

Habakkuk- Finding Faith in Trying Times

Faith in the waiting room

[Hab. 1:5-12]

Ever had to go to the hospital? Often the worst part of any procedure is not the actual surgery but the waiting room. Think how many germs are in the waiting room itself? I am thankful for our pediatrician's office that now has a "well" section and a "sick" area. And don't you know I am checking out the kids as they enter the building. Even worse than the waiting room is waiting in the inner room the fancy robes that they give you. Often the wait is the worst part!

For many today, you are in the waiting room of life asking, crying, standing on your watchtower saying to the Lord: "I will watch and see what God says to me"

Today's message: Faith in the waiting room part 3 of our message series in Habakkuk: Finding faith in trying times. Let me encourage you, if your life is not what you hoped for, maybe difficult and trying, today let the grace of Christ water you by His word in Habakkuk

[Habakkuk 2:1-5] and pray

How can we wait by faith? If we are honest this is a spiritual discipline that we must learn, faithful waiting rather than impatient waiting. Because of our culture, our natural response to "**wait right here**" is haste, worry, and anxiousness. Habakkuk **worried about God's silence**, which he had to endure. That was part of the prophetic task. He has already asked how long (1:2) and now he waits again.

Anyone impatient? Anyone drive to BHM every day? As an aside I-59/20 bridge project (which has its own website) will periodically close to aid with the new interchange. I see how you drive.

If we are destined to wait- and we by nature are impatient hasty waiters, how do you honor and lean into the grace of Christ, when you are called to wait on the Lord?

When you wait, watch and listen for the Lord (2:1)

Habakkuk, the prophet voice of Yahweh proclaims as he waits that he will stand at the guard post and watch to see what the Lord will say. Throughout history men of God are called to wait, stand and watch: **Moses** who stood in the cleft of the rock (Exod 33) Balaam

who went outside on a barren hill (Num 23:3) and Elijah who went to the mountain (1 Kg 19). **God is looking for faithful watchmen. Turn your wait into a watch.**

The word **lookout/rampart generally** refers to a siege work. The confidence of Habakkuk's declaration is that the Chaldeans would use siege works to conquer their foes. It's as if the prophet is awaiting the dreaded enemy- and even in this dark moment Habakkuk determines to watch for the Lord alone. Watching requires a change in perspective- an eternal lookout. **When you wait turn your eyes upon Jesus.**

The watchman who waits for God's word stand in vivid contrast with those who resort to their own imaginations.

When, therefore, we follow our own inclination, various temptations immediately lay hold on us; nor can we even for a moment exercise hope in God; and many things are also suggested to us, which take away and deprive us of all confidence... when Satan finds men wandering in their imaginations and blending many things together, he so entangles them that they cannot by any means come near to God. –Calvin

When you wait, watch for the Lord!

When you wait, remember even if the answer is slow God does not delay (2:1 & 3)

I will watch and see... Habakkuk **worried about God's silence**. Everyone was looking to the prophet who was looking to His Lord. And then we have one of the sweetest verses in all of the Scriptures: the Lord answered me. Over and over again we see in the Word that God answers His people.

But, when the Lord speaks here is the message: **For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it testifies about the end and will not lie. Though it delays, wait for it, since it will certainly come and not be late.**

God reminded the prophet of the certainty of the message but without the promise of meeting Habakkuk's time schedule. **You don't set the Lord's alarm clock. Though it delays- it will not be late???** The two clauses seem to be contrary the one to the other. ***But delay, mentioned first, has a reference to our haste. It is a common proverb, "Even quickness is delay to desire."* –Calvin**

How do you make sense of spiritual delays in your life? 2Pet. 3:8 Dear friends, don't overlook this one fact: **9 The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.**

What if God's response appears slow? Remember God is not perturbed at you, he is patient with you *Many impatient Christian's faith fizzles before finish line. –Fentress.* **Even if the answer is slow—the Lord does not delay**

When you wait, remember the promises and covenants of the Lord (2:2)

The Lord answered me write—on tablets. We are not told what Habakkuk writes but where. The word for “tablets” is the same as that used in Exodus to describe the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Yahweh reminded the prophet of the long-established pattern of inscribing a fresh copy of covenant law as an essential step in covenant renewal. Perhaps with good reason *Jewish tradition declared that the 613 laws of the Pentateuch* had been reduced to one.

