
Habakkuk

STUDY GUIDE



Habakkuk

STUDY GUIDE



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you grow in your relationship with God through his Word. It is a companion to our sermon series and is meant to be studied personally and discussed in groups. We believe that where these three elements (preaching, personal study, and community) combine, personal discipleship will flourish.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We have arranged the material with three basic elements in mind: personal study, preaching, and community. First, study each passage on your own. Begin by familiarizing yourself with the introductory material, then, leading up to each Sunday, study the passage for yourself. On Sunday, take notes on the sermon. And throughout the following week, find time to discuss the questions with a few others. Lastly, we have included a glossary of biblical and theological terms in the back. If a word is in **bold**, you will find a short definition in the glossary. Happy studying!

ABOUT HABAKKUK

"How shall we live when life turns completely upside down?" This question is the main concern for the prophet Habakkuk. As he looks around, he sees injustice and oppression on every corner and scarce hope for the future. Where is God in the midst of these dark times? Can he use this mess while remaining good and **holy**? Will he come through in the end? Habakkuk shows us how wrestling with these questions by faith can actually lead to greater depths of maturity and joy.

QUICK FACTS

- Author: The Prophet Habakkuk
- Date: 609-605 BC
- Main Theme: The righteous shall live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4)
- Outline:
 - The Oracle (1:1-2:20)
 - First Complaint & Response (1:2-11)
 - Second Complaint & Response (1:12-2:20)
 - The Prayer (3:1-19)
 - A Plea for God to Come (3:1-15)
 - Response to God's Presence (3:16-19)

HISTORY

Almost nothing is known about Habakkuk himself except that he is a prophet (Hab. 1:1) who ministered toward the end of the seventh century BC alongside Nahum, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah.² In 640 BC, Josiah became king of Judah at only eight years old (see 2 Kings 22:1-23:30). As Israel's last great king, his reign was characterized by faithfulness to God and a multitude of reforms to Israel's worship and legal systems. But in 609 BC, Josiah tragically died in battle against the Egyptians. Immediately after, his son Jehoahaz reigned for three months until he was captured by Egypt's Pharaoh Neco. Josiah's next son, Eliakim (Jehoiakim), reigned in his brother's place for eleven years until he too was captured by Babylon in 597 BC. Habakkuk most likely wrote this book between the end of Josiah's reign (609 BC)—when the reforms were reversed, idolatry reigned, and God's word appeared paralyzed (Hab. 1:1-4)—and Babylon's rise to become the world power it would eventually be after defeating Assyria and Egypt at the Battle of Carchemish (605 BC). That places Habakkuk sometime between 609 and 605 BC.

PURPOSE

Unlike other prophetic books, Habakkuk is not primarily a frontal rebuke to God's people. There are no direct warnings or calls for repentance. It is instead a recording of Habakkuk's passionate prayers and God's gracious responses. As the two dialogue, God reveals that he will punish Israel's injustice through the Babylonians. And so the prophet fulfills his duty to interpret the times for the people of God by opening up his prayer journal for them.³ We are meant to come away with one central message: amidst the chaos, as Israel is crumbling from the inside out and faces imminent threats from Babylon, nonetheless, "the person of faith...shall live" (Hab. 2:4).⁴

CANON

What role does Habakkuk play within the final form of the Bible? It is located in the **Old Testament** and within a collection of short prophetic books called "The Book of the Twelve" or "The Minor Prophets." Habakkuk, though brief, contributes much to the Bible's **theology**. Like other Biblical books, it invites God's people to wrestle with him and rejoice in him even when his plans do not make sense. But the most unique contribution Habakkuk makes is the way it speaks about the relationship between faith, **righteousness**, and life in Habakkuk 2:4. **New Testament** authors pick up on this verse and quote it to show that the one who is righteous by faith alone also must live by that faith alone (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

THEMES

Lament. Habakkuk centers on a certain kind of prayer known as lament. Mark Voegop defines lament as "a prayer in pain that leads to trust."⁵ It is both deeply honest, as it considers evil and suffering in the world, and yet, humble as it brings these questions and concerns before God, seeking his wisdom. They are often messy and soaked in tears, and so don't fit in neatly with buttoned-up religiosity. And yet, God invites us to pray this way. Habakkuk questions God's awareness of his people (1:2-4) and his unchanging character (1:12-13) all while he waits, trusts, and rejoices in God (2:1; 3:16-19). In faith, Habakkuk blitzes the throne of heaven and then gives God the space to have the final word. (For more, see Article: "The Art of Lament")

The LORD. The most common way Habakkuk refers to God is YHWH, which is translated as 'the LORD'.⁶ This is God's personal name that he revealed to his people, and it's directly tied to his covenant with them. By using this title, Habakkuk roots God's dealings with his people in his covenant promises. These include both blessing for obedience and punishment for disobedience (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). It is counterintuitive, but the reason God sends the Babylonians to destroy Judah is because he is faithful to his covenant (1:5-11). And by the same token, Israel's only hope in the end is for God to be faithful to his covenant with Abraham and come to the defense of his people (3:1-15). This presents a wonderfully complex depiction of God which can be described by pairs of apparent extremes. He is the unique God of Israel and the sovereign Lord of the world; the one who judges and the one who protects; He who forms light and creates darkness, makes well-being and creates calamity (Isa. 45:7). The God of Habakkuk is not tame, but he is good.

Maturing Faith. A surprising feature of Habakkuk is how he develops throughout the book. In the beginning, the prophet is confused and complains, but by the end, he is resolute and rejoicing (Hab. 1:1-4; 3:16-19). What changed? He didn't receive an air-tight answer to every question. He grew. "The idea of growth or maturing in faith is essential to appreciating the genius of this prophecy."⁷ Habakkuk's maturation reminds one that spiritual formation always includes three basic components: God's word, prayer, and the crucible of suffering. But what combines all three of these together is the mystery of faith, not in a set of principles but in the eternal and personal God who gives strength to his people (Hab. 1:12; 2:1; 3:19).⁸

HABAKKUK 1:1-4

¹The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw. ² O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? ³ Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. ⁴ So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

Oracle: A word or pronouncement from God either for blessing or destruction. It can also be translated as "burden." Habakkuk probably has both in view.

QUESTIONS

- In what ways can Habakkuk's wrestling with God help us frame our expectations when he seems silent or absent?
- Why does Habakkuk's sensory language ("saw," "see," "hear," "before me") matter for how we understand our calling as believers?
- Why is it important that we are equipped to know how to respond when we witness injustice or sin within the church?
- How can we guard against our own hearts becoming numb to wisdom and instruction from the Lord?
- How does knowing that Christ cried out in abandonment change the way we approach God in our darkest moments (see Mark 15:34)?

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

HABAKKUK 1:5-11

⁵ "Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. ⁶ For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own. ⁷ They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. ⁸ Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour. ⁹ They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand. ¹⁰ At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh. They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it. ¹¹ Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!"

QUESTIONS

- How does God's commitment to justice challenge our understanding of his methods and timing?
- God can accomplish his purposes through wicked instruments. How does this shape our perspective when we see evil appear to succeed?
- How does this also point us toward Christ's work on the cross?
- How can we guard against making our own abilities, achievements, or strength our functional god?

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

When God's Silence Speaks Louder Than Words

Habakkuk begins where many believers find themselves in suffering: crying out, "How long, O Lord?" (1:2). The prophet sees violence, injustice, and wickedness flourishing while God appears silent. And yet, in his complaint, he doesn't accuse God or grumble in unbelief but wrestles with faith seeking understanding. When God finally answers, he doesn't provide a philosophical explanation for the existence of evil. He reveals something more profound: his **sovereignty** over all of history itself. God will use even the wicked Babylonians as instruments of his justice, then judge them in turn. Simply put, he will not let any evil go unpunished. Scott Christensen observes, "It is not remotely possible for God to take delight in wickedness for the sake of wickedness. Therefore, if God takes no pleasure in wickedness, then it stands to reason that any wickedness brought to pass by the Sovereign of the universe must have some transcendently good intention standing behind it."⁹ What is that "good" for Habakkuk? We aren't told. But just because we cannot think of any good reason does not mean God doesn't have one.

The prophet's wrestling match with God mirrors our own when we watch evil seemingly triumph, when personal loss leaves us gasping for breath, when prayers feel like they hit the ceiling and bounce back. The God who holds all suffering in His hands is not distant from it—He enters into it, becoming acquainted with grief himself. What appears to be divine silence is often sovereignty working beneath the surface of what we can see. This same God who permits what he hates must do so out of a love so deep we

cannot fathom it—a love that sees the end from the beginning and weaves even our darkest threads into His perfect tapestry. Like Habakkuk, we discover that the God worthy of our worship in prosperity is the same God worthy of our trust in perplexity. The path from "How long?" to "Yet I will rejoice" isn't paved with explanations but with revelation—not of God's methods, but of God himself.

The book doesn't end with answers but with trust: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord" (3:18). Habakkuk moves from demanding explanations to delighting in the One who holds all answers—from needing to understand God's ways to being satisfied with God's character. Sometimes God's greatest response to our "Why?" is not an explanation but an invitation to faith. His silence becomes a sanctuary where we learn that he himself is the answer to every question our hearts dare ask. In the gap between our questions and His final justice, between present confusion and future vindication, we discover what Habakkuk discovered: that a God whose ways are higher than our ways is exactly the kind of God we need when our ways have led us into darkness. We don't get explanations—we get God. And that is beyond enough.

HABAKKUK 1:12 - 2:1

¹²Are you not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. O LORD, you have **ordained** them as a judgment, and you, O Rock, have established them for reproof. ¹³You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more **righteous** than he? ¹⁴You make mankind like the fish of the sea, like crawling things that have no ruler. ¹⁵He brings all of them up with a hook; he drags them out with his net; he gathers them in his dragnet; so he rejoices and is glad. ¹⁶Therefore he sacrifices to his net and makes offerings to his dragnet; for by them he lives in luxury, and his food is rich. ¹⁷Is he then to keep on emptying his net and mercilessly killing nations forever? ^{2:1}I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

QUESTIONS:

- How should we feel when our **theology** doesn't align with our experiences? Why is it easy to sometimes blame or question God in these moments?
- Life in a broken world will either soften or harden us over time. Which one do you sense is happening in your life?
- How is Habakkuk able to balance reverence and honesty in his prayer? Which one do you tend to lean towards?
- How does seeing other people (including the biblical authors) wrestle with doubts and questions affect our faith?
- What doubts or questions do you need to bring to God in prayer?

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

HABAKKUK 2:2-4

²And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. ³For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. ⁴"Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the **righteous shall live by his faith.**

Augustine on Listening to God: "He serves you [God] best who does not so much expect to hear the thing from you that he himself desires, but rather to desire what he hears from you."¹⁰

QUESTIONS:

- How can we cultivate a hunger to hear God's answers more than others?
- What keeps us from receiving and sharing the Word of God with urgency?
- Why is waiting so important in the Christian life? What are factors that make periods of waiting harder or easier?
- What are some distorted views of faith you've seen or personally held?
- How can the church encourage one another to walk by faith and not by sight?

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

Biblical Faith

We all live by faith. That might surprise you, but if you spend time considering what gives shape to the hopes and plans you have this week, this month, and beyond, it's not hard to see that we all trust in something. Everyone banks their life on unprovable assumptions.

So it should not surprise us that the Bible understands faith as the operating principle of the human heart. But when it discusses faith (think Hebrews 11), what does it have in mind? What do I need to have a faith that pleases God (Heb. 11:6)?

Theologians have long recognized that faith is not simply a leap into the dark—a reaction against reason, logic, and reality. It's also important to recognize that since we are wired to trust, we all have a kind of spiritual "ESP" (extrasensory perception): an ability to perceive more than our five senses take in. We know there's more to our spiritual lives than simply the matter we encounter and manipulate. Historically, those who have wrestled with faith have concluded that faith contains at least three elements:

Knowledge: In short, faith has content. There is something we must know to make sense of why we trust. God never asks us to leap blindly into the dark, with no idea who he is, what his character is like, or what promises are. In fact, virtually every story of faith in the scriptures includes some element of God imparting some new piece of information that informs how the biblical characters are to express their faith.

Assent: While knowledge is the first step, biblical faith demands that we agree with God when He says he is loving, just, sovereign, and wise; he means what he says (Amos 3:3). And we are commanded to take His perspective as the truest perspective on life. This is where the struggle for biblical faith faces its stiffest challenge. If I feel this way, or see these circumstances, how am I supposed to agree with God's word rather than my perspective? Again, in that moment, we are living out of the faith-operating system in our hearts. All unbelief is still belief, just relocated to some other basis.

Trust: Finally, while we may know and even agree with what God says, we haven't yet appropriated biblical faith for ourselves. The classic example that some have used is sitting in a chair. I may be told that this chair is made of wood, shaped by an expert craftsman. I may even agree that its construction is sound and can withstand much more weight than my body. Yet, it's not until I put my weight in the chair, and lift my feet to allow my body to be supported, that I can say I 'trust' the chair. Biblical faith is exactly like that—we are putting our lives on the line to know, agree, and trust that who God is and what he has said will hold. We risk ourselves on God.

HABAKKUK 2:5-14

⁵"Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples." ⁶ Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, "Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own— for how long?— and loads himself with pledges!" ⁷ Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. ⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them. ⁹ "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm! ¹⁰ You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. ¹¹ For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond. ¹² "Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity! ¹³ Behold, is it not from the LORD of hosts that peoples labor merely for fire, and nations weary themselves for nothing? ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

QUESTIONS:

- How can we discern the difference between healthy ambition and destructive idolatry?
- In what ways does our society entice us to self-indulgence? Have you seen it affect you personally? If so, how?
- What comfort does God's uncompromising and certain justice offer us?
- How does his justice square with our responsibility to show grace to others?
- How can we participate in making God's glory more fully known in our daily spheres of influence?

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

HABAKKUK 2:15-20

¹⁵"Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness! ¹⁶ You will have your fill of **shame** instead of glory. Drink, yourself, and show your uncircumcision! The cup in the LORD's right hand will come around to you, and utter shame will come upon your glory! ¹⁷ The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, as will the destruction of the beasts that terrified them, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them. ¹⁸"What profit is an **idol** when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! ¹⁹ Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. ²⁰ But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

Idol: Anything other than God you can't live without and still have joy in your life. *See more definitions in the glossary.

QUESTIONS:

- How can we recognize when good things (career, relationships, healthy living etc.) have become **idols** in our own lives?
- What idols are you most drawn to place your trust in? What do you hope to find in them?
- Where are we tempted to minimize God's holiness?
- What kind of thoughts, feelings, and actions should awareness of God's holiness produce?
- What's the relationship between God's holiness and our own?

The Irony of Evil

Our world seems to run on the assumption that whatever it takes to get what I want as quickly as I can is good. If I have to cut you off in traffic, so be it. If you have to step on the faces of your coworkers to climb the ladder of success, let it be done. This self-centered pragmatism is what leads to all forms of injustice and oppression—that is, evil. And it works. Or does it?

Biblically speaking, evil cannot ultimately win. Not "it will not win" or "we can't let it win" but by definition, it cannot. First, because our loving and just God will personally not allow his creation to be ravaged, and so he will call evil to account. But second, because evil's own nature will not allow it.

What is the nature of evil? The Bible depicts it not so much as a thing in itself but as a corruption of what is good. After all, Satan was once an angel of light. In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis said, "In other words, badness cannot succeed even in being bad in the same way in which goodness is good. Goodness is, so to speak, itself: badness is only spoiled goodness."¹ Likewise, Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* gave this chilling description of the evil creatures called orcs: "The shadow that bred them can only mock, it cannot make: not real things of its own. I don't think it gave life to the orcs; it only ruined them and twisted them."

But the great irony of evil is that by mocking goodness, it makes a mockery of itself. Throughout the Psalms, the wicked repeatedly fall into their own

traps (Ps. 7:14-16; 9:15-16; 35:7-8; 57:6; 141:9-10). Haman is hanged on his own gallows (Esther 7:9-10). Likewise, Habakkuk points to this same pattern in the five woes of chapter 2:

- The plunderer is plundered (v. 6-8).
- The shameless are put to shame (v. 9-11)
- The cheaters will be cheated (v. 12-13)
- The wrathful will receive wrath (v. 15-17)
- "The worshiper of powerless idols [will be] left powerless."¹² (v. 18-19)

Like a parasite, evil cannot live on its own. It needs a host, but what evil fails to realize is that by feasting on its host, it destroys itself in the process. This is precisely what makes the cross so brilliant: the host (The Son of God) let evil kill him, which in turn delivered the death blow. At the cross, God took evil by the arm and made it punch itself. Jesus "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" (Col. 2:15). In the end, evil is destined to lose. It cannot do otherwise. Jesus personally made sure of it.

HABAKKUK 3:1-15

¹A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. ² O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. ³ God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah* His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. ⁴ His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. ⁵ Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. ⁶ He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways. ⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. ⁸ Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? ⁹ You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. *Selah* You split the earth with rivers. ¹⁰ The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. ¹¹ The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. ¹² You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. ¹³ You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. *Selah* ¹⁴ You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. ¹⁵ You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters.

QUESTIONS

- What practices are out there to help us remember God's past graces in order to endure difficult times?
- What aspects of God's creation help us remember his power and authority?
- What biblical stories are helpful to remind us of God's faithfulness?
- How can we guard against self-pity during "dark nights of the soul"?
- What prevents us from seeing God as a mighty warrior? What confidence should we gain if we understood him that way?

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

HABAKKUK 3:16-19

¹⁶ I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us. ¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. *To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.*

John Calvin: "Our only duty is to wish for what is best, and beseech it of the Lord in prayer; to strive with all zeal, solicitude, and diligence, to bring about the desired result, and, at the same time, to submit with patience to whatever that result may be." ¹³

QUESTIONS

- The last chapter in Habakkuk is a psalm. Which songs or hymns help you remember God's goodness?
- Suffering can often feel like self-inflicted punishment. Instead, how can we view suffering as a place to find joy and help others do the same?
- What are tangible ways other believers have helped you in suffering?
- What spiritual practices can we implement to strengthen our confidence in God's love and provision?
- How should Habakkuk affect our relationship with God and our view of the world?

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

The Art of Lament

Lament is an art that must be learned. What comes naturally to us in times of trouble is rage, slander, or disengagement. However, the Bible paints a different picture and invites us into something better. There are many lessons to learn from the art of lamentation, but the book of Habakkuk gives us four:

Lesson 1: Be Honest. "God, where are you?" Have you ever asked this question? Habakkuk did when his experience and theology didn't seem to line up. Many of us were taught that to question God is irreverent. However, the authors of scripture are constantly asking, "God where are you and what are you doing?" The doctrine of **inspiration** adds even more light to this: it actually seems like God invites these questions.

Lesson 2: Wrestle with God. Like Jacob and the Angel of the Lord, we wrestle with God, seeking not to let him go until he blesses us (Gen. 32:22-29). In wrestling with God, we bring our experiences and God's Word together and seek to work them out. We hold God to his Word and character, not for his sake, but for our own (Hab. 1:2-4, 12-17). We go on the offensive by bringing our honest questions and fears, and then we let him take the offensive while we sit and listen (Hab. 1:5-11; 2:2-20).

Lesson 3: Trust and Wait for God. This is the most difficult, yet most appropriate lesson in the art of lamenting. Both of these require the opening of our hands and the relinquishing of control, two things we

loathe. Habakkuk 3 takes a deep look into the overwhelming power of God's presence. Then, in verse 16 he has only one response: wait for God with fear and trembling. Questioning and wrestling, if done rightly, will ultimately humble us and leave us with only one option: to wait for and trust in God.

Lesson 4: Rejoice in God. This seems almost impossible... until we see that Jesus himself led the way. In the garden he cried out: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..." (Mat. 26:39). On the brink of the greatest injustice the world has ever known, Jesus is brutally honest with his Father, wrestling with the weight of what lies ahead at Calvary. Yet just a few verses later he says, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done (v. 42)." And yet, through all the turmoil of facing hell itself, the author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus endured "for the joy that was set before him" (Heb. 12:2). What is that joy? Us. We are his passion. Only when Christ's embrace of us through pain and suffering warms the depths of our hearts will we be able to rejoice in him in our lament. We'll learn to say with Charles Spurgeon, "I have learned to kiss the waves that thrust me against the Rock of Ages."

GLOSSARY

Covenant - A promise that binds two parties together into a relationship.

Glory - It refers to the manifestation of God's presence. The Hebrew word *kabod* is related to the idea of weight, substance, and heaviness. It also carries connotations of beauty and splendor.

