



*Becoming Fully Devoted Followers  
by Studying the Followers Before Us*

**WEEK 31**

**HABAKKUK**

**JULY 30 - AUGUST 3, 2007**

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	<i>ABBREVIATED STUDY</i>
<b>Monday</b>	Lamentations 1-5, Psalm 1	Habakkuk 1:1-4, Psalm 1
<b>Tuesday</b>	Habakkuk 1-3, Psalm 2	Habakkuk 1:5-17, Psalm 2
<b>Wednesday</b>	Daniel 1-4, Psalm 3	Habakkuk 2:1-17, Psalm 3
<b>Thursday</b>	Daniel 5-6, Psalm 4	Habakkuk 2:18-20, Psalm 4
<b>Friday</b>	Daniel 7-10, Psalm 5	Habakkuk 3:1-19, Psalm 5



**READ**

Habakkuk 1:1-4  
Psalm 1

**REFLECT**

The week I began this study of Habakkuk was the same week of the shootings on the campus of Virginia Tech. A newspaper article following the tragedy told the story of a pastor in Blacksburg who also serves as a police chaplain. His job was to tell 20 families that their children were gone – shot by a deranged gunman. As he was sharing his story, Pastor McDearis struggled to control his emotions – to understand how God could let something so vile happen to so many people. He said, “I was standing ... waiting for the next broken family to come in, and a woman pulled my badge...and said, ‘you know it seems like God could have done better.’ I knew just what that woman was feeling.”

A Presbyterian pastor, Susan Verbrugge, in Blacksburg, told her congregation she was having a hard time dealing with the shootings. During a recent walk she stopped on a hill overlooking a normally stunning city and screamed into the wind, “God, this is your world, do something about it!”

The book of Habakkuk begins with a similar screaming question addressed directly to Yahweh. “How long (or why) does evil go unpunished?” It begins with the age-old question “Why?” but ends with a prayer, “In wrath remember mercy,” and a confession of faith, “Though the fig tree does not bud ... yet will I rejoice in the Lord.”

James Brucker writes in The NIV Application Commentary, “How should we think about the successes of terror in our world? How might we live with integrity in the midst of its threats? Habakkuk lived through situations in which God provided a word to sustain and strengthen His people.”

The book is one of the “minor” prophets. Minor, not in substance, but in length. This Old Testament book totals only 56 verses. Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah were originally part of one scroll called, “The Book of the Twelve” which included Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai,

Zechariah and Malachi. The twelve Minor Prophets cover approximately 300 years (750 - 450 BC). Jeremiah was a contemporary of these prophets. Together they call God’s people to consider what it means to be faithful when violent enemies press upon them.

As we read through Habakkuk the prophet asks the same question, over and over again, “Why does a righteous God allow evil?” Isn’t that our question, too, as we daily read the headlines or listen to the news on TV, even if we only get our news from The Jon Stewart Show?

Do you remember Harold Kushner’s, best selling book *Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?* He tried to make sense of the evil that seems to pervade, or better, invade everything good, moral and life-giving. Habakkuk tries to deal with a similar crisis in his life and ministry, but unlike the other prophets who take God’s message to the people, he takes the complaint of the people to God.

Some believe Habakkuk was a Levite and a member of the temple choir. We can assume he was a prophet of the southern kingdom of Judah and lived in Jerusalem. The book points to a time after the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC). One professor dates the book after the beginning of Babylon’s westward move for world conquest, putting the date about 607 BC.

Habakkuk is a devoted man of God perplexed by what is happening around him. He doesn’t understand why God would use the wicked Chaldeans to punish his people, which in spite of Israel’s sinfulness, is still more righteous than the Chaldeans. Habakkuk believes God should have corrected the situation, particularly in response to believing prayer.

**RESPOND**

Be honest. Aren’t there times in your life when you become confused and anxious because God seems to have abandoned this world, allowing us to fend for ourselves? For me, at times, I’m afraid to open the morning newspaper fearful that the headlines will shout some new obscenity or world class horror.

**PRAY**

Gracious, loving God, in Your presence is our peace. Give us the faith to see beyond the headlines, beyond our personal doubting hurts, to confess because of Jesus Christ You are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all creation. Amen

- D.M.

