

Faith in Uncertainty

Sermons from Habakkuk

Questioning God's Inaction (Habakkuk 1:1-4)

It is estimated that around 1.3 million were killed at the Auschwitz camps during the Holocaust. I am not all about the Popes, but when Pope Benedict XVI visited this area, his response stood out to me. "In a place like this, words fail; in the end there can only be silence, a silence which itself is a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent? How could you tolerate all this?" Eli Wiesel, a prisoner in Auschwitz, wrote these words after two Jews were hung before the crowd. "'Where is God? Where is he?' someone behind me asked... 'Where is God now?' And I heard a voice answer within me answer him: 'Where is he? Here he is - he is hanging here on these gallows...'"

What do you do when everything you would expect God to do, he does not do? Life is upside down, and despite your prayers, pain continues. Certainly, many have experienced this. Despite prayers, couples go childless for years. Despite prayers, young parents get ill and are given months to live. Despite prayers, fathers are laid off, depression consumes, children go hungry, diseases spread, the innocent are abused, Christians are reviled, and Christians are killed. Despite prayers, justice is not served. When pain hits Christians and our prayers seem unheard, what do we do?

The Context of Habakkuk

This is the question faced by Habakkuk. We know nothing of Habakkuk, but his heart is all over these few pages. Most prophetic literature focuses on the message God speaks through his prophets to a nation; however, Habakkuk records the conversation that resulted when he brought his complaint to God. Habakkuk asks hard questions, but God's answers are even harder to hear.

When we understand Habakkuk's situation, his questions make sense. Manasseh began reigning over Judah around 697 BC. He was the worst king Judah had seen. He rebuilt the high places and burned his children as sacrifices to idols. Furthermore, **2 Kings 21:16** says, "... *Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another...*" Manasseh repented before dying, but the damage had been done. Idolatry and violence remained in Judah long after his death.

Manasseh's grandson, Josiah, began reigning around 640 BC and was the last righteous king over Judah. Josiah made huge reforms. But the prophet Zephaniah made it clear that God saw the violence and sinfulness still in Judah. Josiah died in 609 BC in battle against Pharaoh Neco when he disobeyed God's command. Josiah's children began to reign and were very evil men. Violence and idolatry continued unchecked. It is around 609 BC when Judah's morality continued to decline and when Judah lost righteous king Josiah that Habakkuk very possibly brought his questions and complaints to the Lord. Would Habakkuk's faith stand the test of fire? Let's read Habakkuk 1:1-4.

Questioning God's Inaction

How long? This is not the beginning of Habakkuk's cries to God. Habakkuk has been praying and praying; yet, there is no response. How long do I need to cry for help so that you will finally hear me? How long will you not save? Why do you idly look at wrong?" These are strong questions to ask God, but they are questions coming from a confused and innocent heart. This is no small matter. Notice verses 2, 3, and 4. He is crying out about violence! Destruction is before him. Strife and contention arise. The law is paralyzed. The wicked surround the righteous. Justice is never goes forth.

Most of us are blessed to know nothing of this fear. Imagine what it would like to live in a city where the righteous, weak, and defenseless were constantly preyed upon by the strong and corrupt. They

take what they want when they want, hurt who they want, and the authorities do nothing about it. There is no safety at night, or in the day. Let's not forget - these are supposed to be God's people who are behaving this way. The people who should provide refuge are the ones spreading the violence.

All this and the Rock of Salvation has been silent. While justice is perverted and while the wicked surround the righteous - silence. How long? Though our situations can often be quite different, there are few Christians who cannot relate to this question. By the strength God gives us, in some things we are able to accept God's will when we do not receive our requests. But let's be honest. There are some things we cry to God about and it makes absolutely no sense to us that God does not answer. It does not seem right or according to God's character. Illness in youth, childlessness, a job for a father, protection for the innocent, food for the hungry, safety for Christians, and justice amidst corruption - does it make any sense why God at times does not answer these requests? In those days we too ask, "How long?" But, we are not alone. Many righteous men and women have cried these words to God.

David cried in **Psalms 13:1–2**, *"How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?"*

The persecuted and killed saints cried in **Revelation 6:9–10**, *"When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"*

Even angels have asked this question. **Zechariah 1:12**, *"Then the angel of the LORD said, 'O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?'"*

Abraham, Joseph, David, Elijah, Job, persecuted saints, angels - the list goes on. Asking "how long?" and having the feeling that God does not listen or act on the cries of the righteous is not an uncommon situation in the Bible. But what can we learn from the example of the godly people who have asked this question? Let's consider three applications of Habakkuk's questions.

1. It is okay to not have all the answers.

The example of many righteous people and even angels asking why and not understanding why God is not acting shows that **it is okay for us to not have all the answers**. An innocent man of God was calling out to God while he and others were suffering and God gave no response. If he was okay with this or acted like he had all the answers, we would be concerned. It is the same for us.

We are pressured right now in the Christian world to act like we have all the answers in pain. Verses are taken out of context and Christians are told to believe "everything happens for a reason" and "God plans to bless you." Notice this is not where Habakkuk or others were. "God I am really confused, but I trust you because I know everything happens for a reason." No. Job, Habakkuk, saints, and angels are in the opposite place. Their complaint to God is that they can see no logic or reason behind his inaction. For Habakkuk, God's plans to bring blessing and show his purposes would not come until 600 years after this generation was dead.

This does not mean we give up our faith, our prayers for God's blessing, or on finding purpose and glorifying God in the pain. Never! Rather, this means when we don't understand we don't have to

comfort ourselves or others with faith in things God never promised. Otherwise, what will happen 20 years from now when we have not found the reason everything happened? We may give up our faith because God did not fulfill a promise he never made.

I like the way my brother Brent put it. "... true faith often finds itself perplexed at God. The faithful do not know all the answers. Spiritual beings do not have all the answers. Being a follower of Jesus does not mean we will never have questions or that we will always understand." Let us not feel alone in confusion. All the godly before us have been there too. But what have the godly done in doubt?

2. It is okay to pray honestly.

They told God. They were honest. The fact that many righteous people and even angels have put these difficult questions to God shows that **our prayers to God can and should be honest**. God does not need or want us to fake our faith. There is no reason we should act as if we are not confused when we are. God can handle it. Certainly, we must be respectful in our honesty where some have not been (i.e., Joshua 7:6-15; Job 23:1-7, 42:1-6). But God does not need us to pray the same, "We still trust and understand you," when our heart is screaming doubt and confusion.

