



Habakkuk – Live by Faith

Minor Prophets #6 • August 17, 2025¹

Prayer

Let me open with a word of prayer this morning...

Almighty God,

Your words are right and true. The Scriptures are filled with messages that reveals Your heart, information that is useful as we try to more closely follow You and try to encourage one another. Help us to pay attention to Your words this morning. May they challenge us and uplift us as we consider them today and apply them tomorrow.

In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

Opening

This morning, we are wrapping up our summer series on the Minor Prophets!

*(Is anyone: Excited to be done? Disappointed it's over?
Surprised that you are disappointed? At another time, we might come back and visit the rest)*

Over the past month and a half, we have looked closely at some of the short books of prophecy located at the end of the Old Testament in your Bible.

These books are often **unfamiliar territory – short enough to miss** as you flip through your Bible, **challenging enough to dismiss** in favor of something easier to understand, and **far enough at the end** that many people **give up** on their “read through the Bible” plan before getting anywhere near this section.

But you and I know that these books are worth the extra effort. They are small, but mighty! They give us a chance to hear not just *about* God, but *from* Him!

¹ Revised from a message preached on May 24, 2015

This summer, we've studied the following books: Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, and Haggai. As God spoke through these messengers, He provided insight and wisdom and motivation...not only for the original audience the book was written to address, but for us as well. Each one continues to have relevant and challenging truth.

This morning, if you have your Bible with you (a hard copy or a Bible app), please turn to the book of Habakkuk. Just go to Matthew and then back up five short books. It's tucked in there, between Nahum and Zephaniah.

Many of you don't know much about Habakkuk. **But trust me....even if you don't know Habakkuk...you KNOW Habakkuk.**



One of the big themes in this book is **confusion** – the voice in your head that says, “*WHAT?!*” when **God's plans or actions don't make sense**. Even if you don't know the Minor Prophets, you know a little about *that* feeling.

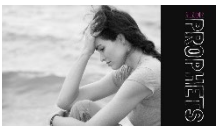
Confusion is something we all know about.

Sometimes moments of bewilderment can be a **good** thing.



I love watching videos where a couple springs a surprising birth announcement on unsuspecting soon-to-be grandparents. They present them with a cryptic t-shirt...or slip an ultrasound photo into a stack of bills...or keep the birth of twins secret until they come in to hold one baby and then turn to see someone holding another.

Those kinds of moments are awesome! The looks on their faces are priceless. We are **surprised and confused** by the blessing – not sure how it happened, but we're **glad** that it did.



However, many times our **moments of confusion** are **less fun**. Instead of a laugh, they feel like a **punch to the gut**: a spouse serves divorce papers, a company makes unexpected job cuts, a child brings home a fiancé of the wrong gender, a bill is double what you expected...and none of it makes sense.

➔ **What are your confusing moments?** *Think about those for a second...the events that threw you for a loop... that blew up your world... where you had no idea what was going on... or why.*



How do we have faith when we are confused?

That's really a big question for us as Christians, isn't it? The **Sunday School answer** is that we **don't worry** about it because God's in control. We just **smile** as we trust and obey.

But the **reality of our reactions** is often different.

When we're confused, our **reaction** is usually to cry out to Him, "**Why, God?**"

We want clarity in the confusion! We want to know His plan. And in our quest for answers, we find ourselves in good company. Scripture is filled with men and women who shared our heartfelt desire for understanding in the midst of hard events and announcements.



- **Job**, a faithful man blessed immeasurably by God, was rocked to the core when his family and fortune were destroyed...without any explanation. Job asks, "**Why?**"

"Tell me, what have I done wrong? Show me my rebellion and my sin. Why do you turn away from me? Why do you treat me as your enemy?" (Job 13:23–24, NLT)

- And what about **Moses**, sent by God to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian slavery? His initial confrontations with Pharaoh did not result in emancipation, but instead led to more punishment for his people. Moses, confused about God's plans, asks, "**Why?**"

"Then Moses went back to the Lord and protested, 'Why have you brought all this trouble on your own people, Lord? Why did you send me?'" (Exodus 5:22, NLT)

- Or listen to the writers of **Psalms** as they pour out their hearts to God in the midst of difficulty. They want to be rescued, but they find no relief. Confused, they ask, "**Why?**"

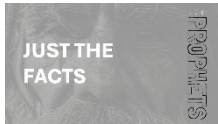
"Wake up, O Lord! Why do you sleep? Get up! Do not reject us forever. Why do you look the other way? Why do you ignore our suffering and oppression?" (Psalm 44:23–24, NLT)

These are all great examples of confusion in Scripture. But today, I want to focus on another example, the one right in front of us: **Habakkuk**.



