

**Refuge City Church — November 12, 2023**  
**“Faith in the Chaos”: A study in the book of Habakkuk**  
**“Evil for Good??” (Habakkuk 1)**

***Introduction***

- Habakkuk was a prophet around the late 500s to early 600’s B.C in Israel; after it had been divided into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.
  - The Babylonian Empire was rising to prominence under King Nabopolassar and his successor/son Nebuchadnezzar.
- He would have written around the time, or a little prior to Daniel and others being taken into captivity to Babylon; [along with Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Daniel](#)
- The book is sectioned into 3 parts: [[Habakkuk’s questions, God’s answers, Habakkuk’s praise](#)]
  1. Why are evil, violence, and injustice allowed to exist when there is a sovereign, loving, and just God that rules over all things?
  2. Habakkuk’s appeal to God in why he would allow an evil nation to punish a “less evil” people?
    - Why use evil to punish evil?
    - At the time, Israel was looking to anything & anyone other than God for help.
  3. A Psalm of praise to a faithful God, and faith to live knowing He’s in control.
- **QUOTE/QUESTION: “What are godly people to do when the moral and spiritual fabric of their nation is being ripped apart and the political and social structures are disintegrating?”** [Kenneth G .Hanna]
  - We struggle in our faith when things go wrong... why? [[does faith exist at all?](#)]
    - Who or what is the dependency of our faith?
    - Who or what is the foundation on which we build our life?
- Life flows like an hour glass.
  - We’re all destined to go to one point in various seasons in life.
  - And all the pieces of sand represent various aspects of life, trouble, people, marriage, family, work, health, finances, world affairs, etc., that are all flowing towards one pivotal point when they all come together.
    - There doesn’t seem to be any rhyme or reason, yet we’re stuck in the middle of it all, with no grasp on what happens or why.
    - When our life, along with local and/or worldwide events are beyond our control & capacity of understanding...what do we do??

***“Questions Asked” [Verses 1-4]***

**“The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why**

do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.”

- How long do we have to wait until we see the Lord intervene in our lives and fix all that’s wrong??
  - Why do I have to bear this burden? Why do I have to suffer?
  - How many times have you prayed and feel as if God has remained silent? [[this is Habakkuk’s cry](#)]
- Violence, iniquity, wrong, destruction, strife, contention, wickedness, and injustice.
  - Violence = *hamas*
    - Russia-Ukraine War, Israel-Hamas/Palestine War, riots, senseless murders, school shootings, human trafficking, domestic abuse, kidnapping, needless murder of the unborn, etc...
    - Iniquity = evil, injustice, deception.
  - Destruction = wars, natural disasters, fires, earthquakes, homes/communities destroyed, etc...
  - Strife/Contention = disputes, politics, LGBTQ/Gender confusion, legal issues [[sue happy nation](#)], divorce, fighting, etc...
  - Have you been online lately? Have you watched the news? It’s all you see.
    - *Yesterday’s news article*: “Night of Chaos”: Pro-Palestinian demonstrators vandalize entrance of New York City landmark, tear down American flags as mob swarms the city.
    - Public hostilities, political sideshow, fault-finding, conservative v. liberal...
  - Everyone has their complaints and is throwing hostility in the direction of anyone they feel will listen... except God.
- So we ask the same questions that Job, Jeremiah, Solomon, Habakkuk, and others asked:
  - **Verse 3**: “Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.”
  - **Job 21:7**, “Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?”
  - **Jeremiah 12:1**, “...Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?”
  - **Ecclesiastes 8:11**, “Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.”
  - Why does a good/loving God allow bad things to happen?
    - Most of the time, this question is issued as a complaint, rather than honestly seeking an answer from God Himself.

### “God Answers” [Verses 5-11]

“Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.”

