn’t understand how God can use the wicked Babylonians to judge Judah for her sins.

It doesn't make sense to him. In his devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers has some helpful things to say at this point:

"God can never make us wine if we object to the fingers he uses to crush us with. If God would only use his own fingers and make me broken bread and poured-out wine in a special way! But when he uses someone whom we dislike, or some set of circumstances to which we said we would never submit, we object. We must never choose the scene of our own martyrdom. If ever we are going to be made wine to drink, we will have to be crushed. You cannot drink grapes. Grapes become wine only when they have been squeezed" (Reading for September 30).

He goes on to say that if we fight against the Lord's plan for us, any wine that is produced in us will be bitter and undrinkable. "We have to be placed into God and brought into agreement with Him before we can be broken bread in His hands." This is surely good advice, but oh, how hard it is in practice, especially when we deeply object to the fingers God uses to crush us. That's precisely where Habakkuk is at this moment. He knows Judah needs to be broken because of her sin, but he cannot reconcile himself to God using the Babylonians as his appointed fingers of crushing judgment.

People don't listen as they did long ago

Thus his decision: I will wait on the Lord. We don't know how long he waited, only that at length God answered him. J. Sidlow Baxter offers this observation:

"People say that God does not speak to men as he did long ago. The truer statement is that men do not listen today as they did long ago."

At some point you have to stop talking about your problems. But no one wants to do that. We want to talk, we need to talk, and talking is often beneficial. We all need friends who will listen to us in our agony. But some Christians can't get better because they won't stop talking. Perhaps you object and say, "No, I'm going to tell Facebook all my problems!" That's not necessarily a good idea. As we come to the end of this message, we have already reached a turning point in this little book. Having laid out his complaints before the Lord, Habakkuk now waits for an answer. While he's honest about his complaints, he's also wise enough to take them to the Lord and leave them there.

### **He's Much Better Than That**

That leads me to an important point. Our deepest problems are not psychological or sociological and they are certainly not political. Our deepest problems are always theological. Can God be trusted? What kind of God do we believe in?

What kind of God do we believe in ?

As I was pondering that question, two sentences came to me: He's not the God we think he is. He's much better than that. That's not only true, that's a huge truth. I chose the word "better" because it sums up all I am trying to say in this message. Not only is God far beyond us, much vaster than our puny minds can conceive, he's much better than we have imagined. God's ways are better. God's heart is better. God's thoughts are better. God's plan is better. All that God is and all that God does is better. Because that is true, we shouldn't be surprised that we continually run into the problem of not understanding him. And it shouldn't surprise us when his answers don't always line up with our desires.

Everything about God is "better"

What do you do when you've prayed to God and you don't like the answer you've received? That happens to all of us sooner or later. Whenever I mention this in a sermon, heads nod in instant agreement. What do you do when you don't like God's answer? You can try bargaining but that doesn't work. You can get angry but that doesn't help. You can ask God some questions, which is what Habakkuk did. You can go back to the "first principles" and remind yourself of who God is. That's also what Habakkuk did.

Will you wait on the Lord?

Most of all you can decide to wait on the Lord in faith and hope and in confidence that what doesn't make sense now will make sense later. As you wait remember that God doesn't keep time the way we do. "God never hurries. There are no deadlines against which he must work" (A. W. Tozer). For the moment we will leave Habakkuk right here. He's in his tower looking, watching, and waiting for the Lord to give him an answer. Waiting is good for the soul, especially if you are waiting on the Lord. As you wait, remember that God has not forgotten you. You are on his mind right now. He sees you in your confusion, your fear, and your distress. Do not despair, but as you wait, rest your weary soul on this mighty promise from God: "They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).