The book of Habakkuk provides a **great case study** of seeing **how to handle our confusion** with God. This prophet is called to **share** a message from the

Lord, but he also has an **honest reaction** to that message – a message that he found difficult and puzzling. The result is a **conversation** in Scripture where we see both the prophet's mind and the Divine Author's heart... and consequently we learn a thing or two about **how to have faith when we are confused**.



Just the Facts

Before we jump into this **short** book (only 3 chapters long), let's fill in some **background information**.

** I know that it's probably not necessary since we all know and love this book...but just in case there's a visitor here... 😊*

The Prophet

Let's talk about **the man**.



As with most of the Minor Prophets, our knowledge of Habakkuk's life is almost non-existent – the text just **doesn't tell us much**. The main tidbit we can deduce with reasonable confidence is that Habakkuk was a **musician**, probably one that served in the **temple**, playing music for their worship services.

That's it. No family tree, no tribe, no city of origin.

However, we don't need all the facts of his life story to know the **essence** of the man, especially his **deep faith**. Several indicators in the book are enough to show us that Habakkuk was a devoted follower of God.

For example, the book's opening verses indicate a history of **repeated and fervent prayer**. The nature of his prayers showed that Habakkuk **loved people** and was **heartbroken by hurt**. He was **in tune to God's ideals**, and he hated to see those ideals violated.

Furthermore, he addresses God as **My God**, **My Holy One**, **My Rock** (Habakkuk 1:12), showing a **personal relationship** with the Lord. In other places, he shows familiarity with God's works in **history**², and he rejoices in the God of his **salvation**³.

² (chapter 3)

³ (3:18)

This is a man who **knows the Lord**, who **trusts Him**, and who has **great faith**.

The Setting

While his occupation playing music in the temple would have strengthened his faith, Habakkuk's life in **Jerusalem** (where the temple was) would have **tested it**. Habakkuk's ministry was during a **dark time** for the country of Judah. Habakkuk served during the reign of **King Jehoiakim**, one of the last kings of Judah before their exile... and one of the **worst!** Jehoiakim's actions and policies led to an **oppressive spiritual climate** for those who sincerely tried to worship Yahweh. As one commentary shared:

"He killed the innocent who opposed him and refused to pay poor laborers. Under his administration the prophets and priesthood were corrupted in adultery and abuse of authority. The king even sent assassins who killed a prophet for prophesying that Jerusalem would fall."⁴

This difficult situation weighed heavily on Habakkuk. He struggled with the things he saw happening in the streets, the courts, and the palace. Injustice and immorality were the norm, and it led to a **crisis of faith** for him.

In his prayers, then, he **poured out his heart** to God. And doing so led to Habakkuk's **rare honor of dialogue** with his Creator – a Q&A that is recorded for us in this book. His unique privilege of getting answers from God, though, was **not** the kind of **satisfying** exchange that provided comforting answers ...instead, **it was grounds for confusion!**

Habakkuk's First Question: "How Long?"

The book opens with Habakkuk's **big initial question**.

*"How long, O Lord, must I call for help? But you do not listen!
"Violence is everywhere!" I cry, but you do not come to save. Must I
forever see these evil deeds? Why must I watch all this misery?
Wherever I look, I see destruction and violence. I am surrounded by
people who love to argue and fight. The law has become paralyzed,
and there is no justice in the courts. The wicked far outnumber the*

⁴ NIVAC p 214

righteous, so that justice has become perverted.”
(Habakkuk 1:2–4, NLT)

The world around Habakkuk has **not valued** the things that God values, and so Habakkuk begins this exchange as one who is **offended**. King Jehoiakim is not the only one who is abusing the system. The **violations are widespread** among the population, and they are shocking!

Violence. Plundering. Strife. Contention.

Habakkuk sees these, and he sees that the official remedies of law and justice are not working. As a result, he is indignant and wants to know when God is going to take some action!