- The first thing God calls us to do is to develop a broader perspective of the world around us.
  - Stop being so self-focused and near-sighted that you forget we serve a God who is sovereign over *all* the world, not only our life.
    - He is our Master. We are His servants. Not the other way around.
- What is the number one source of pain, hurt, violence, destruction, injustice, arguing, and fighting? SIN!
  - **Romans 5:12**, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—”
  - The Apostle Paul would quote Habakkuk when he was preaching in Antioch in **Acts 13:38-41**.
    - “Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about: ‘Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I am doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells it to you.’”
    - He would issue the warning of God’s answer to keep our eyes open to the wonder of God’s gift of salvation, lest we incur His discipline and/or ultimate judgement.
- God does not work in secret. He avails Habakkuk and us to His work in far off countries. [Just as the ministry of Christ was *not* done in secret]
  - **CONSIDER: 2 Peter 3:8**, “But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”
    - By that perspective, Jesus suffered, died, and rose again just 2 days ago, and yet we turn a blind eye, forget what He did, and go about sinning. *Shame on us!*
    - We can’t look at the atrocities of the world, and then turn a blind eye to our own sin. *What ignorance!*
    - And then, cry to God and ask, “Aren’t you going to do anything about all this sin and evil in this world?!” *What arrogance!*
    - **Romans 2:1, 6-8**, “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things... He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.”
- **Verses 6-11**: God explains how the Babylonians are a powerful, fear-mongering, dreadful nation.
  - They take what isn’t theirs.
  - Their version of justice is self-defined.
  - They are a deadly force, who take pleasure in their violent ways, laughing and mocking those they destroy.

- **Verse II:** “Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, *guilty* men, whose own might is their god!”
  - These too fall under the sovereign hand of God, and will one day stand before the Lord and give an account for their sins. [**Romans 3:23**, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”]
  - In who or what do we trust when the violence, burden, hurt/pain comes our way?
    - **Proverbs 3:5-7**, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.”
- Consider the use of violence and destruction as discipline and judgment by God to lead people to repentance!
  - These Chaldeans/Babylonians mock and laugh as they bring destruction.
  - **EXAMPLE:** Sheltered US History class at Walnut HS; Chinese v. Japanese.
  - We saw the same as Hamas recorded their murderous attack against Israel [**murder, rape, beheading of children...and they cheered... embodiment of evil**]
    - Yet those same cheers turned to tears when Israel responded.
    - As the world watches and waits, is God doing a work that we won’t understand?
- Is He using this atrocity, along with others around the world, to bring His plan to fruition? To bring people to repentance?
  - Does God allow evil to discipline evil? Yes.
  - Yet don’t forget God’s answer in verse II: “Guilty men”.
    - Those committing atrocities are themselves under the sovereignty of God, and will incur divine judgement.

### **“Confusion Remains” [Verses 12-17]**

“Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?”

- **Question #1:** Why does God allow sin to go unpunished? No.
  - God allowed the Babylonians to punish Israel because of their unrepentant sin and disobedience to God.
  - **Psalm 5:4-6**, “For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.”
- **Question #2:** If God is so just, why allow sinners to punish those who sin less than they do?
  - Habakkuk goes on to explain how these violent men sweep through the land, taking what they want, destroy lives, and act according to their own law.

- With all that happens in our lives and around the world, we may ask as the prophet Malachi did, “Where is the God of justice?” **[Malachi 2:17]**
- **Psalm 34:16-17, 21**, “The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. **When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.** Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.”

## **Conclusion**

- We must remember above all...
  1. Questioning God to understand His ways is a good and proper thing to do. [\[Job, Jeremiah, Solomon, Malachi, Habakkuk...\]](#); *Doubt v. Unbelief*
    - Do so with His sovereignty and majesty in mind [\[vs. 12\]](#)
    - Do so with the understanding that there may be things we won't understand.
      - **Isaiah 55:6-9**, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”
  2. Habakkuk's statement, “**We shall not die.**” [\[vs. 12\]](#) Is something we need to hold on to.
    - We have hope in the salvation of our God!
    - When the world is on fire, with no water in sight, we need to remember that God sent His Son into the world to die for us and provide eternity to our souls.
      - **1 Corinthians 15:55-57**, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- Remember all the prophets who had asked the hard questions to God?? They found themselves resting on some pretty amazing conclusions...
  - **Job 42:2, 4**, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted... ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’”
  - **Jeremiah 29:11-13**, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”
  - **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**, “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”
  - **Malachi 4:2**, “But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.”