Aside from the pressure to act like we have the answers, if you are like me, another reason we struggle with praying honestly is because we sometimes misunderstand the function of prayer. When we read Habakkuk and others, it is clear prayer is not just an emergency request line. This helps us in two ways. First, we will be less confused when we realize Scripture is balanced in its teaching regarding prayer and that everyone did not always get what they wanted. We will be less confused when we understand God is not obligated to give us all we ask.

Second, this helps us realize that when we are distraught, our prayers need to be more like Habakkuk's. Prayer is not an emergency request line, it is an open communication line to the Father. Is this not beautiful? When we need to talk to our Father, we can simply talk to him. We can make petitions, but we actually do not have to ask him for anything. Is this not unbelievable? We can just talk to him, and he will listen! Christians, let us honestly pour out our hearts to God. But why?

3. Pray honestly to build trust in God.

Let me suggest that Scripture teaches we should **pray honestly because it builds our trust in God**. Consider, what do we do when we do not pray honestly to God? We have a variety of methods. We bottle it all up inside. We listen to what the psychos on TV say. We tell others about our issues. We talk to ourselves. We use our own physical coping methods to deal with stress. Notice, we go to and talk to everyone but God. I have to admit, from the Bible's perspective, this is a dangerous thing.

Proverbs 3:5-8, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding... Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.*" **Psalms 118:8**, "*It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.*" **Psalms 146:3**, "*Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.*"

When we do not speak honestly to God it causes us to be prideful and rely on ourselves and on man. Satan wants us to think this is okay, but it is everything God hates. This builds pride and does not fix our problems. When we put our doubts on ourselves and others, we are trusting people who have no vision for the eternal future or control over anything at all.

God knew this would be a temptation for us. This is why he warns us so frequently about it in Scripture. David testifies to us in **Psalms 62:7–8**, *“On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.”* Paul instructs us in **Philippians 4:6–7**, *“... do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

When we pour our our heart to God instead of being anxious over our doubts and turning to man’s answers, we are speaking to the God who understands. Hebrews 2:17-18 tells us that Jesus was made like us in every respect so that he could be a merciful high priest. Christ helps us before God’s throne not as our accuser and judge when we call out in distress. Christ helps us as one who can empathize.

Conclusion

Habakkuk had been crying out to God for help and God had still not answered. Habakkuk did not have all the answers in the beginning, so he told God. Even when God responds, Habakkuk will still not understand. This does not mean faith is blind. God has answered so many times. Write down all you have prayed for in the past year and you will see God has answered more often than not. But at times it will feel like God is not there. In that day, let us realize it is okay to not have all the answers. Instead of comforting ourselves and trusting man, let us be honest with God and explain why we are struggling to trust him in this moment. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in that day.

Questioning God's Action (Habakkuk 1:5-2:1)

We began with a helpful illustration last time. Around 1.3 million were killed at the Auschwitz camps during the Holocaust. When Pope Benedict XVI visited this area, his response stood out to me. "In a place like this, words fail; in the end there can only be silence, a silence which itself is a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent? How could you tolerate all this?"

What do you do when everything you expect God to do, he does not do? Habakkuk is living in Judah among those who are supposed to be God's people, but they are not living like it. Habakkuk cried to God with no response, so his cry is now, "How long?" How long must I see violence and corruption while the righteous are surrounded by the wicked? We have seen that this is an appropriate response. When we are confused by God, we should pour out our hearts to God instead of leaning on our own understanding. This builds our trust in God as we put troubles in his hands.

Now in 1:5-11 God answers Habakkuk's cries. We will see today from Habakkuk's response in 1:12-2:1 that God's answer was not easy to hear. There is much to learn here. God's answer teaches us about God's nature and how God works, while Habakkuk's response teaches us the attitude we should have as finite humans crying out to the sovereign God. Let's read the start of God's response to Habakkuk's cry about the wickedness in Judah in 1:5.

God Sees (1:5)

Habakkuk asked God how long he would not hear and why he is looking idly at wrong, but we should appreciate God's first words. "*Look among the nations, and see...*" Habakkuk's questions make sense when we put ourselves in his shoes. Consider what it would be like to live in a city where "God's people" freely prey on the weak and innocent. Imagine being the righteous surrounded by the wicked. Imagine what it would be like to cry to God and see no salvation. Habakkuk's questions make sense! Habakkuk feels like he is suffering alone. He wonders if God hears or sees.

God's first words, "*look... and see,*" are comforting because he does not respond in shock. "Oh, wow, Habakkuk. Sorry about that, I was taking a nap." Or, "I had some important things on my mind and I didn't see what was going on over there." No, Habakkuk has cried out for God to hear and see, and God responds by telling Habakkuk that he is the one who needs to look and see.

This should give us pause to realize where we fit into God's big picture. God is the one who created us. God is the one who has taken great care to sustain us to this point. God is the one who has sent his Son to die for us. He is heavily invested in us. God sees when life is upside down. When we were studying 2 Corinthians 6 last year we read a passage in Isaiah that is helpful for us to remember now. **Isaiah 49:14–16**, "¹⁴ *But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.'* ¹⁵ *Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.* ¹⁶ *Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...*"

Mothers, can you forget your nursing child? I am told it is physically impossible. In the same way, let us understand that God is in heavens and has sent his Son to die for our sins and cannot forget us. **Hebrews 13:5–6**, "⁵ *Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'* ⁶ *So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'*" God has promised not to leave us. God has not created and saved us only to forsake us in our time of trouble. God hears. God sees.

God Acts (1:5)

Not only does God see, but he also says in verse 5 that he is acting. "... *wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.*" Habakkuk had been crying to God for salvation. Little did Habakkuk know, God not only saw his situation, but he was acting. Even though Habakkuk had no clue that God was working, God says he was doing something huge.

Just because we cannot see God's action does not mean God is not acting. God is not idle like man-made idols. I like how Psalms 115:3-7 reminds us of this. "*Our God is in the heavens; **he does all that he pleases.** Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat.*" God acts and is acting though we may not see it. He has not created the world only to leave it to run on its own.

God Acts in Unexpected Ways (1:5-17)

However, as we can see in verses 5-11, God is acting in very unexpected ways. Habakkuk has cried out about the violence and unrighteousness among God's people in Judah, and God responds that he is raising up the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans are the same as the Babylonians. If we are correctly dating the book around 609 BC, the Babylonians were just beginning to rise as the next world power. They had just conquered the Assyrians. As God describes here, the Babylonians were famous for their cruelty. Different translations use different descriptions in verse 6. They are bitter, hasty, fierce, impetuous, cruel, and ruthless. They are taking others' dwelling places.