**READ**

Habakkuk 1:5-17  
Psalm 2

**REFLECT**

In the first four verses, Habakkuk is not afraid to wrestle with issues that test his faith by bringing to God's attention all the injustice and ungodliness that is going unchecked. He questions God's character by an honest complaint and waits for an answer. God's answer stuns the prophet when he speaks of allowing the Babylonians to "march all over the land to possess homes and cities that are not theirs."

We must never forget that throughout secular history, as well as biblical history, God is sovereign and uses nations and individuals to accomplish His will and way. Caesar Augustus put out a decree that all the world should be taxed, unbeknownst to him that Jesus, the Messiah, needed be born in Bethlehem, the city of David as the Scriptures foretold.

God's timing in world affairs is never frustrated.

Here in these opening verses we see God revealing the might of the enemy and the devastation that will be caused by the enemy's arrogance and pride. In Preaching from the Minor Prophets, Elizabeth Achtemeier writes, "Time is not going around in circles. It's stretching out like a river. It had its beginning in the purpose of God, when God created the universe. It flows toward the final fulfillment of God's good purpose. Time is God's creation. In short, time is linear. It had a beginning in God's act; it will have its end in the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. God is working toward a goal, restoring his creation to the goodness that God intended for it in the beginning."

God uses the armies of the Babylonians to His own purposes. God is in control of history, then and now, to work towards a just conclusion. God can and does use any group of people as instruments of His divine will. The traumas and agonies of history, by faith, can be redeemed for our good.

Romans 8:28 says, "We know that in everything God works for good." I believe this passage does not say that everything is good, but that in everything God works for good. My faith is tested when I experience some hurt or disappointment, especially when I don't get my way or the answer to my prayers, but God is sovereign.

In the concluding verses of this first chapter (12-17), Habakkuk continues to speak in the language of the psalms of lament, asking God the same questions that began the book by first reminding God through a confession of faith that God is everlasting, the Holy One who cannot tolerate wrong and then states, "Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" The book of Psalms also has psalms of lament where the psalmist affirms God's goodness, but laments the mess the world is in (see Psalm 74).

**RESPOND**

What is happening in your life that seems to be marching towards oblivion? Some of us seem to have more problems, more unanswered prayers, and more pressures than we know what to do with. If that is where you are as you read through Habakkuk read on, read on. The bumper sticker says it all, "Be patient – God is not finished." Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Are you between a rock and a hard place? Rather than everything coming up roses, you find yourself feeling like a reject. Hold on. The final chapter, the last page, the final scene we must remember that God is sovereign and still in control.

**PRAY**

God, Creator & Sustainer of everything, my life as well as the twirling planets, the rising and setting sun, I believe you are the author of creation and the One whose will is being carried out behind the headlines and traumas of our time. I believe; help my unbelief. Amen.

- D.M.

**READ**

Habakkuk 2:1-17

Psalm 3

**REFLECT**

The opening verses of this second chapter continues Habakkuk's crisis in his life and ministry. Ungodliness is all around him. He voices his honest complaint to God and waits for God's answer. God's most amazing response is in verses 2 and 3. The Living Bible paraphrases it this way, "Write my answer plainly on tablets, so that a runner can carry the correct message to others. This vision is for a future time. If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed." I love this passage. It assures me that God's timing is not my timing, but God's timing is never delayed. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

The next verses are also monumental in a believer's life. Habakkuk groans on and on about the proud, the boastful, but he counters by stating, "The righteous will live by their faithfulness in God." There is hope for those who will hold firm their trust in God even as calamity comes.

Here is the Apostle Paul's key verse for our salvation. Romans 5 begins, "therefore since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Read on and be confident that God's timing and our salvation is secure in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Friend. Amen.

Following is the five-fold woes: verses 6, 9, 12, 15, and 19. All of this to say the great passing powers spoken of by Habakkuk will come to an end. The nations weary themselves in vain to fill the earth with their fame, power and debauchery.

**RESPOND**

Rather than finding yourself with the "woers" why not allow God to set your timetable? Why worry about that prayer request that has yet to be answered? Remember "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

**PRAY**

Eternal God, thank You that Your sovereign will is never delayed, but is always right on time. Your time, not mine. Not the world's time, but Your time. Give me grace to live by faith in the promises of Your Word. Amen.