Gospel - The good news that God sent his Son, Jesus, to live a perfect life, die on the cross, and rise from the dead so that we can be reconciled to God through faith. For a more detailed description of the gospel, see *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert.

Holy - Set apart. For God, it highlights how he is unlike us (totally pure, loving, and just). For humanity, it refers to being set apart for a particular person or task.

Idol - Anything other than God you can't live without and still have joy in your life. In other words, it's something created that people worship as a god.¹⁴

Idolatry - The practice of worshiping idols.

Iniquity - A reference to sin that emphasizes its twisted or perverted nature.

Inspiration - The Christian belief that the Holy Spirit of God governed the writing of scripture through human authors. It comes from the Greek word *theopneustos* (literally, "God-breathed") in 2 Timothy 3:16.

Law - The biblical authors use this term as a way of referring to the first five books of the Bible (Hebrew: *Torah*). Broadly speaking, it can refer to all of God's Word.

New Testament - The collection of 27 books beginning with Matthew and ending in Revelation. The word "testament" means covenant. Therefore, the title communicates that these books have to do with the New Covenant instituted by Jesus Christ.

Old Testament - The collection of 39 books beginning with Genesis and ending in Malachi. The word "testament" means covenant. Therefore, the title communicates that these books have to do with the Old Covenant.

Oracle - A word or pronouncement from God either for blessing or destruction. The word can also be translated as "burden." Habakkuk probably has both in view.

Ordained - Something given by God's sovereign decree.

Righteous - The state of being right or just. God is righteous and makes righteous those who trust in Jesus.

Shame - The feeling of embarrassment and exposure for being wrong or let down as a result of sin. Similar to guilt, except where guilt is tied to actions ("I have done wrong"), shame is tied to identity ("I am wrong").

Sheol - The place of the dead.

Sovereignty - God's ultimate authority and control.

Theology - The study of God. It consists of two Greek words: *theos*, meaning "God", and *logos*, meaning word/speech/study.

ENDNOTES

1 Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas, *The Minor Prophets: A Theological Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023), 223.

2 It's also believed he had ties to the temple system since his writing style and use of song (Hab. 3:1-19) is consistent with Hebrew worship. See Gary V. Smith, *The Prophets as Preachers: An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets* (B&H Academic, n.d.), 181-182.

3 For the primary role of prophets as interpreters of the times for the people of God, see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2018), 1.

4 Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 14.

5 Mark Vroegop and Joni Eareckson Tada, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2019), 28.

6 The name YHWH was first revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3). God introduced himself as "I AM WHO I AM." The Hebrew word for "I AM" is the same root word (היה) as YHWH (יהוה). Scholars have noted that the verb tense here is flexible, and so it can be interpreted as either present or future. Therefore, "I AM" can also be translated as "I WILL BE" which would make God's self-identification to Moses akin to "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE" or even "I WILL BE WHO I AM." Regardless of the right translation, what's clear is that God is telling Moses that he will be the same faithful God in the future as he is today.

7 Thomas Renz, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2021), 136

8 Habakkuk "discovers there is a mystery of faith that transcends arid formulation of doctrines divorced from the manifest presence of the living God. Still, Habakkuk teaches the church to embrace God's clear word even if he (or we) cannot understand God's precise designs." Quoted in Bartholomew and Thomas, *The Minor Prophets*, 232.

9 Scott Christensen. *What About Evil?: A Defense of God's Sovereign Glory*, (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2020). Kindle Edition, loc 4959.

10 Augustine, *Confessions* 10.26. Quoted in Alberto Ferreiro and Thomas C. Oden, eds., "Introduction to the Twelve Prophets" in *The Twelve Prophets: Volume 14* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2003).

11 C. S. Lewis and Kathleen Norris, *Mere Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001), 44.

12 Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 22.

13 John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (West Linn, OR: Monergism Books, 2011), ebook.

14 Thomas Oden defined an idol as such: "When a finite thing becomes a center of value by which other values are judged... and has been elevated to centrality and imagined as a final source of meaning, then one has chosen what Jews and Christians call a god [idol]... One has a god when a finite value is worshiped, adored, and viewed as that without which one cannot receive life joyfully." Quoted in Christopher Watkin, *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 310.



CITADEL SQUARE CHURCH · CHARLESTON, SC