

Relentless Trust

November 27, 2022

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Habakkuk 3:1-19

Session Outline

1. Prayer for Revival (Habakkuk 3:1-2)
2. Remember God's Power (Habakkuk 3:10-13)
3. Trusting God Relentlessly (Habakkuk 3:16-19)

Theological Theme

Habakkuk struggled to deal with the coming destruction of Judah that was revealed to him. Instead of giving into despair, Habakkuk begged God to bring revival to the people. As he recounted God's past faithfulness, Habakkuk committed to complete trust in God regardless of the plan.






Leader Guide

Relentless Trust

Introduction

Think about a time when you were a child and your parents or an authority figure caught you doing something wrong. Did you ever have to wait for punishment to be meted out? If you had an idea of what was headed your way, you may have stressed out until you received the punishment. Maybe you thought through worst case scenarios about how bad it would be, and you struggled with all the imagined details, or maybe you planned to tough your way through it and keep going. No matter what discipline looked like in your life, there were probably some common elements.

You may have been told that the discipline was for your own good. Parents often remind kids that punishment is coming because they are loved and need the discipline to help them grow and mature. Although it is not fun to receive discipline or punishment, there is usually a purpose and that is where we pick up with Habakkuk today.

-  As a kid, when you knew punishment was coming, what was the worst part for you?
-  How can waiting for discipline to be enforced be as bad as the discipline itself? Why?
-  How does trust in the authority figure impact a person's experience of discipline?

Session Summary


The book of Habakkuk records the conversation between the prophet and the Lord. The people of Judah had been acting in terrible rebellion and disregard for God. When Habakkuk saw their choices, it broke his heart and brought him stress because he knew the people would face severe consequences for their actions. Habakkuk took his concerns to the Lord, who explained Habakkuk how the punishment would come, and it was going to be terrible.

As Habakkuk wrestled through all the details, he continued to dialogue with the Lord. He was reminded that God knew everything and had a plan in place. No matter what was going on around him, Habakkuk knew he could trust that God was in control and would handle it whether Habakkuk understood the plan or not.


1. Prayer for Revival (Habakkuk 3:1-2)

After spending two chapters asking of the Lord and listening to His responses, Habakkuk concluded with a final prayer. He had wrestled through the newfound knowledge of the devastation that God revealed to him and knew the only hope was for God to work. So, Habakkuk prayed for revival.

Habakkuk knew all that the Lord had done in the past, and he had faith that it could be done again. In recalling the Lord's previous work, he asked God to revive His work, making it clear that this kind of revival could only happen from God. It was not about Habakkuk's efforts but about God's power and plan. The best thing man can do is cry out to God for revival and beg Him to do what only He can.


 Why might revival be the thing Habakkuk asked for in the face of coming destruction?

Habakkuk recognized the work that matters most is what God is bringing about, and this is the work he longed to see resurge in his day. The fact that Habakkuk prayed for revival to happen in a certain time frame indicated that he wanted it to be seen and noticed. He wanted God to do a work that would be evident and bring glory where glory was due. Our goal should always be to bring glory to God; it should never be about us.

 How does revival bring glory to God? Have you ever experienced this reality? If so, share with the group.

Though Habakkuk wanted revival and all that would mean for the people as well as the attention it would bring to God, there is also a personal element to revival. When you pray for revival and ask God to continue His work, it does focus on God instead of self, but there is also a great need to remember that revival starts in the heart of the individual. As part of the body of Christ, when we cry out to God for revival, we should also offer our own lives up in surrender. Do you want revival enough to evaluate your life to see where you could be harboring sin? Is there anything you are keeping hidden from everyone but God? Are you walking in faith and acting as a light in the dark world? Do people know you are a Christian?

Habakkuk knew the people deserved the coming punishment, so he based his request for revival on the mercy of God. Yes, they had made bad decisions and turned from God, but on the verge of judgment, would God out of His mercy give them revival? How often do those two things go hand in hand? People turn from God and make bad decisions, then they reap the consequences, but in the pain of their punishment, they experience revival that ends up drawing them back to the Lord. Think about your own life. Those moments of difficulty can help us finally remember how much we need God as well as how far we have drifted from Him. Often this leads us to cry out to Him, as we recognize how much we need Him and desire to walk with Him in fellowship. There is purpose in the pain of our lives.

 Application: In what ways do you need to experience personal revival? How have you been drawn closer to the Lord because of difficult circumstances in your life?


2. Remember God's Power (Habakkuk 3:10-13)

Habakkuk was bold to ask the Lord for revival, but he also knew the hardness of the people's hearts. Habakkuk had eyewitness evidence that the people were evil and ungodly, yet his faith was in the Lord not the people.

 When have you asked God for something that felt practically impossible?

Recognizing the difficult days ahead of the people he led, Habakkuk gave another good example of what to do. He began to praise the Lord. He moved his focus from what was about to happen and placed it on God. When things get tough in our lives, it can be helpful to recount who God is and what He has done.

