

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

**HABAKKUK**

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**Hab. 1:1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.**

“burden” = a doom, an utterance, a prophecy

Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah. His name means “he that embraces; a wrestler.”

**Hab. 1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee *of* violence, and thou wilt not save!**

Evidently Habakkuk has been praying to God and feeling like He is being ignored. He wants God to act against those who are unjust, cruel and unrighteous.

“how long” – The phrasing makes it sound like he has been crying out to God for years. If he is anything like me, his “how long” could represent a week or month—maybe even a couple of years. We are so impatient by nature.

**Hab. 1:3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention.**

Habakkuk doesn’t understand why the Lord is causing him to dwell in a place of wickedness and idolatry (iniquity), a place of misery, sorrow and trouble (grievance), a place of robbery and oppression (spoiling) and of cruelty, injustice and unrighteousness (violence), a place filled with those who cause controversy, strife, and quarreling. Why isn’t God punishing sin?

**Hab. 1:4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.**

The people are acting as if there is no law of God; there seems to be no judgment on the wicked. Those who are righteous are outnumbered and have no authority; they are intimidated by the wicked. It sounds like he is saying that wrong prevails over right and is accepted as the norm by the people.

Boy, does that sound like this world today. More and more, especially in America, the “righteous” are being muffled (if they speak out at all) and God’s word is being declared as false, a book of half truths, a book that doesn’t mean what it says.

**Hab. 1:5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for *I* will work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*.**

**Hab. 1:6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces *that are not theirs*.**

In His good time, God speaks to Habakkuk. God directs Habakkuk to watch with wonder and amazement as He works among the heathen, the Gentile nations. God is going to raise up the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, a discontented and rash people who are eager to conquer other nations.

The key here is that God is the one who is bringing this nation into power.

**Hab. 1:7** They *are* terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

**Hab. 1:8** Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat.

**Hab. 1:9** They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up *as* the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

**Hab. 1:10** And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

God continues to describe this nation on the rise:

1. They instill fear into their enemies.
2. They will enforce their own laws according to their own will.
3. Their horses are very fast and are ferocious in battle.
4. The warriors on the horses are proud as they cover great distances.
5. They will attack with the fierceness of a hungry bird of prey.
6. They oppress through violence.
7. Their great army will come from the east and will take God's people into captivity as easily as the wind blows the sand.
8. They have no fear of those who rule other nations; they are confident in their skills and sure of their victory.

**Hab. 1:11** Then shall *his* mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, *imputing* this his power unto his god.

Here God seems to be singling out the leader of the Babylonians. He will become filled with pride. I couldn't help but think of Nebuchadnezzar and the words he spoke that are recorded by Daniel:

**Dan. 4:30** The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

**Hab. 1:12** *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.

I guess the Lord quit speaking, because Habakkuk now begins to question the way God is going to answer his prayer. (Isn't that so typical of how we respond when the Lord answers our prayers. We want Him to respond according to our expectations.)

Habakkuk recognizes YHWH as *his* God, *his* Holy One—the God of eternity. He knows that according to God's word, God's chosen people will not be completely destroyed. He realizes that God has found His people in need of punishment and correction.

**Hab. 1:13** *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?***

Habakkuk doesn't understand. How can a holy God keep silent as He watches an evil and wicked nation destroy a nation that, even in its sin, is more righteous than its conqueror. All of a sudden the sins of Habakkuk's people don't seem that bad to him—at least not in comparison to the Babylonians.

Again, how human. As Pastor Bob often says (my paraphrase), "Your sin looks worse on you than my sin looks on me."

**Hab. 1:14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, *that have no ruler over them?***

**Hab. 1:15 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.**

**Hab. 1:16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion *is fat*, and their meat plenteous.**

**Hab. 1:17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?**

Habakkuk continues to question God. Are You really going to allow the Babylonians to run rampant over the other nations? Are You going to let them flaunt their power and wickedness? Are You really going to let them become prosperous in their pride and disdain of You? Are they going to be allowed to conquer nation after nation after nation?