What was the Lord doing? He was reminding his people of His promises and His covenant. **When we wait we are quick to forget.**

What is His promise and covenant through Christ (Eph 2:13-22)? *You who were far away have been brought near, He is our peace, you have access to the Father, you are no longer a stranger but a fellow citizen with the saints, built on the foundation of Christ, built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.* When you wait, **remember the promises and covenant of the Lord.** You can't do anything today to make God love you more or less—The full measure of his love and promise is on full display in Jesus.

When you wait, remember the righteous will live by faith (2:4)

Finally, the Lord communicated a timely yet profound message of hope the wicked will fall by their own arrogance but the righteous will live by faith. **When we wait- the greatest temptation you will face is to rely upon yourself (ego inflated).** *Moses struck a rock* instead of speaking and did not enter the promised land (Num 20:1, See Exod 17). *Saul waited 7* days for the appointed time for the prophet Samuel and then took matters into his own hands and sacrificed to God. Because of this he was rejected as king. **Remember, in the waiting room the righteous live by faith.** The message to Habakkuk referred to the righteous person living by faithfulness—an important Old Testament term describing **loyalty as well as truth and trust.**

Heb. 10:37 For yet in a very little while, the Coming One will come and not delay.³⁸ But my righteous one will live by faith; and if he draws back, I have no pleasure in him. But we are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved.

One day Jesus will return and we will meet him face to face. On that day, will be you be found righteous? God is not delayed- He is patient. The righteousness of God is not earned it is declared by faith in Christ. **9 If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

Faith in the waiting room: Remember to watch for the King, Remember his promises, remember the righteous will live by faith.

Notes

The prophet is right in the position he takes with respect to his own role in the resolution of this perplexing issue. He will not attempt to reconcile in his own mind the apparent contradiction between the election of Israel by God as the object of his special love and the devastation of Israel at the hands of the rapacious Chaldeans as ordered by the Lord himself. Habakkuk knows that, in accordance with the nature of the prophetic office in Israel, revelation from God alone can answer his perplexity (NICOT, 165).

Hab. 2:1 I will stand at my guard post and station myself on the lookout tower. I will watch to see what he will say to me and what I should reply about my complaint.

- The second chapter opens with a prophetic announcement (v. 1) followed by a divine word (vv. 2–4) to which is attached a separate description of the enemy, the nature of which scholars continue to debate.
- Habakkuk **worried about God's silence**, which he had to endure. That was part of the prophetic task. Not even a prophet could force God to answer what appeared to be a burning, immediate issue, even an issue defending God's (and the prophet's) honor (see Jer 28:11–12; 42:7; Job)
- Both statements reflect a sense of purpose. The resolve of the prophet may be taken literally.¹⁵⁷ He had a position, much like the military watchman who had a post above the city looking out for the approach of enemy armies (2 Kgs 9:17; cp. Nah 2:2; Jer 51:12)
 - the prophet went there to withdraw from normal society and concentrate specifically on God and what God would say when God decided to speak.
- The verse stresses the importance of the work of **humans alongside the work** of God. In the first half of the verse Habakkuk determined to station himself so as to receive the revelation of God. In the second half of the verse the prophet expected that God would indeed answer Habakkuk's complaint.

I will stand

Similar to Moses who stood in the cleft of the rock (Exod 33) Balaam who went outside (Num 23:3) and Elijah who went to the mountain (1 Kg 19).

Guard Post - מִשְׁמָרְתִּי

The Hebrew term has a very specialized meaning in relation to priestly service in the Temple, which suggests that Habakkuk serves in some cultic function as a prophet or oracle diviner based in the Temple.

Lookout Tower/Rampart - מִצֹּר

Generally refers to a siege work.

Watchman

The watchman who waits for God's word stands in vivid contrast with those who resort to their own imaginations (NICOT, 166).

When, therefore, we follow our own inclination, various temptations immediately lay hold on us; nor can we even for a moment exercise hope in God: and many things are also suggested to us, which take away and deprive us of all confidence: we become also involved in variety of thoughts, for when Satan finds men wandering in their imaginations and blending many things together, he so entangles them that they cannot by any means come nigh to God. –Calvin

[Hab. 2:2 The LORD answered me: Write down this vision; clearly inscribe it on tablets so one may easily read it.](#)

The Lord answered- God's answer is always worth the wait.

Surprisingly, the Lord's response to the prophet's challenge comes in the form of a vision of hope that the prophet must write for future generations (NICOT, 167).

