

God Promises Salvation

HOW DO BELIEVERS RESPOND TO OUR TROUBLES? Focal Verses • HABAKKUK 3:2-6, 17-19

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will **RECOGNIZE** that there are times when we may not understand how God is moving, **EMPATHIZE** with wondering why God allows certain things to happen, and **DISCOVER** that God's character dictates that unrighteousness will not go forever unpunished, nor charity unrewarded.

In Focus

Cheryl struggled to keep her car on the road as she sped home from the office. After years with the school district, the administrators had decided to eliminate her position. As she drove, Cheryl thought bitterly of the dozens of hours of overtime she had worked and never charged the district for.

Her reports were always well prepared and on time. Her supervisors always praised her for her efforts, and she had been named "Employee of the Year" multiple times.

The worst cut was the coworkers who were remaining. Neither of those women had been with the district more than four years. One rarely reported to work on time and frequently left early. The reports prepared by the other were sloppy and often contained wrong information. Cheryl had to cover for both of these women countless times, yet the district chose to cut her job. It just didn't seem fair!

Cheryl was the sole supporter of her children. How would she make the payments on the house? How soon could she find another job? She began crying and wondering why God would allow her to be in this terrible situation.

How do we respond when God allows difficulties and disasters to happen to His people?



Keep in Mind

"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation"
(Habakkuk 3:18, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV **Habakkuk 3:2** O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

4 And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and

the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

The People, Places, and Times

Habakkuk, the prophet. There is little information about the prophet Habakkuk. There is no mention of his father's name or what city he is from. Habakkuk did live in Judah, and his prophecy occurred before Judah fell to the Babylonians. He may have been a contemporary of the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah. The Habakkuk book is small, containing only three chapters, but it has two verses often quoted by Christians. "...the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4, KJV), and "...the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Habakkuk 2:20).

Background

The Prophet Habakkuk was greatly disturbed by Judah's condition. All around, he saw the people living in wickedness and the violence and oppression that permeated the land. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been invaded and the people were carted away, and Judah is a little better morally. Judah's constant state of debauchery, combined with God's apparent

indifference, worries the prophet. Habakkuk knew that God was just, yet there was injustice around him. He struggled to reconcile what he knew about God with what he saw going on around him. Because he was a man of God, Habakkuk took his problem directly to God in prayer. In the first chapter of the book of Habakkuk, the prophet demands to know how long God will allow this sinful condition to go unchallenged. The second chapter is God's response to Habakkuk.

God responds to Habakkuk's accusation that He has remained silent by pointing out that Habakkuk does not know how to recognize His answers. God's response has not come in the way that the prophet expected. God tells Habakkuk that He will use the Babylonians to punish Judah. God also tells Habakkuk to wait and see just what He would do. Habakkuk was astonished by God's response. Rather than a revival, the lawlessness of Judah would be dealt with through an invasion. Habakkuk wonders how God could conquer Judah with an even more evil nation. God assures Habakkuk that

Babylon, too, would be punished. Our lesson focuses on Habakkuk's remarkable prayer when he finally recognizes that God has everything under control. Habakkuk's faith rests in his remembering what God has done in the past and his conviction that God alone can be trusted with the future. Although his book begins in fear, it ends with a marvelous revelation of faith.

At-A-Glance

1. Response in Crisis (Habakkuk 3:2–3)
2. Recognition of Judgment (vv. 4–6)
3. Praise in Destruction (vv. 17–18)
4. Strength in Salvation (v. 19)

In Depth

1. Response in Crisis (Habakkuk 3:2–3)

Habakkuk appeals to God to remember mercy in His wrath. God has revealed His plan to the prophet, and the prophet is pleading on behalf of the people. He seems to ask that in the ensuing 70 years of captivity, God would secure His people and show them some compassion. In prayer, Habakkuk remembers what God has done in the past. God's past performance convinces Habakkuk that he can continue to trust in God.

2. Recognition of Judgment (Habakkuk 3:4–6)

Habakkuk remembers that God hid His awesome power, which flashed out in sudden acts of miraculous interventions, such as the various plagues He leveled against Egypt. When God was leading the people out of Egyptian captivity, He used pestilence and plagues to destroy the land and flock. The text continues describing what happens when God is present: “the earth shakes,” “nations tremble,”

“ancient mountains crumble,” and “age-old hills collapse.” God's creation is no match for His presence. Further, He is unhindered; the text declares He “marches on forever.”

3. Praise in Destruction (Habakkuk 3:17–18)

The prophet laments that there will come a time when there will be no fruit on the trees, and the livestock will be gone. God's people, who had once been blessed with a land of milk and honey, would soon suffer starvation. Despite this, Habakkuk determines that he will remain joyful. His intent to remain joyful likely points to his confidence in God.

4. Strength in Salvation (Habakkuk 3:19)

Habakkuk is no longer worried about the situation because he knows that his salvation lies in the Lord. He declares that God will make his feet like those of a hind. This female deer is a slender, graceful creature, renowned for its swiftness and surefootedness, which enables it to escape from its enemies. Habakkuk uses this allusion to demonstrate how he and all the remaining faithful will endure the impending confrontation with the Babylonians. Nothing has changed Habakkuk's situation. Judah is still sinful, and the Babylonians are still going to invade. The change is in Habakkuk! This book begins with the prophet's declaration of fear and ends with a declaration of faith in the nature and character of God. With God as the source of his strength and comfort, Habakkuk is now confident that he can rise above the challenge that faces him.

Search the Scriptures

1. What was Habakkuk's initial reaction after hearing God's “speech” (v. 2)?
2. What virtue did Habakkuk appeal to God to remember (v. 2)?
3. How does the prophet declare he will respond in the face of these destructions (v. 18)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Habakkuk declared that he would rejoice in God even though afflictions may surround him. How do we respond to God in the midst of a crisis? What do these responses reveal about our level of faith in God?

2. What does Habakkuk's response reveal about his character?

Liberating Lesson

We often forget that God did not promise the world would be peaceful. He did, however, promise to remain a source of strength and comfort to us. Our inability to understand why God allows things to happen should not hinder us from trusting in His power and plan. God has a divine plan and purpose for each of us—whether we recognize it or not. At the beginning of this book, Habakkuk wants to know why God is allowing such evil to go on in the land. He wants to know why God won't move to stop it. Today, we only need to look at our phones to see the latest account of some horrific event. We may find ourselves asking the same questions: "Why won't God stop these terrible things?" It often appears to us that God is not moving. However, God revealed to Habbakuk that He was indeed moving, but not in the way the prophet expected.

Despite everything happening around us, we must be mindful that God desires us to become more like His Son. Only when we trust in Christ, does He begin to work in us, transforming our hearts and guiding us toward a life that reflects His love and purpose. It does not matter what our problems are because God is always in control. This fact allows us to move from our fear to faithfulness and truly rejoice in the God of our salvation.

Application for Activation

Habbakuk declares, "yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!" (v. 18, NLT). This particular verse should speak loudly and boldly to each of us. The God who saved our souls from destruction is the God who can be trusted in all things. Not only will God give His people the ability to face the challenges of life, but He will also give us the power to rise above them. Make a list of the perplexing or troubling things in your life. How can you use Habakkuk's example as a model for expressing your faith in the Lord despite these situations?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:
