



Habakkuk

Get Started

If you could be a musical instrument, what would you be?

I took an online quiz and discovered I'd be a trumpet.

I'm sure it was all very scientific.

The reason I'm asking is that by the end of Habakkuk we will be talking about "stringed instruments," and I think what we see will both surprise and encourage you.

Get Studying

The place to start is chapter two, verse four, where Habakkuk records the words, *"The just shall live by his faith."*

I wonder if he knew how deep those words were; how much would be written to explain them.

These seven words are so important that it takes **three** New Testament books to explain them. The words are quoted in Romans 1:17, in Galatians 3:11, and in Hebrews 10:38.

1. Romans describes what it means to be "just." You are justified by God when you have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. To be justified means that God declares you righteous because of what Jesus has done for you.
2. Galatians describes how you are to "live." Having been justified, you can *live* by the empowering of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.
3. In Hebrews you learn about your "faith." The word is really "steadfastness," or "faithfulness." A justified person, living by the empowering of the indwelling Spirit of God, is *faithful* to walk in a manner pleasing to God. He or she perseveres, looking beyond earthly circumstances to the certainty of eternity.

The context in which Habakkuk received these words is a conversation he was having with God. As a sensitive and sincere prophet, he was wondering how long God would allow His people to sin, and what He was going to do to discipline them.

The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen prey to the Assyrian Empire. God had spared the southern kingdom of Judah from Assyria, but the Jews were a sinful, rebellious people.

Hab 1:1 The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.

Hab 1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save.

Hab 1:3 Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises.

Hab 1:4 Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

Do you ever wonder about our own nation - "how long" we can continue before God acts to discipline us?

God's discipline of Judah was not at all what Habakkuk was expecting.

Hab 1:5 "Look among the nations and watch - Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you.

Hab 1:6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs.

Habakkuk was stunned. He couldn't believe it.

Hab 1:12 Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment; O Rock, You have marked them for correction.

Hab 1:13 You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?

Habakkuk didn't understand why God would use a nonbelieving, pagan nation as His instrument of discipline.

It's not the reason why, but it is interesting to note that by being held captive in idolatrous Babylon, the Jews grew sick of the idolatry that had led to their discipline. It was a kind of immersion discipline. They would be neck-deep in idols and see their folly.

Habakkuk retreated to wait for The Lord to answer him.

Hab 2:1 I will stand my watch And set myself on the rampart, And watch to see what He will say to me, And what I will answer when I am corrected.

Ancient cities were walled, with watchmen posted upon the walls in high towers to spot the approach of an enemy. Once the advancing enemy army was spotted, the watchmen would send information to messengers who would run throughout the city and the surrounding countryside sounding a warning for the citizens. Warfare consisted of long periods of siege as the enemy army encamped around the city, cutting off all supplies to the inhabitants within.

Jerusalem would be besieged. Her watchmen would spot the advancing Babylonian army; messengers would run throughout the city and the surrounding countryside sounding a warning for the citizens.

We don't know whether or not Habakkuk literally went up into a watchtower. He was talking about a spiritual watch. He was using the imagery of the watchman in the tower to teach at least two spiritual lessons:

1. As Israel's watchmen took their positions and saw the *coming* of Babylon, Habakkuk took his position as a spiritual watchman and saw the *condemnation* of Babylon. He said in verse eight, "Because you have plundered many nations, All the remnant of the people shall plunder you..."
2. As Israel's watchmen took their positions and saw the coming of Babylon, Habakkuk took his position as a spiritual watchman and saw the *coming of Jesus*. He said in verse fourteen, "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

Hab 2:2 Then the LORD answered me and said: "Write the vision
And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it.

Hab 2:3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry.

The “vision” that Habakkuk was to “make plain” and entrust to messengers to publish throughout the city is what follows – the condemnation of Babylon as a kingdom, and the coming of the Messiah with His kingdom.

Christians commonly use this phrase in other ways, e.g., when giving the mission statement of the church or Christian organization. It's an OK application in that we should be plain and simple in our explanations and descriptions. Just remember the original context is one of impending judgment.

Hab 2:4 "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith.

This verse is, in one sense, the whole message of God's dealings with mankind.

"Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him." Mankind is proud in its rebellion against God. Men are born with sin imputed to them, and with sin indwelling them. They commit individual acts of sin. There is none righteous - no, not even one. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. This is where the things we listed come from - from the lost, sinful heart of men.

"**But** the just shall live by his faith." You can be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. You can believe God and trust Christ for your salvation and be declared righteous by God, Who is both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

Then, made alive in Jesus, you can walk by faith in His promises and prophecies.

Habakkuk prayed for revival:

Hab 3:1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth.

Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.

"O Lord, **revive**..." The word can mean to *make alive* or to *restore to life*.

1. Revival is making *alive* those who are dead. Those who are dead are **nonbelievers** – described in the Bible as “dead in their trespasses and sins.” They are spiritually dead and need to be made alive by God. We would call this aspect of revival, *evangelism*.
2. Revival is also restoring the life of those who are alive. These are **believers** whose walk with the Lord lacks vitality. They have the Holy Spirit; *but the Holy Spirit does not have them!* Leonard Ravenhill is quoted as saying, “Evangelism affects the other fellow; **revival affects me.**”

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, you need revival: You need to be made alive by God.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you might need revival: You might need to be restored to a walk that has vitality.

Each of us should make Habakkuk’s prayer *our* prayer. When you make Habakkuk’s prayer your prayer, you notice three aspects of revival:

1. In verses one and two Habakkuk *receives* God's Word, saying, "O Lord, I have heard Your speech..."
2. In verses three through sixteen Habakkuk *reviews* God's works on behalf of His people.
3. In the closing verses Habakkuk *rejoices* in the ways of God, singing, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Habakkuk had called upon God to discipline Israel. God ways of doing it were not what Habakkuk had in mind. But now, as the book closes, on the verge of captivity, Habakkuk *rejoices* in God's ways!

Hab 3:17 Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls;

You could not paint a worse word picture than Habakkuk does in this phrase. Nothing of his normal, daily life would remain.

Hab 3:18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

God **saves** – and that in itself ought to be enough to cause us to rejoice, no matter our outward circumstances. Regarding the outward circumstances, Habakkuk said,

Hab 3:19 The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills. To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

The KJV is much more beautiful:

Hab 3:19 "...He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places..."

You are to have “hind's feet on your high places.” The “hind” is a mountain deer. It's a picture of the sure-footedness of the deer even when it is forced by enemies to escape to higher, rockier ground.

Danger is turned into devotion as you are forced upward. As enemies pursue you, you pursue eternity.

The high places that trouble directs you to are **yours**; they are personalized, they are individualized. Habakkuk calls them "**my** high places." They are the ways God causes you to walk *in* and *through* to conform you more and more into the image of His Son, your Lord, Jesus Christ.

Get Spiritual

The book ends with one last musical notation:

Hab 3:19 To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

This third Chapter was meant to be sung. The worship leader is instructed as to its arrangement, its pauses, and its instrumentation.

Some commentators say Habakkuk was part of the Levitical chorus in the Temple - a worship leader.

What are the "stringed instruments?" The Hebrew word is *neginoth*. According to Strong's Concordance, one of its meanings is "a poem set to music."

Hearing the word “poem,” you can’t help but be reminded of the passage in the New Testament book of Ephesians that calls believers God’s “workmanship” – where “workmanship” is the Greek word for *poem*.

From heaven’s perspective, Habakkuk himself was the Lord’s *neginoth* – God’s poem set to music.

You are just as much God's *neginoth* – His poem set to music! Jesus is arranging the movements of your life in order to make your life a praise song to your Father in Heaven.