- D.M.

**READ**

Habakkuk 2:18–20

Psalm 4

**REFLECT**

Let me invite you to read verse 20 before you look at the opening verses of this section. How many times have we heard this as a call to worship gathering for worship, “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him”?

God assures Habakkuk, you and me that the pride of the Chaldeans or those who grab the headlines of tomorrows’ paper will come to a woeful end. All who humbly trust God will gain the future. In the midst of turmoil echoed in Habakkuk, after the turbulence of fighting against life’s injustice, after the bitterness of the condemnation of those who oppress us, the prophet speaks with a completely new voice, with assurance and serenity, “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.”

Faith means taking the bare Word of God and acting upon it because it is the Word of God. It means believing what God says simply and solely because God has said it. Hebrews 11 recounts name after name of those who believed God simply because God had spoken. They had no other reason for believing it. Sing with me, “Jesus shall reign where’er the sun doth its successive journeys run. His kingdom stretch from shore to shore till moons shall wax and wane no more.”

The heathen may rage and bow down to their homemade idols. Let the enemies of God be rampant. Yet a day is certainly coming when “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God.”

**RESPOND**

In *From Fear To Faith*, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, “In light of all this, what, then is our final conclusion? ‘What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it: the molten image, and the teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? God forbid that we should trust, or commit ourselves to, any power other than God Himself, to any idols man may set up. Put your trust in nothing of man, but of God alone.’”

**PRAY**

To You and to You alone, O God, do we put our trust. Help us today to remove the idols that dim our view of Your gracious provision. Give us such hope in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ that nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Savior and Friend. Amen.

- D.M.

**READ**

Habakkuk 3:1-19

Psalms 5

**REFLECT**

After all the “woes,” all the cries of injustice, all the sorrow with which Habakkuk began his writing, he ends with a prayer. Some believe that this final chapter is “according to Shigionoth and not Habakkuk.” We will leave this up to the scholars who have undoubtedly written their Ph.D. thesis on who Shigionoth was and why he and not Habakkuk wrote this final chapter.

The whole chapter is a record of the prophet’s prayer of petition, praise, thanksgiving and adoration, including praying the history of God’s past action. Some of the great prayers in the Bible recount the wonder and majesty of what God has done in the past. The chapter begins with the fear of the Lord and these words, “in wrath remember mercy.” I believe this is the entire expression from this prophet. The entire book is encapsulated in those four words.

My Study Bible divides this last chapter in three sections: A. “In wrath remember mercy,” B. “God dooms the wicked and saves the repentant,” and C. “Habakkuk’s unwavering faith”. When Habakkuk stops lamenting the wicked and contemplates the holiness and justice of God, he speaks of God’s power and might. He has to stop comparing the wickedness of the Chaldeans while forgetting the sin of his own nation to see only the wonderful vision of the Lord in His holy temple. When all of life is seen through God’s perspective, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” the holiness of God and the sin of humanity are the only things that matter. If we ask why God allows evil and wickedness to continue, we have not learned the lesson from Habakkuk.

Realizing the godlessness that is so much a part of our lives, do we have a right to complain? Nothing else matters except the holiness of God and sin. There is nothing to do but to humble ourselves in the sight of God. Does the fact that there are others worse than I am mean that I am all right? All of us must confess to God: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned....” (Psalm 51).

Habakkuk concludes by saying things may get worse than when he was led to complain as he did in chapter one; “YET WILL I REJOICE IN THE LORD, I WILL JOY IN THE GOD OF MY SALVATION.”

**RESPOND**

This may be the toughest truth, if we are honest. We love our comfort, our homes, our abundant food shelves. Will our faith in a loving, giving, gracious God continue if all of our middle class props are taken from us? I struggle with my own complacency, my money in the bank, my never-having-to-do-without lifestyle. If it were taken away, could I, would I still praise God and seek to be a faithful follower?

**PRAY**

God, the Lord, is my strength I will rejoice in the Lord and pray that I would be a faithful disciple, a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, my Savior, My Friend, my Redeemer, my Rock, my help in ages past, my hope for years to come. Amen.

- Don Maddox