Habakkuk began to describe the power of God and the fact that He is Lord over everything, including the universe. Our anxiety and stress can often be soothed by remembering our place in God's design. We were never meant to be in control, and therefore we do not have what it takes to handle all the things that come our way. But we do have a God who has all the power. Even the universe bows to Him. A shift in perspective can change the way we deal with tough times. As Habakkuk reminds us, God is the One with all the answers and the best plans.

 How does praising God help change your perspective in tough times?

Being specific about who God is also builds our confidence in Him. We are reminded that He has never let us down and He never will. It reinforces God's character and confirms that we can count on Him in all things. The more we trust the Lord and surrender control to Him, the more we see for ourselves just how much He loves us. The more we understand how much He loves us, the easier it is to trust Him with the next thing.

In his praise of God, Habakkuk recalled how God had saved the people previously. Being reminded that the Lord has come through for His people in the past gives confidence that He can do so again. Habakkuk's reflection on who God is and what He had done empowered Habakkuk to continue leading even though he knew that devastation was coming.

- ❓ Application: What situation are you facing in which you may need confidence or trust in God? What have you learned from Habakkuk that can help you with that situation this week?

3. Trusting God Relentlessly (Habakkuk 3:16-19)

Despite his fear and concern, Habakkuk responded to God appropriately. By describing himself as weak and trembling, he pointed out his own limitations. It is wise to recognize how small and needy we are when compared to our great and awesome God. Habakkuk clearly stated how he was physically affected by all that was happening and though his physical body was suffering, his faith was growing.

- ❓ What benefit is there in admitting how needy and powerless we are before our God?

In his fear and trembling, Habakkuk declared he would wait quietly for the day to come as God had predicted. How many of us can say that we not only wait on the Lord, but we also wait quietly on the Lord? That means we are waiting and not whining or complaining about what is coming. Though it can be challenging to wait for something good or exciting to happen, think about how tough it can be to wait for destruction to come.

- ❓ What makes it hard to wait quietly, especially if you know something bad is coming?

He Who Was and Is

Habakkuk 3:16 recounts the psalmist's believing acceptance that God was active in his own moment in time as well as in the past. He would "wait patiently" for God's retribution against the tyrants. He recognized that his was a day for waiting, not for action.

As the book draws to a close, Habakkuk returned to the news he had received from the Lord at first. He again described how bad the suffering would be. But he then summed it all up with the declaration that regardless of how bad things got, he would rejoice in the Lord. He would find joy in the Lord and trust Him for salvation. That is the key to thriving in life whether your circumstances are great or difficult.

When you can rejoice and find joy in the Lord, you will have found the strength you need for whatever comes your way. Habakkuk declared that the Lord was his strength. In comparing how God strengthened him to a deer on high places, he described the sure footedness that happens to believers when their trust is in the Lord. Just as a deer confidently climbs across rocky, uneven, and uncertain terrain, Christians who trust the Lord can confidently walk with sure steps across rocky, uneven, and uncertain ground in our lives.



Application: Where do you need trust God and find your strength in Him now?

Conclusion

Habakkuk loved God's people and wanted the best for them though they were acting ungodly and evil. In his desperation for change, he cried out to God and received God's plan to punish Judah. This plan involved allowing Babylon to invade and wreak havoc on the people as punishment for their rebellious behavior. His dialogue with God led him to ask the Lord to send revival. He knew the only hope for the people was to come back to God and live His way.

Though it was a seemingly impossible request, Habakkuk reminded himself of all God had done and all He can do. This served to strengthen his faith and trust in the Lord. Speaking praises helped with Habakkuk's perspective and fueled his faith that he could wait quietly on the Lord to do what He said He would. We are wise to follow the example of Habakkuk and praise God in all things and any circumstance. When we do that, we will be able to find strength in Him and walk into the future with the sure footedness of a deer on high places.

- ❓ How is God pruning idols from your life so that you can relentlessly trust Him?
- ❓ How can you be intentional about praising God in all circumstances?
- ❓ What have you learned about waiting from Habakkuk? How might waiting for God faithfully give you opportunity to have gospel conversations with others?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for His good plans. Confess any ways you have not waited quietly on Him to do His work. Commit to trusting the Lord in all things, even when they are hard. Spend time praising God for who He is and what He has done in your life.

Additional Resources

- *Exalting Jesus in Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk* by Eric Redmond, Bill Curtis, and Ken Fentress
- *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* by James Bruckner
- *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* by Thomas Renz

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Call to Action

The hardship, disaster, and chaos of our world points toward creation's desire for redemption. Take time this week (preferably within the context of your LifeGroup) to make a list of the way God is pruning away idols (i.e., comfort, convenience, materialism) in your life so that you are forced to relentlessly trust Him. Ask God to increase your trust and faith in His plan for the redemption of all things.

For Next Week

Session Title

- Jesus is Our Peace

Main Passages

- Isaiah 11:1-10

Session Outline

1. The Person of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1-2)
2. The Character of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:3-5)
3. The Peace of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:6-10)

Memorize

*The Lord my Lord is my strength;
he makes my feet like those of a deer
and enables me to walk on mountain heights!*

-Habakkuk 3:19

Historical Context of Habakkuk

Purpose

Like the book of Job, Habakkuk deals with the problem of understanding God's ways: Why does God allow injustice to prevail (1:3)? How can God use the more wicked Babylonians to punish the less wicked Judeans (1:13)? How long will God allow evildoers to dominate the world (1:17)?

God did not give clear answers to the questions Habakkuk raised. Instead he called on the godly to have faith (2:4). When Habakkuk declared he would rejoice in God no matter what (3:17–19), he showed that he had accepted and appropriated this message to his own life.

Author

Habakkuk is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. His name is thought to derive from the Hebrew word *chabaq*, “to embrace,” but its form appears non-Hebraic. More likely the name is related to *habbaququ*, a word found in the related Semitic language of Akkadian. It denotes a species of garden plant or fruit tree.

Setting

Habakkuk predicted the invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans (1:6). The term Chaldean (Hb *kasdim*; Akk *kaldu*) was originally used of an ethnic group that appeared in southern Babylonia in the ninth century BC. In the eighth century BC, Chaldeans began to rise to power in Babylon. Among the early Chaldean kings was Merodach-baladan II (2Kg 20:12; Is 39:1), who twice in the late eighth century took (and lost) Babylon's throne. The Chaldean Nabopolassar (626–605 BC) began to dismantle the Assyrian Empire with help from the Medes and founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire. By the time of Habakkuk, “Chaldean” had come to be a synonym for “Babylonian.”

Special Features

The book of Habakkuk, one of the Minor Prophets, is unique in its style. Rather than speaking to the people on God's behalf, Habakkuk spoke to God on behalf of the people. Habakkuk struggled with how to understand God's actions in history, especially his use of an unrighteous nation as the instrument of his justice. God's answer to Habakkuk's objection was that “the righteous one will live by his faith” (2:4).

Extended Commentary

Habakkuk 3:1-19

3:1 The prayer of Hab 3 is a psalm to be sung to musical instruments and presented to a music director (v. 19). This psalm represents the prophet's response to God's message to him. The Hebrew word *shigionoth* refers to a type of song. Like many musical terms in the Psalms, its precise meaning is unknown; "dirge" and "song of irregular beat" are educated guesses.

3:2 The report about you (or "what you have reported") perhaps alludes to the revelation that God was punishing Judah through Babylon (1:5–11). God's coming deeds made Habakkuk stand in awe (lit "fear") and beg for mercy.

3:3–7 This vision portrays God marching north in power and wrath from the direction of Mount Sinai (Teman was in Edom to the south; Paran was in the wilderness of Sinai; Dt 33:2). God was casting lightning bolts (Hab 3:4), and was accompanied front and back by personified plague and pestilence. Earthquakes associated with God's presence terrorized bedouin peoples such as the Cushan and Midian.

3:8–15 Sea (Hb *yam*, vv. 8, 15) is the name of the pagan god Yam, who was a symbol of chaos subdued by Baal in Canaanite mythology; similarly the watery deep (Hb *tehom*, v. 10) was the goddess Tiamat subdued by Marduk in Babylonian mythology. The purpose of God's march was to subdue his people's enemies, who were symbolized by elements of nature. He will punish the wicked Babylonians and save his people and their anointed Davidic lineage, thus preserving the promise of the coming Messiah.

3:16 The Hebrew of v. 16b is ambiguous. Did the prophet await the day of distress to come against the people invading us (CSB) or "for the day of distress, for a people to come and attack us" (NJPS)? With the first rendering the prophet awaited a double distress: invasion of Judah and judgment on Babylon (vv. 13–15; 2:6–20). With the second rendering the focus is on the predicted Babylonian invasion (1:5–11). In either case, Habakkuk's feeling of dread (my lips quivered ... I trembled) best relates to the invasion of Judah that must come first.

3:17–19 But come what may, the prophet will trust in God, finding his strength and sure footing through faith. Yahweh is God's personal name in the OT and is usually rendered "the Lord." It occurs almost three hundred times following 'adon plus a possessive ("my/our Lord"), rendered "Lord God" (cp. Gen 15:2). But here and seven other times Yahweh comes first, and the pair is rendered the Lord my Lord (Neh 10:30; Ps 8:2, 9; 68:20; 109:21; 140:7; 141:8). The prophet applied to his own life the message of 2:4: "The righteous one will live by his faith."¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

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Eric C. Redmond is an assistant professor of Bible at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois and Pastor of Adult Ministries at Calvary Memorial Church, Oak Park, Illinois. He holds a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary and is the author of *Where Are All the Brothers? Straight Answers to Men's Questions About the Church*

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Ken Fentress has served as the Senior Pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Maryland since 2007. He formerly served as Dean of Intercultural Programs and Associate Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He has served in several pastoral and teaching positions.

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James Bruckner (PhD, Luther Seminary) is professor of Old Testament at North Park Theological Seminary and the author of several books including a commentary on Exodus (2008) and *Healthy Human Life: a biblical witness* (2012).

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Thomas Renz is the rector of Monken Hadley, a parish within the Church of England. Previously, he taught Old Testament and Hebrew at Oak Hill Theological College, a seminary in North London.