

CCF Study Notes
Tuesday 7 AM Study
5 June 2006
Habakkuk

Before beginning to read from Habakkuk let's spend time in prayer, considering the works of God in the world and in our lives. Let's ask God that we might:

1. Let our hearts be **broken** by the things that break God's heart;
2. **See** God's hand at work – even when Satan is attacking;
3. **Know** the righteousness and holiness of God, never blaming or accusing God;
4. Be **just**, those who live by faith;
5. Able to **keep** ourselves from idols;
6. **Know** the greatness and power of God, and
7. **Trust** God fully, not relying on our own understanding!

Habakkuk is a song written by the prophet Habakkuk late in the seventh century BC. Habakkuk prophesied in the southern kingdom, known as Judah. The northern kingdom, called Israel or Ephraim, had already fallen to the Assyrians. The southern kingdom, or at least its capitol, Jerusalem, had been spared from the hand of the Assyrians during the reign of King Hezekiah. After the reign of Hezekiah, prosperity continued for a while in Judah. But the kings were terribly corrupt, and the people soon became spiritually and morally corrupt as well. Like America today, God had blessed them and saved them in the past, and while they still remained somewhat prosperous, they had become morally and spiritually bankrupt, having forgotten God.

Have you ever read a newspaper or watched the news on television, and found yourself lifting up a prayer, "Why God? Why don't you do anything about all the violence and injustice?" That was the place that Habakkuk was in. The righteous are a dwindling minority that are being persecuted and attacked by the unrighteous.

God answered Habakkuk: "You wouldn't believe it if I told you. I am bringing those horrible Babylonians to punish Judah. When they are finished they will chalk up the victory to their own false gods and idols." God's discipline sometimes comes by the hands of wicked men. What looks like an attack of Satan is turned so that it is the means by which God works in our lives.

Habakkuk is shocked! How could such a wicked tool be used to do the work of God? Something isn't right! Have you ever been shocked by how God works in your life? God sometimes takes the most horrible disaster, an obvious attack of Satan, and turns it into a blessing, a teachable moment for us.

Habakkuk stood at the crossroads. He could go forward or go backward. He could turn to the right or left. He could accept God's plan and work as being Holy and righteous and go too far by becoming self-righteous. He could complain and find fault with God. He could refuse to accept God's word. He could try to alter what God had said. He chose to wait right there at the crossroads until God's answer was known. This may seem to be an odd place to be – at the crossroads. This may seem to be an odd choice of action. Yet it is right here that a most precious teaching is given: "The just shall live by his faith!" We live by faith, not by sight. Often we don't know which way is right, so we must wait in faith until the way is clear. We are not to step out in our own strength or wisdom, but we are to wait by faith for God's strength and wisdom. Then, and only then, as we live by faith will we be considered just in all our ways.

God goes on to answer with five "woes" spoken against Babylon (and corrupt Judah as well!) Can you spot these woes? How might Habakkuk 2:19 be the most significant of these woes? Pride leads to a fall, because it inevitably leads to idolatry. The materialism of our day is idolatry and will bring God's judgment upon us. The idolatry of materialism then becomes the underlying justification for many other evils.

Habakkuk turns to God in prayer, humbled at the justice and majesty and power of God. The major issue that renders many of our prayers weak and ineffective is that we have too small a view of God. Read through Habakkuk 3:1-16 and note some of the characteristics Habakkuk ascribes to God. How big is God to Habakkuk? How big is God to you?

Finally, Habakkuk ends with the chorus, a hymn of faith, Habakkuk 3:17-19. Do things appear pretty bleak to you just now? They did to Habakkuk. The crops seem to have failed and the herds seem to have died off. Yet the Lord God is still Habakkuk's strength. Is God your strength today? God can make your feet like hind's feet – like those mountain goats who walk with sure steps on the most precarious ledges and the faintest of trails. And if you are facing mountains before you now, know that God can take you over them. Then you will know indeed that God is the Chief Musician who makes beautiful music of the discordant notes in our lives. God uses even those highly stressed strings to produce beautiful music.

Are there some things you don't understand going on around you or in your life that you need to ask God about? Do it! God would love to enlighten you. Are you ready to blame God for all your troubles? Don't do it! Look again at who God is and how He works. The work of art isn't finished yet! Let's spend some time praying through these things.

P.S. Recordings of these studies in John and copies of these notes are now available on a new website at <http://www.jstoker.name> . A new podcast is also available there or at <http://feeds.feedburner.com/CCF-T-Podcast> .