Write down

The writing material is not identified in the verse though the word for "tablets" is the same as that used in Exodus to describe the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Reflecting the long-established pattern of inscribing a fresh copy of covenant law as an essential step in covenant renewal, Habakkuk's instructions include inscribing his vision on the tablets (NICOT, 168).

Perhaps with good reason Jewish tradition declared that the 613 laws of the Pentateuch had been reduced to one by Habakkuk (NICOT, 169).

Rudolph notes that we do not know if Israel used such tablets for public "bulletin board" announcements and that God had to insist on making the writing clear and plain

So one may easily read

Apparently the phrase refers to the passing of the recorded vision to a runner or a herald who will read or proclaim the message publically, much as the herald of good tidings in Isa 40:9-11 (Berit Olam).

The traditional interpretation seems best: make the message plain enough so the person running (Hb. participle) may read the message.

- The GNB supports this interpretation with the reading “so that it can be read at a glance.” “In this respect it would be like a large modern advertisement beside a main road.”

Habakkuk must inscribe his vision plainly so that he who proclaims it may run (NICOT, 170).

3 For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it testifies about the end and will not lie. Though it delays, wait for it, since it will certainly come and not be late.

- Verses 2 and 3 prepared the prophet for the handling of the message.
 - Verse 3 is the reason or motivation for v. 2. It guarantees certainty of the coming of the revelation and provides evidence of fulfillment for those who will experience that fulfillment. The content of the message is found in v. 4.
- Impatience is the normal human response to God’s promise to answer his people.
 - God warned the prophet to wait on the prophecy. The answer of God would surely come, but the prophet should write down the message because from the prophet’s point of view the prophecy might seem slow.
 - God reminded the prophet of the certainty of the message but without the promise of meeting Habakkuk’s time schedule.

Appointed Time

The term frequently refers to festivals (Hos 9:5), it also refers generally to an appointed time when some important event will take place, such as the time of YHWH’s return when Sarah bears a son, Jonathan’s meeting with David, the place where the men of Ai would meet Israel in battle, or the time when the Shunamite woman would bear a son (Berit Olam, 471).

End and will not lie

At the end, he says, it will speak. In a word, the Prophet intimates, that honour is to be given to God's word, that we ought to be fully persuaded that God speaks what is true, and be so satisfied with his promises as though what is promised were really possessed by us. –Calvin

Delay/Wait

But we must notice the contrariety, If it will delay, it will come, it will not delay. The two clauses seem to be contrary the one to the other. But delay, mentioned first, has a reference to our haste. It is a common proverb, "Even quickness is delay to desire." –Calvin

But if we have regard to the counsel of God, there is never any delay; for he knows all the points of time, and in slowness itself he always hastens, however this may be not comprehended by the flesh. We now, then, apprehend what the Prophet means. –Calvin

Many impatient Christian's faith fizzles before finish line. –Fentress

4 Look, his ego is inflated; he is without integrity. But the righteous one will live by his faith.

- Finally, God revealed the message itself. "It is short but comprehensive." In the day of turmoil and destruction, the righteous person shall live by his faithfulness to God.
- The first half of the verse apparently refers to the wicked described in 1:7, 11, 13 (without using the term) while the second statement explicitly describes the righteous person
- To look for salvation in a world dominated by persecution requires faithfulness. World history may not indicate it, but God is leading his world to accomplish his purposes.
- The message to Habakkuk referred to the righteous person living by faithfulness—an important Old Testament term describing loyalty as well as truth and trust.
 - Jepsen demonstrated that "faithfulness" (*'ěmûnâ*) is a way of acting that flows from inner stability. It indicated one's "own inner attitude and the conduct it produces."
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The arrogant will die by their arrogance, but the righteous will live by faith. –Fentress

Proud

"The one who swells up." It more likely indicates one who is arrogant.

Faith- בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ

Frequently translates as "faith" under the influence of the NT, but it refers more generally to "constancy," "stability," or "reliability" (Berit Olam, 472).

NT Connections

36 For you need endurance, so that after you have done God's will, you may receive what was promised.

Heb. 10:37 For yet in a very little while, the Coming One will come and not delay.

38 But my righteous one will live by faith; and if he draws back, I have no pleasure in him.**Heb. 10:39** But we are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: **The righteous will live by faith.**

Illustrations

God is not looking from the ramparts of heaven observing how history unfolds.

Application

Not a weak faith but a perplexed faith torments Habakkuk in 1:12 (NICOT).

“Frankly this cure is worse than the disease” (Begg).