But the the Babylonians are not just terrifying people. They are proud and unrighteous. Habakkuk has cried out that there is no justice in Judah, but God says at the end of verse 7 that the Babylonians see that justice goes forth from themselves - they decide for themselves what is right. They come for violence and gather captives like the sand. God gives his verdict regarding the Babylonians in verse 11: they are guilty men who make their own might their god. The Babylonians were cruel and wicked. God's response to Habakkuk's cries about Judah's sins was to raise up the wicked Babylonians to punish Judah. This is tough. Let's read Habakkuk's response to this in 1:12-17.

God told Habakkuk to wonder and be astounded and that he would not believe what God was doing when Habakkuk heard it. Looking at Habakkuk's response to God's words, God's words could not have been truer. Habakkuk's response can be summarized in one word: what? Before, he was distraught because it seemed God was not acting on his prayers. Now Habakkuk is confused by God's response to his prayer. Verse 12: Are you, God, really the everlasting, Holy One I have thought you were? How can this be? We will not die, will we? Verse 13: You have pure eyes that cannot look upon evil? Why are you doing this? Habakkuk's confusion is strong, but it makes sense when we look at the end of verse 13. Can God remain silent while punishing his people (Judah) using a nation more unrighteous than them (Babylon)? It seems to Habakkuk that God has just created people as fish of the sea who are defenseless against the net of the cruel Babylonians.

Habakkuk is right to voice his confusion to God, but consider a problem with his complaint. Habakkuk was crying out for justice to come upon the unrighteous in Judah *now*, but he no longer wanted justice when God promised it. He did not like God's timing or method in answering prayer. Can't we make the same mistake? We want what we pray for to come now in the way we want it to come. I want this job, healing in this way, justice like this - and I want it now. If God's answer does not come in 10 seconds the way we asked for it to come, we jump out the window. Consider, God

does not operate like this, but we do not either. Children, do your parents always give you exactly what you want when you want it? No. This is not because parents are mean. Parents use wisdom.

God operates similarly. It is easy to say this when we are not in Habakkuk's shoes hearing that God's answer that an unrighteous nation was going to deal out punishment to solve the problem. But when we endure difficulty and do not understand God, we should remember **two** important things. When God answers prayers, **(1)** his timing is not our timing and **(2)** his methods are not our methods.

Consider how true this was for Jacob's family and for Joseph. God knew a famine was coming that would threaten Jacob's family. God saved Jacob's family from the famine by allowing Joseph to be sold into slavery and then go to prison so that he could eventually interpret Pharaoh's dream and save the world from the famine. Despite prayers, Joseph lived in misery for decades until life improved and God's plan became evident to him. If I were God, I would just stop the famine altogether, but this was not God's method or timing. Hence the subtitle - God acts in unexpected ways.

It is in these times when we struggle to understand why God is answering prayers in the way he is a **third** point: God's timing and methods should be different than ours because he is sovereign, all-wise, and he sees the big picture that we do not see. Consider how Elihu instructed Job in a similar way in **Job 36:22-31**. *"²² Behold, God is exalted in his power; who is a teacher like him? ²³ Who has prescribed for him his way, or who can say, 'You have done wrong?' ²⁴ 'Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. ²⁵ All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar. ²⁶ Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable. ²⁷ For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, ²⁸ which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. ²⁹ Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunders of his pavilion? ³⁰ Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea. ³¹ For by these he judges peoples; he gives food in abundance."*

Elihu is very wise in what he says. God is exalted and no one is a teacher like him. People sing of his work because he is so great; yet, we do not fully comprehend him. He gives a great example of this in verses 27-31. God causes clouds, thunder, lightning, and rain to come down. Yet, as Elihu says in verse 31, sometimes God does this to judge people and sometimes he does this to give food in abundance. The same rainclouds can flood one place but provide much needed sustenance to another place. God sees timing, situations, and the big picture we do not see. Remember, we do not cry to God just because he is more powerful than us, but also because he is wiser than us.

Though this is can be difficult to accept, we need to be deep Christians. Western evangelicalism is said to be a "mile wide and an inch deep" - shallow. But God wants thoughtful Christians who can to think deeply about the world and God's action in it. We need to have the capacity to realize that God is God, and we are not. This leads to a **fourth** way we can cope with God's unexpected actions. If God were subject to our demands in how he answers prayers, he would not be God.

Cry Out With Respect (2:1)

Habakkuk was misled and confused about God, but we should still cry out as he did when we are confused. Notice the attitude Habakkuk had in 2:1. Habakkuk has said some difficult things to God, but they are not said with a prideful attitude. Habakkuk knew he would need to be set straight. Let us pursue this attitude. Let us cry to God in confusion, but with respect remembering what we have learned tonight. God sees and is acting; however, God's timing is not ours, God's methods are not ours, God sees the big picture we do not see, and God is not God if he is subject to our demands.

The Righteous Live By Faith (Habakkuk 2:2-2:5)

Habakkuk has asked God how long he will be deaf to his cries regarding the violence and corruption among God's people in Judah. But God has answered that Habakkuk is the one who needs to see the work God is doing. God is raising up the Chaldeans (i.e., the Babylonians), a bitter, hasty, dreaded, and fearsome nation, to bring judgment and destruction upon faithless Judah. This completely shocks Habakkuk. Will God allow the Chaldeans to mercilessly kill nations forever? If God can idly watch the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they, God is not who he thought he was.

I hope our study so far has caused you to want to cry out with him. This book should cause us to sit next to Habakkuk asking difficult questions and reworking our misconceptions about who God is. Habakkuk knows he has posed difficult complaints about God's judgment, so he says he will wait to see how God will respond. He is ready for answers and to be corrected. God's overall response spans Habakkuk 2:2-20 and is comprised of two sections - a word to Judah and a word to the Chaldeans. Our goal will be to receive the first portion - God's admonition to the currently judged Judah - and consider how we can endure trials, persecution, and even God-sent judgment today. Notice 2:2-3.

