

READING

Habakkuk 1:1-4

TALK 1

**Have you ever prayed like this?****“How long, O LORD...”** (Habakkuk 1:2 NIV)**“Why... Why....”** (Habakkuk 1:3 NIV)

Two questions asked by Habakkuk to God. Have you ever prayed to God along such lines?

“How long, God do I have to .... How long will you allow...?”

“Why are you not listening to me?” Have you ever said that to God? Habakkuk is talking about injustice and wrongs that he is living with i.e. these are being done by God’s own people. However the circumstances when you may have said that, ‘How long, Why’ may be different, but no less heartfelt.

“So why do you let this go on God? You are a just God, a holy God, a loving God.” Habakkuk does not accuse God of being unloving, but we might use that. “If you loved me, then you would...” Why do the wicked seem to prosper – that was the domain of the righteous people I thought – those who follow you!

Of course you may be of the school of thought that says that one should not ask God such pertinent questions, such direct questions. Asking God such questions shows a lack of faith. But Habakkuk is not alone in this questioning of God – others in the Bible have said the same thing. Jeremiah says

**“You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?”** (Jeremiah 12:1 NIV)

Psalm 73 is a list of what the wicked are getting away with

**“For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, “How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?” This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence.”** (Psalms 73:3-13 NIV)

But it is not wrong to question God – at least it shows that you believe that there is someone there to question. At Libby’s dedication Becky, our eldest daughter stood up and told people about the journey that she and Jason were on from when they first heard the news that they could not have children. Becky said that at times she did question God and say to him, “It’s not fair, especially when I see or hear of children being abused by their parents and you, God have denied us having children, when we have followed you for so long? Why, why”



So what are we to do when we pray and don't get the answer we expect? What does Habakkuk do?  
Chapter 2:1

**“I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.”**  
(Habakkuk 2:1 NIV)

Habakkuk goes off to await a further answer to his questions. This could have been Habakkuk's favourite spot, a particular place where he goes to be with God. There he was standing on the ramparts, looking out, wondering, waiting, asking God for a further revelation.

It appears as if he did not expect an immediate answer, but he did expect an answer. We live in an instant age where we expect instant answers. If we do not know the answer to a question we look it up on the internet. But at times we have to wait and wait for God to give us the answer. It seems as if Habakkuk had a position to fill on his watch. Some say due to evidence from chapter 3 that Habakkuk was possibly a priest and so the rampart could have been part of the Temple in Jerusalem. Where ever it was, it was a place where he could be with God – just him and God.

Do you have a place like that? Maybe we all need to have a place like that where we can listen to God even when the answers may not be to our liking!

What did Habakkuk hear next?

RESULT	Habakkuk 2:2-20
PRAYERS	Intercessory prayers: For the things we don't understand
READING	Habakkuk 3:1-19

TALK 3

### **The Prayer of Faith at God's Justice**

Remember to whom Habakkuk is talking. Habakkuk is talking to the holy, the pure God, chapter 1:13

**“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?”** (Habakkuk 1:13 NIV)

And a God who is everlasting and stable, chapter 1:12

**“O LORD, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, we will not die. O LORD, you have appointed them to execute judgment; O Rock, you have ordained them to punish.”** (Habakkuk 1:12 NIV)

This is all part of Habakkuk's dilemma. How can God tolerate all this evil in his own people and being done to his own people? Firstly though he stands in awe of God, chapter 3:2

**“LORD, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, O LORD. Renew them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy.”**  
(Habakkuk 3:2 NIV)

As Habakkuk remembers the past and what God has done, he stands in awe of him. Do we do that enough? My dad was a rep for a company for most of his working life and when we went out on car journeys I use to be in awe of his knowledge. Every time we went past a factory on the road I would pipe up from the back seat, “What does that firm make, dad?”

And he would come back with what the firm made. This sequence of events would never fail.

“What does that firm make, dad?”

“They make washers”

I thought my dad knew all the factories in England and what each one made. This knowledge meant I was in awe of my dad. Of course I have subsequently thought out that maybe my dad would say anything just to shut up this little person in the back of the car.

God never does that. His deeds are real and we can look back and stand in awe of him, as individuals and as a church. God is amazing, but do we take time to just stand in awe of God? Do we as Habakkuk does take time to mention them. And the ones he talks about are big ones. Earthquakes, rivers, oceans, all are under God’s control. The sun and moon standing still for Joshua, he mentions which as a physicist I am absolutely confounded about. For when the earth stopped turning everything on the earth should have flown off very, very fast – like a car stopping very, very suddenly – sadly people and objects fly forward very rapidly, causing damage. But if you were left, then when it began at the same speed, the bits that were left should have gone the other way – like the comic show of someone being dropped off the back of motorbike which takes off at high speed. That is what the physics demands – but God is greater than that and so neither of those things happened.

God has been great in the past that it just made Habakkuk tremble to think about it, verse 16

**“I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us.”** (Habakkuk 3:16 NIV)

Habakkuk knows that God is in charge but has to wait for God to act. In fact God has told him that whatever is to occur to help God people out will not be in his lifetime. Think about that for a moment. God’s help would come, but not for his eyes.

That is a long timescale – too long for us in our culture – we live in an instant age. When I pray it must happen now. But for Habakkuk, he says

**“Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.”** (Habakkuk 3:17-18 NIV)

Could you pray that prayer of praise when things are going wrong – when things are difficult? This is not Habakkuk trying to bolster himself up – it is not Habakkuk being glib and thinking if I praise God even in the depths of a problem, then the problem will go away and all will be well as the old hymn writer says. But we know and he knew that at times life is not like that, but that does not mean that we are not to praise and rejoice in God.

**“yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.”**  
(Habakkuk 3:18 NIV)

That is a real prayer of faith – could you go there when it appears that God’s justice has gone awry, when things are not going the way you thought they should?

Hopefully we can because of course we have a supreme example in Jesus who went to the cross because he saw the bigger picture. At times we cannot see the big picture, but God can, so we can always praise him and say along with Habakkuk

**“The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.”** (Habakkuk 3:19 NIV)

PRAYER