



**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

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**Conviction to
Live by Faith
A Study in Habakkuk**

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11/02	Introduction	
11/09	Faith in a Just God	1:1-17
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Food for Thought

A SMILE
is a universal language
that everyone understands.
How well do you communicate?

*... You will fill me with
joy when I am with you.*

Psalms 16:11a (NIV)

(shared by a Class Member)

**FAITH IN A JUST GOD
HABAKKUK 1:1-17**

Imagine for a moment that you are walking down the street and you see an elderly woman being attacked by a gang of thugs. Then you notice a policeman, sitting on a park bench nearby. You shout to the policeman, pointing to the woman in distress. The policeman refuses to lift a finger to come to her aid and goes right on reading his newspaper. Wouldn't you be angry with the policeman? This is how Habakkuk felt. He lived during the final dark days of Judah, just before her captivity. The prophet rightly assesses the spiritual state of the nation, and he agonizes because the sins of his day are rampant. Most of all, Habakkuk fumes with anger because God appears to be doing nothing about it, and that is His job! That is the essence of the prophet's protest: "God, I have persisted at urging you to deal with the sins of this people, and you have been strangely silent? Don't you care?" "God, if you are a just God, why is there no justice?" We might paraphrase the first part of God's response this way: "Take a good look around you, Habakkuk, and you keep your eyes open. I am already at work, raising up the Chaldeans (the Babylonians). The problem is not that I am doing nothing, but that what I am doing is so beyond your grasp you would not even believe it if I revealed it to you." Did Habakkuk think that God had been "asleep at the wheel," that He either did not know or did not care that His people were acting wickedly? Well, contrary to Habakkuk's perception, God was at work. God informs Habakkuk that He is raising up the Babylonians as His rod of judgment upon Judah. These were an arrogant, powerful, and wicked people, who loved to terrorize their victims. Judgment, when it came, would be swift and devastating.

On the surface, Habakkuk's rebuttal is based upon three impressive arguments. In the final half of chapter 1, the Habakkuk sounds more like a lawyer than a prophet. He attempts to reason with God on the basis of His character. He **first argues** in verse 12 that since God is eternal, God's chosen people are indestructible. God is eternal, and thus His promises must also be eternal. Therefore, Israel cannot cease to exist as a nation. Habakkuk appears to have assumed that if the Babylonians were allowed to prevail, they would completely wipe out Judah entirely. Thus, God could not allow the Babylonians to prevail. The prophet's logic is far from flawless, however. Habakkuk seems to have overlooked God's promise to preserve a remnant of his people (Isaiah 1:9; 10:20-22; 11:11; Jeremiah 23:3; Micah 2:12; Zephaniah 2:7). Habakkuk was wrong. God could use the Babylonians to chasten His people, and yet preserve a remnant, through whom His covenant promises could be fulfilled.

Habakkuk's **second argument** is also based upon God's character. God is righteous, and He abhors evil. God cannot approve of evil; therefore, God cannot approve of an evil nation destroying His people. The way the prophet sees it, God's plan to use the Babylonians as a chastening rod is inconsistent with God's character. A righteous God cannot achieve His purposes through unrighteous means. God will simply have to change His plans, or so the prophet supposes. But Habakkuk's logic is wrong. The use of foreign nations as a chastening rod was not inconsistent with His character, and it was not something new. God is righteous, and He is also sovereign. He is able to use the wicked, and even their wicked deeds to accomplish His purposes.

Habakkuk has yet a **third argument**, one which I am sure he felt was the clincher. If the law was clear on any point, it was surely clear that God hates and forbids idolatry. Habakkuk uses this as the basis for his third argument. The Babylonians are idolaters, so surely God cannot allow them to prosper against His people. Why would God grant the Babylonians success if they are only going to worship idols as a result? "God, you hate idolatry," Habakkuk argues, "Can you honestly allow the idolatrous Babylonians to prevail over the people of Judah, and then worship the god of their own strength?" This argument is a double-edged sword. God does not have a double standard. If God should judge the Babylonians for their cruelty and idolatry, then why should He not also judge Judah for its cruelty and idolatry? After all, God has already sent Israel into captivity, at the hands of cruel oppressors, because of their sins.

Habakkuk wants to know how God can allow the wickedness of the Babylonians to go unpunished. Ironically, the answer to this question is the very thing that made Habakkuk angry in the first place. God is **"slow to anger;"** He is **"long suffering."**

(Excerpts from "The Just Shall Live By Faith" by Bob Deffinbaugh)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Question: Why does God allow evil without swift punishment? (Hab 1:1-4)

Five Case Studies:

Gen 50:15-21 (Joseph - Man may mean it for evil, but uses it for Good)

2 Sam 12:7-15 (David - Sometimes it does not involve the evil-doer, but others around him)

John 9:1-3 (Blind man - What we think is evil may not be evil at all)

2 Peter 3:3-18 (God is not slow)

Ps 37 (Sometimes it's not about swift punishment as much as it is envy of evil-doers)

Answer: God is at Work (Hab 1:5-11)

God's work is always amazing (Mark 2:12; Matt 9:4-8; Luke 7:11-17)

God chastises those He loves (Heb 12:3-11)

God's love is always working even in rebellion of His people (Hos 11:1-12)

Question: Why does God sometime use bad to bring about good? (Hab 1:12-17)

God is Holy, yet sometimes uses the evil (Jer 12:1-2, 14-17)

God uses both the honorable and dishonorable (Rom 9:14-24; 1 Cor 1:27-28)

God uses the unrighteous, but their doom is still applicable (Jer 25:8-14)