Judgment Will Surely Come (2:2-3)

This is not what Habakkuk hoped to hear. God tells Habakkuk to write the vision on tablets. The ten commandments were also written on tablets. This means the message is permanent. It is like when we say "write it in stone." God even tells Habakkuk to ensure that it is written plainly so that someone who is running can read it. It is like a billboard. God wants nobody to miss this message. The reason God wants the vision to be written clearly on tablets is seen in verse three. Habakkuk responded doubting God would really raise the Chaldeans against them, but God says the vision needs to be written clearly on tablets because his decision has been made. Judgment will surely come.

It is interesting that God, after he has already promised judgment, begins by warning Habakkuk to be sure he and everyone knows it is coming. Jesus did the same thing in Matthew 24-25 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Paul and Peter speak similarly in 1st Thessalonians 5 and 2nd Peter 3 when writing about final judgment. Do not fall asleep. Scoffers will say judgment is delaying, but they are wrong. God does not only warn of judgment. God warns, then says, "I'm serious about that." Why?

Notice the third line of verse 3. *"If it seems slow, wait for it..."* God reminds us he is serious because he knows that even after he promises judgment there will be times when it seems judgment will not come. God knows this because it is a typical human response to think future punishment can be avoided. Children do this when parents promise punishment when they get home. The immediate thought is, "Maybe they will forget." "Maybe if I am really nice I won't be punished." "We have been home for 10 minutes and nothing has happened. Maybe they forgot!" We are the same way with respect to God. Time passes and we begin to think, "God would not actually judge the world." "I've been doing some good things, God won't judge me now." God knows this, so before he gives any other admonition regarding judgment he makes the message clear, "I am not kidding about this."

We should first learn that if God did not want Judah to doubt judgment, we certainly must not doubt God's judgment of the whole world. It continues to shock me how many say God may not condemn anybody. "Maybe God will save everyone." "It has been 2,000 years and you still think he is coming?" Peter warned of this in **2 Peter 3:4-7**. *"⁴ They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of*

water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.” God always fulfills his word. God still flooded the world when only 8 believed. We need to spread the message that YHWH is faithful to his word. God cannot lie. He will punish.

Second, the fact that God warns of doubting his judgment should reveal God’s heart to us. God’s double-warning is gracious. God does not have to warn us to not be deceived into doubting judgment! God is showing us how much he loves us. Even if judgment is certain, he wants us to repent and be ready. He does not want us to be caught unaware. **Ezekiel 33:11**, “... *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...*” God takes no pleasure in destroying the wicked, but he will do it. Let us not be deceived. Judgment will come.

The Righteous Live By Faith (2:4-5)

This certainty of judgment is what makes 2:4-5 so shocking and beautiful. Habakkuk can be sure the Chaldeans are coming, not just because God promises it, but also because of the arrogance and greed of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans arrogantly believe they can secure their own success, so they will march on to overtake Judah. But God contrasts the arrogance of the Chaldeans with a one-liner in verse 4 that must not be overlooked. “... *but the righteous shall live by his faith.*”

But what does God mean by this? The key question is God’s use of the word “live.” Does God mean that in judgment those who are righteous will walk by faith or does he mean those who are righteous will actually survive by their faith? It is true that the righteous walk by faith, but I will argue why I believe God is telling Habakkuk that those who are righteous will survive judgment by their faith. Let’s consider two reasons for this interpretation (see the end for a third^a and fourth^b reason).

A first clue that God is promising that the righteous will survive by faith is the context. In 1:13 Habakkuk charged God with idly watching the wicked swallow up those who are more righteous. God’s response is that judgment is surely coming, but Habakkuk can be assured that those who are truly righteous will survive by their faith. God will not idly watch them die. Habakkuk wants to know why God will allow the wicked to swallow up the righteous - God’s response is somewhat irrelevant if he is affirming that he and others are truly righteous if they walk by faith.

A second clue that God is promising that the righteous will survive by faith is God’s teaching elsewhere the righteous would actually survive the Chaldean attack. In Ezekiel God is speaking to the people of Judah who are experiencing the punishment of God via the Chaldeans. The people are concerned that they have no hope and are dead in their sins. **Ezekiel 33:14-16**, “¹⁴ *Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵ if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.*”

Judah was concerned that they had no hope in God’s judgment via the Chaldeans. However, the comfort in Ezekiel and Habakkuk are the same. Judgment is inevitable, but if you turn to live righteously with faith in God, you will live! This is contrasted with the first portion of verse 4. I like the NET Bible. **Habakkuk 2:4**, “*Look, the one whose desires are not upright will faint from exhaustion, but the person of integrity will live because of his faithfulness.*” The message to Judah is clear. The

appointed day for Judah's reproof is near. If your heart is not right or if you think you can save yourself, you will perish. But those who are righteous will put their faith in me and they will last this.

Consider why faith would be so key and so difficult. A ruthless, unrighteous nation was coming to overtake the city. Hunger and thirst would be crippling. Friends would be slaughtered. To say the situation would be bleak would be an understatement. But those who were truly righteous would look at this situation with a unique perspective. Though we tremble as the thundering army draws nearer and though we starve without food - we will follow the law of our God, rejoice in the Lord, and trust him to preserve us.

Consider how Hebrews uses Habakkuk 2:4 to encourage persecuted Christians (see also Romans 1:17^c and Galatians 3:11^d). **Hebrews 10:32–39**, *“³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷ For, ‘Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸ but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.’ ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.”*

Reproach, danger, and loss for the cause of Christ had returned. These Christians needed to not shrink back but have faith as they did before. But notice the nature of the faith needed here. Their faith was not that God would preserve physical life. They endured this treatment and the loss of all things because they had full confidence in God's promise of an abiding possession and a great reward. The Hebrew writer takes it further in chapter 11 when he gives the example of those who willingly lost possessions and their physical lives because of faith. They had conviction of things not seen as they looked forward to the city built by God (cf. Hebrews 11:1, 10).

What does this mean? Notice the interpretation of Habakkuk 2:4 in verse 39. When the righteous live by faith this means they are willing to trust God's promise to preserve their souls while they lose any physical thing, including life itself. The promise to us is different and greater than it was for Habakkuk. We will cry out for physical life to be spared, but in the midst of dark, bleak days when trials make us cry and make us sick to our stomachs, our faith must most importantly be in what we cannot see: the preservation of our souls in the city of God. Let's consider three conclusions to help us be the righteous who find life by our faith.

Conclusion

1. Trust God's Promise of Judgment. There is no reason to put faith in God if all are not condemned and if the future of the world is not destruction by fire. Let us not fall asleep and live carelessly. We must not doubt God's judgment is coming but instead recognize and teach that his wrath on ungodliness will be revealed. Believing this destruction is the beginning of faith.

2. Trust God's Promise of an Abiding Possession. But this does not mean we simply believe God's promise of an abiding possession. This trust means we will stop putting our hopes in having the good life, the American dream, and a place to call home in this world. This trust means we will actively hope in our eternal home. I grow weary of the temptation to make sure I have a good life here. Christians, if we look through the eyes of Habakkuk, we will see all is already gone. We must

let go of physical hopes because we will be separated from all physical things. Whether trials, persecution, judgment from God, or death separates us from comfort, it will happen. In that day we want to already be clinging to our abiding possession. Even when our physical bodies decay we will be able to smile as we cling God's promise and to our assurance of our souls' preservation.

3. Trust God When We Do Not Understand. I was recently troubled how many conversations about prayer recently have been defaulting to us being okay with not always understanding God. I no longer care. Faith means we hope so intently in God's promise of an abiding possession that it does not matter when we do not understand. Consider, God is giving us eternal life with him simply because we trust him! Let us be satisfied with this. This hope can take us through any lack of understanding. We will still cry out to God "How long?" when we do not understand. But in that day we will also declare that no matter what happens, *"I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation"* (Habakkuk 3:18). Let's trust God's promise of judgment so we can let go of life here and hope in our eternal home with the Father. Then we can accept not understanding God. This is faith and this faith is how the righteous live.

^a **Reason #3.** The NET Bible argues for a translation of the first line of verse four which makes more sense of the poetry. **Habakkuk 2:4**, *"Look, the one whose desires are not upright will faint from exhaustion, but the person of integrity will live because of his faithfulness."* The NET argues the word commonly translated "puffed up" (i.e., "proud") could be translated as "faint" (i.e., from exhaustion). Pride is a common theme in the book of Habakkuk with respect to the Chaldeans, but not with respect to Judah. If fainting is in view, this would follow the common translations for Isaiah 51:20, Amos 8:13, and Jonah 4:8. If the NET Bible is correct in its translation, the fainting of those who are not upright contrasts the righteous who survive by their faith. This would certainly align with other biblical teachings regarding the survival and renewal of those who put trust in the Lord instead of growing faint in unrighteousness (cf. Isaiah 40:30-31, etc.).

^b **Reason #4.** It is possible that the Hebrew word translated as live, *hayah*, is never used to describe the nature of a subject's living, but instead to refer to the fact of a subject's being alive. From my studies, *hayah* is used very frequently in the prophets to refer to survival and the preservation of life, but never to refer to the quality of someone's day to day life. It is possible this word cannot even be used to refer to describe the nature of someone's living. Not being a Hebrew scholar, I cannot make a definitive argument here.

^c **Romans 1:17.** The message of Romans 1-5 must be considered to understand the usage of Habakkuk 1:4 here. All are under sin and deserve condemnation, but the gospel reveals God's righteousness to be the God of both Jews and Gentiles. This is because the gospel reveals how it is that *"the righteous shall live by faith."* The gospel reveals that all can survive by faith because of Christ. Walking in the footsteps of faith like Abraham describes real faith (Romans 4:12ff), but it is more contextually appropriate to interpret "live by faith" as the righteous surviving the wrath of God against ungodliness (Romans 1:18) by their faith. This also is more contextually appropriate because the progression of faith leading to righteousness which leads to life is common in Romans. After Paul argues for the righteousness and life that comes by faith through the righteous action of Christ, Paul contrasts this with the sinfulness and death that came through the sinful action of Adam in Romans 5:17-21. Because of Jesus' faithfulness to be a sacrifice of atonement (Romans 3:21-26) faith in Christ without unbelief leads to righteousness (Romans 4:20-25), and righteousness leads to eternal life. As the marginal ESV reading for Romans 1:17 says, *"The one who by faith is righteous shall live."*

^d **Galatians 3:11.** The message of Galatians must be considered to understand the usage of Habakkuk 2:4 here. The message of Galatians 3 must especially be understood. Everyone who relies on the works of the Law of Moses all are cursed who do not abide by all things written in the Law. Notice the parallel and contrast in Galatians 3:11-12. *"The righteous shall live by faith,"* and *"The law is not of faith, rather, 'The one who does them shall live by them.'"* Paul usage of the word "live" is parallel in both verses and I argue that he is speaking of life and survival, not walking by faith. It would be redundant for Paul to say of the Law, "If you do them, you walk by them." Furthermore, the discussion in Galatians is regarding the curse and subsequent death that comes by relying on the Law of Moses. Paul makes the answer clear. As the marginal ESV reading for Galatians 3:11 says, *"The one who by faith is righteous will live."*

The Wicked Die in Arrogance (Habakkuk 2:5-20)

Upon hearing that God will punish Judah with the ruthless Chaldeans, Habakkuk responded in 1:12-2:1 with three key concerns. We have seen God's response to the first two statements. First, **Habakkuk 1:12**, "... *we shall not die.*" Habakkuk hardly believes God will use the Chaldeans to judge Judah. Despite Habakkuk's shock, God says judgment is surely coming (2:2-3). Second, **Habakkuk 1:13**, "... *why do you ... remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?*" In certain judgment, God gives an amazing reply: the righteous will survive by faith (2:4). By expecting his people to trust this when death by ruthless armies was imminent, God is teaching us what true faith is. True faith trusts in fear. Others would not believe God's promise of judgment. When the Chaldean army came and despair set in, others would give up on God, trust their own strength, prey on the weak, and perish. But the righteous would continue rejoicing in the Lord and live. We too can have faith in perils if we trust God's promise of life in an eternal, heavenly home.

But Habakkuk had a third concern in **Habakkuk 1:17**. Will God allow the Chaldeans to mercilessly kill nations forever? Here God replies to this third question explaining how he will handle the Chaldeans. In two weeks we will see how God's response helps Habakkuk and us today trust God when others seem to endlessly gain from corruption. Today we will consider the Chaldean's sins and judgment so we can avoid similar wickedness and pride. As we read **Habakkuk 2:5-20**, carefully note the relationship between the Chaldean's sins and God's future treatment of their sins.

Your Wickedness Will Be Repaid (2:6-20)

We will look at two overall messages from this passage. The first thing to see is that our wickedness will be repaid. Throughout this passage God shows how sin always boomerangs back at us. We begin to see this when God says in verses 5-6 that the Chaldeans greedily gather nations for themselves, but one day these same nations will taunt the Chaldeans. What follows in this passage are five woes that serve as the content of the nations' taunts. Let's consider the first four sins and how they are repaid.

Woes are pronounced in verses 6-8 because the Chaldeans have taken what is not theirs by taking advantage of others. They were loading up pledges and using their power and wealth to force people and nations to be in debt to them. This is likely a result of the harsh tribute Babylon forced conquered nations to send. The Chaldeans made themselves wealthy by allowing the debt of weak, poor people to mount higher until the Chaldeans plundered them for everything they had to pay off their debts. They freely took from the poor and weak because they could. God says this will return on their heads. The remnant of the people they plundered will plunder them.

This reminds us that we must not separate business or finance from faith. We should also remember the heart God has for the poor and weak. God reveals this in the Law of Moses when he taught Israel to care for the poor among them and to not loan at interest. It matters how we get wealth. Profiting from people's pain or from mounting interest and fees just because people owe us is not our right; it infuriates God. Satan points to the gain, but God makes it clear that these actions will result in loss.

The Chaldeans are taunted similarly in verses 9-11 and 12-14. Woes are pronounced because they built their homes and founded their cities through unrighteous gain and bloodshed. Verse 9 says they do this to set their nest on high. They want to hedge against the day of trouble and ensure they are safe from harm. Verse 13 shows the irony. They are wearying themselves for nothing. Verses 10-11 say there are two consequences to building their homes and cities on evil gain and bloodshed. First, as they killed, they will be killed. Second, their own homes and possessions will cry out against them.

If we see that turmoil, danger, sickness, or economic trouble is coming, this is a good time for us to be reminded that the way “to be safe from the reach of harm” is not to cheat, take advantage of, or harm others. And, I say this because I need to hear it, this also counts when we are talking about the actions of a country. In fact, this passage is about a country that was founded on bloodshed and grew by taking advantage of others. It hit me the other day how I have been deceived to think we gained our land and freedom in the United States in honorable ways. How was it okay to slaughter the natives and take their land? It does not matter that the colonists wanted more land or were more powerful and founded a great nation. The message here is that the home, business, city, or nation we build does not justify the means. Rather, the means by which we build will be paid back to us in full.

This message continues with the fourth woe in verses 15-17. Verses 15-17 were a little confusing at first glance. The nations will proclaim woe to the Chaldeans because they made each other get drunk to see each other naked? Though this would be sinful, there is a different message here. Notice the second line of verse 15. “... *you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness.*” The Bible often ties wrath and alcohol together. God speaks of his punishment as him forcing people to drink the cup or wine of his wrath full strength (cf. Isaiah 51:17; Revelation 14:10, 16:9). Alcohol is tied to wrath because of its intensity and how it hurts to drink. Woe is pronounced because the Chaldeans have forced the nations to drink the cup of their wrath. They are doing this to “gaze at their nakedness.” The Chaldeans were causing widespread destruction - mindlessly killing people, animals, and cities. They openly shamed the nations as they stripped them of their possessions and human rights until they were naked. The cities were powerless as they watched the Chaldeans wrathfully slaughter, shame, and take advantage of them.

But verse 16 shows how this too is going to come back on them. Instead of glory, the Chaldeans will have their fill of shame. God will force them to drink his cup of wrath, and it will be far worse. Any glory they had would be consumed by shame and embarrassment. Is this not one of the most painful results of sin? There is shame before God. There is shame before others. This is especially the case when sins are revealed that show how, in our wrath, we have caused senseless pain to others.

How is Satan able to so easily deceive us into thinking sin’s physical consequences are small or non-existent? The problem here is that we forget God is in control. We foolishly think that if we can hide sin from people, we have escaped even physical consequences with God. Let Babylon be a reminder that this is a lie. God is in control. Many of us may not have struck, stolen from, or killed a person, but this does not mean we never harm or take advantage of others. We will pay for our sin. We will pay for the wrath we have dealt out to people at work, on the road, or in our family. We will pay for the gossip we have whispered about them. We will pay for using, embarrassing, and taking advantage of the weak. God controls the future and God says our sin will boomerang back onto our heads. When we are tempted and think we can escape the consequences of a sin, let’s remember our wickedness will be repaid.

Your Arrogance Will End in Shame (2:5, 9, 13-14, 16-20)

Second, consider how in the midst of these woes for sin, the text points to an underlying sin that this wickedness springs from. Notice line 2 of **verse 5**. The Chaldeans are arrogant. It is arrogance and pride that leads people and nations to take what belongs to others and to build a house and city on bloodshed and evil riches. But why is it arrogance? This passage refers to two motivations the Chaldeans had when they committed these actions.

First, the Chaldeans were arrogant because they thought their power and wealth was a hedge against the day of destruction. Notice this in **verse 9**. *“Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his house on high, to be safe from the reach of harm.”* Pride to believe their power and wealth could save them from destruction was a common indictment against the Babylonians. They piled up riches and people and walls thinking it would save them. The Chaldean empire was amazingly powerful and influential; yet, remember in Daniel 5 how long it took for them to fall to the Medes and Persians? God was furious at their pride, so a hand appeared to write their Babylon’s fate on the wall and they lost the kingdom that night. This powerful nation that could not be destroyed or thwarted by anyone lost everything in one day and nobody saw it coming but God.

We may be tempted to think that because of our army, political positioning, treaties, or wealth that the United States could not fall, but we should think again. Picture what happened to the Chaldeans happening to us. If God decides our time has come, we can lose everything in a few moments, hours, or days. No army or amount of money in our retirement accounts can hedge against this. If you struggle wrapping your mind around the possibility of that, look at what is happening to Greece right now. Nations fall. Remember the economic downfall of 2008. In a matter of about three weeks, people lost half of their life savings for retirement. There is wisdom in being like the ant who works to prepare for winter, but it is arrogance to think there is any security in our riches.

Consider how it is also idolatry to arrogantly thinking riches give security. We are taking a created, physical thing and expecting it will preserve us from trouble. We are acting like money has an eternal heartbeat. But notice the problem with trusting a created thing like money in **verses 18-19**. We laugh at those who have carved idols and bowed down to them, but it is no different for us if we print money and trust it. We are saying to a thing made out of wood - arise! A good way to test if we are trusting an idol to save us is to consider how view and use money: are we selfish or selfless with our money? If everything is about saving for the nest egg or the rainy day and we worry, worry, worry about the future with our finances and are stingy with others in the name of saving money, we are not thinking right. We are forgetting who is in control. This is why I love **verse 20**. God alone is God and he alone sends sunshine and rain. Money has no power when there is no rain to produce crops. Our own creation cannot hedge against trouble. It can all be gone in an instant. In that day we do not want to cry for our possessions, but praise God and ask our Father for our needs.

Second, the Chaldeans were arrogant because they were sinfully laboring to conquer the world for the glory of their name. Even if the Chaldeans did not build their cities on violence and gain their riches by taking from others, they would have still been at fault. They wanted their name and kingdom and power to be the one the people feared and the future generations remembered, so they sought to be mighty and to accomplish mighty works. Daniel 4 tells the sad story of how King Nebuchadnezzar made this mistake. Nebuchadnezzar had been warned to humble himself, but he did not. Read Daniel 4:28-33 with me. Nebuchadnezzar thought he was great and glorious because of his power, but God had to bring his arrogance low and show him how small he was. God predicted this humiliation of the Chaldeans from glory to shame back in **Habakkuk 2:16**.

Our desires can easily be arrogantly focused on personal glory too. We want to be the one with the good grades so everyone knows how smart we are. We want to be the one with the good job so everyone is impressed with us. We want to be the one with the long life so everyone will think we are wise. We want to have the nice clothes so people think we are great. We may even want to baptize the most people so people think we are really religious.

God says an amazing thing in **Habakkuk 2:13-14** about this. All our labor is meaningless. Just as God has set a line in the sand where the waters will not pass, God has ordained that our labors only obtain fire. We are not going to have the glory and honor that we want. Nebuchadnezzar fought for his own glory thinking he would be remembered and all we remember about him is that he is the one who ate grass like an animal because of his arrogance to glorify himself.

The only one whose glory will fill the earth completely and permanently is God's glory. This is the purpose of God from the beginning of creation until the end of time. When God has created the awesome skies and stars that will forever proclaim his handiwork, what are our little trophies? When God has parted seas, delivered people from lions, saved people from across the world, changed sinners to believers, and raised the dead, what are our accomplishments? They are all nothing.

Conclusion

1. **Let us not arrogantly believe we will escape the consequences of sin.** God sees and has control. Use the knowledge of repayment for sin to motivate us to not give in to temptation.
2. **Let us not arrogantly believe our own creation can save us from trouble.** Let us use our power and wealth to care for those who are weak and in. Then we will not care or worry when money and other physical things fall and fail.
3. **Let us not arrogantly seek our own glory.** As certainly as the waters cover the sea, God's name is the only one people will remember. In trouble or success, let us not worry about the glory of our name but instead praise God's name. The wicked will die in their arrogance, but the righteous will live by their trust and faith in his name.

Faith in Fear (Habakkuk 3)

The past couple of weeks have brought a number of difficult situations for Christians we know. Two Christian friends have miscarried. Two Christians among us have lost their jobs without any warning from their employers. We said goodbye to a new brother who may deal with persecution in China. It has been a time to cast many cares on God. Habakkuk was pleading with God about a horrible situation in Judah. The weak and righteous were surrounded and harmed by those who claimed to be God's people. Instead of promising Habakkuk another reformation like Josiah's, God responded by raising up the godless Chaldeans to judge Judah. Habakkuk was stunned. His home, his people, and everything physical he knew would soon be gone. But in our last two lessons, God has made two promises: the righteous will survive by faith and the Chaldeans will die for their arrogance.

This is a great promise; yet, we know this does not make steadfast faith in uncertainty easy. Doubt and dissatisfaction are easy. But this book teaches us to respect the difficult situations God expects us to trust him in. God calls us to have faith in fear. If we have not yet experienced suffering, Elihu in Job 33:29-30 insinuates that God allows it to come two or three times in one's life. Recognizing this - whether trials are now or later - we will see tonight proof that God really can move us from doubting him to trusting him in uncertainty. Life is uncertain, but our study will help us put faith in a certain place so our souls have stability when life is unstable. Notice **Habakkuk 3:1-2**.

Repeat Your Work (Habakkuk 3:1-15)

Upon hearing that the righteous in Judah will survive by faith and the wicked Chaldeans will die for their arrogance, Habakkuk responds with a prayer. Verses 1 and 19 show us this is not only a personal prayer. This prayer was to be sung with stringed instruments by all the faithful in these terrifying times. Habakkuk's introduction in verse 2 helps verses 3-15 make sense. The NIV-11 catches the message plainly. **Habakkuk 3:2**, "*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 prays what many Psalmists have prayed. In fear, the faithful look back to God's past works to assure themselves of God's existence, power, and faithfulness as they ask God to repeat his past works in their day. Since Habakkuk 3 contains language similar to other songs written about God's deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians and Canaanites (Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 44, 77), most believe Habakkuk is asking God to use the power he displayed at the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. "God, you conquered before, conquer again." It is also possible Habakkuk is describing a vision he saw concerning God's salvation through judgment. Either way, as we read verses 3-15, it is important to contrast Habakkuk's current description of God with his previous one.

Habakkuk describes God's majesty and rule over the nations in verses 3-7. In verses 8-15 he describes God as a fierce warrior who judges the wicked to save his people. At first, we may not fully appreciate the weight of Habakkuk himself writing of God like this, but consider two contextual reasons why writing of God's power, rule, and judgment was a key experience for Habakkuk. First, the Chaldeans are terrifying. They see themselves as their own God and as an eternal kingdom created by their own might (cf. Habakkuk 1:7-11, 2:5ff; Daniel 4:30). The Chaldeans think they can do anything without consequence, and Habakkuk used to think this was true (cf. Habakkuk 1:13, 17)! Second, Habakkuk previously accused God of not acting, not exerting his rule, and not saving the righteous. His complaint is clearly seen in **Habakkuk 1:2-4** and **1:13-14**. This was how Habakkuk felt before, but God's call to have faith obviously brought about a change. Habakkuk had to be quite emboldened to turn from composing a complaint to composing and singing God's praise.

Intellectually, our hearts are with Habakkuk. Intellectually, we know God is powerful. We know God hears. We know he sees. As we observe Habakkuk's transformation from doubt to trust, the key way to apply this passage is to ask how we can have faith like Habakkuk that sings about God in tribulation. How can we have this trial-surviving, soul-saving faith that pleases God? Consider five ways we can imitate Habakkuk's faith so we can have a faith that does not faint from exhaustion and discouragement, but instead perseveres in the darkest times.

Faith That Survives and Pleases God (Habakkuk 3:1-19)

1. Faith survives by asking God for mercy in wrath (3:2). Notice verse 2. When Habakkuk feared God's works of judgment, Habakkuk asked God to remember mercy in wrath. Habakkuk knew God was coming against the wicked and that the righteous would survive by faith, so we might wonder why Habakkuk felt the need to say this. Yet, this very knowledge leads Habakkuk to ask for mercy in wrath. God did not say the righteous would survive by their good works or their knowledge that God would spare some. Death and destruction would surround Habakkuk and it would only be by *faith in God's mercy* that any remnant would survive! Just because we know the righteous survive by faith does not mean we are entrusting our survival to God. Only those who humbly ask God for mercy in wrath were guaranteed to survive by faith because only these have faith. Because of this, Habakkuk tells God he knows God controls this invasion and asks for survival by God's mercy.

This is especially important to remember if we see our suffering is caused by our own sins. We might think it is prideful to ask God for mercy, but if we have a broken heart, this is exactly what faith does. This is what faith does in any type of suffering - whether it is the direct result of sin or not. In sickness, faith asks God for mercy. As we near death, faith asks God for mercy. If we do not, we can easily become self-reliant and forget that God has the power over any storm. Ask for mercy in wrath.

2. Faith survives by praising God for past salvation (3:2-15). Praise is such an important means to faith that Habakkuk spends most of his words praising God here. Habakkuk looks back God's past salvation and audibly recounts these times to God as he asks for mercy. This is an oft-forgotten way of building our faith. I often fail in this because I often fail to give God glory when he does answer prayer. Many Western Christians struggle with this. Wisdom, power, science, and armies get glory. Faith is seen as disingenuous in our culture if we talk about "what God is doing," so we can tend to not privately or publicly give God glory for his action. If this is a struggle, join me in confessing stubbornness. This is such a failure for me that I am committing to keeping a notebook on hand to try to record blessings more frequently.

This is key to faith that survives because it ingrains in us the everlasting and faithful nature of YHWH. When we write down and audibly praise God for his salvation, we see very clearly how faithfully God is working for us. Consider, if before we ask God for mercy in wrath we recount God's past activity in our lives, how can we not pray with faith? It is very difficult! Furthermore, if we will do this before suffering hits, our natural response to rising needs, sickness, persecution, and other tribulations will be to bow, praise God, and entreat him to work in our lives. Faith will strengthen when we praise God's past work while we ask for and struggle to see his current work.

3. Faith survives by waiting on God to judge enemies (3:13-16). This was key for Habakkuk because he had struggled to believe God would judge the wicked to save the righteous. When God assured Habakkuk that the Chaldean's arrogance would come back on their heads, he told God he would quietly wait for this. This point may seem less relevant to us because many of our trials have little to do with visible enemies. We should praise God if it seems our enemies are few and we should

ask God to continue giving this. But some Christians around us do struggle with enemies and peace in our life may not continue. Since we are not used to often applying this biblically, it can be easy to conform to the world's responses to adversaries. Complaint, slander, and revenge are all natural, but this is not what faith does. The faithful pray for enemies and sacrifice to make peace.

Most relevant to this passage, when the faithful cannot make peace, they respond by hoping in the day when God will bring their rebellion against them. At first, this may seem prideful. If we have a prideful, self-centered, and vengeful attitude behind this hope, we are sinning! This attitude is far from God's heart. But when we love Jesus and follow in Jesus' footsteps and are praying for his kingdom to continue conquering the hearts of men, we will long for Jesus' enemies to be conquered by Jesus. This is because we want his name, power, and glory to be recognized on earth as it is in heaven. When we have this heart that prays and waits for God to conquer the enemies of Christ's body, our faith will strengthen because we will let God be the God of justice and vengeance he says he is. Not only this, we will gain a clearer sense of the fact that he is with us and on our side.

4. Faith survives by admitting fear to God (3:16). The terrifying Chaldean armies would kill without mercy. People would be killed or starve. God told Habakkuk he would survive by faith, but Habakkuk was about to lose everything he physically knew. He said he trembled because he was scared and that is okay. Fear did not mean Habakkuk had no faith. This is true for us as well. Having fear does not mean we have no faith. If anyone questions your faith because you have fear, gently show them Habakkuk. Furthermore, let us not guilt people simply because they tremble in difficulty.

However, Bible teaches it matters what we do with our fear. When Christians were killed for their faith, God told them in Revelation to not love their lives and to faithfully testify about Jesus. Some would preserve their lives by being quiet about Jesus. Revelation 21:8 says these are cowardly and are cast in the lake of fire. Fear and anxiety are sinful when we hold onto them and let them guide our decisions. When we are consumed with fear, we act sinfully. We become cowards. We are silent about Jesus. We take advantage of others to ensure security. Because of this danger, let's follow Habakkuk's example. Let's talk to God about our fear. Conversing with God about fear is not faithless, it is exactly what faith does. Paul tells us to cast our cares on God in Philippians 4:6-7 so the peace of God can guard our hearts. Telling God our fears makes fear powerless and faith powerful.

5. Faith survives by rejoicing in God in plenty and lack (3:17-19). Verse 17 is difficult. Habakkuk recognizes this invasion could bring the loss of everything. If no fruit grows and no animals are in the stalls, there is not food now or in the future. Relate to this. This does not mean Christmas and vacation are scaled back due to less money. Money does not matter because it cannot buy food when there is no food! If any food exists, the faithless kill for it and kill to keep it.

What would we do? Verse 18 is inspiring. "... *yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*" With nothing in his belly, Habakkuk would find joy in God and still see God as his salvation. This is the reality of loving God for who he is and not for the gifts he gives. This is why we have studied Habakkuk. It is *not* faithless to accept the complete loss of everything physical. It *is* faithless to not be able to accept this. In fact, our idols are revealed in what we cannot accept living without. Faith pleads with God and then rejoices in God even if he takes everything from us. We can only do this by the strength God gives us through his promises. We can rejoice in God with his strength when we imitate Abraham and all the faithful. We look forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). In fear, let us plead for mercy, praise God for his past salvation, wait on God to give justice, admit fear to God, and rejoice in God no matter how little we have. This is trial-surviving, soul-saving faith that pleases God.