I hope you can relate! I hope you look around your community, your county, your state, your nation, your world, and recognize the same prevalence of evil. I hope you are upset by it! I hope you aren't numb to injustice or callous to crime. I hope you see rebellion against God and question how long God will put up with it!

Habakkuk cared! Civil and religious crime was going unnoticed and unpunished, so Habakkuk plays the role of a **distraught observer** in these opening verses, knowing that change is beyond his power to effect. His sensitivities have not been dulled by this wickedness around him; instead, they have been sharpened. He is more keenly aware of the abuses against God's Word than his countrymen are, and that knowledge is agony.

So, he **cries out**, and his pleadings receive a **Divine response**.

The Response

While Habakkuk's focus has been on his own nation of Judah, God answers by **shifting that focus** eastward.



“The Lord replied, “Look around at the nations; look and be amazed! For I am doing something in your own day, something you wouldn't believe even if someone told you about it.” (Habakkuk 1:5, NLT)

Instead of finding an **internal remedy** to social injustice, God points to an **external solution**. He reveals a plan to **destroy** Judah's society using the army of the **Chaldeans** (aka, the Babylonians)!



God **describes an upcoming attack** in poetic yet terrifying terms. This “*bitter and hasty nation*” (1:6) would sweep across the region, taking control of lands they had never before possessed. They are compared to leopards in reference to their **speed**. Their **fierceness** is likened to a wolf at dusk (1:8). Like a speeding eagle ready to eat, the Babylonian army would **swoop** in for the kill (1:8). The ease with which the Chaldeans would conquer is reminiscent of a child playing in the sand at the beach. The cities and countries of the Middle East have been built up like sandcastles...and now Babylon would flatten them. Judah is next.

God’s response to Habakkuk isn’t vague; His answer seems clear.

Why, then, does this answer bring **confusion**?

Part of it is tied to the **Chaldeans** identity. They are a surprising choice because they aren’t yet a regional power. Before any assault can happen, they must **rise to power**. It would be like predicting that the **Kansas City Monarchs** (the minor league team that plays at the Legends) will defeat the Royals in the World Series. Quite a few things have to happen first!

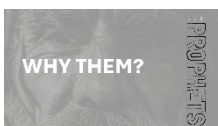
But the bigger reason for confusion is because **God’s answer doesn’t match Habakkuk’s question**.



“How long until you fix the injustice in our country, God?”

*“I won’t fix it. I’ll **smash** Judah with the Chaldeans’ army!”*

This leads Habakkuk to more confusion, and to his **next round** of dialogue.



Habakkuk’s Second Question: “Why Them?”

Habakkuk trusts God implicitly, yet he **struggles** to make sense of this answer. *What does God mean in this response?* Habakkuk must now ask ‘**why them**’ instead of ‘**how long**.’



“But you are pure and cannot stand the sight of evil. Will you wink at their treachery? Should you be silent while the wicked swallow up people more righteous than they?” (Habakkuk 1:13, NLT)

If any situation warrants confusion, certainly this one does. God had a **special relationship** with the nation of Israel. They were His people, promised to Abraham, rescued from slavery in Egypt with Moses, settled in the Promised Land under Joshua, ruled by the anointed King David. God has

done amazing things for his people...and **now**? He seems to be **siding with the enemy**.

The Jews are facing **destruction** by an **evil, pagan** society.

Habakkuk **can't understand** this! As bad as Judah's population may be, Habakkuk feels their **flaws are minor compared to the evil** of the Babylonians. He **paints a picture** of his confusion in the next few verses (1:14-17) as he tries to make sense of things: Fishermen at sea, he says in an analogy, use their hooks and nets to haul in and devour unsuspecting and defenseless fish. And now, Judah is the **fish**; Babylon is **dragging in the nets** of impending disaster; and God is the one who has granted the **fishing license**!



Don't tell me you can't relate! Your family or your workplace might be full of inconsiderate jerks who need to be taught a lesson. But if God allowed them to be brutalized by the Mexican cartel, wouldn't you raise an objection?

"We're bad...but they're worse!" you'd say! "Why are you allowing this?"

Habakkuk pours out his heart in his confusion, honest and baffled. He is bold enough to push for answers, even if the Lord may reply with great force and with little explanation. In verse 2:1, he makes plans to **stand on the ramparts of the city wall** and **wait for God** to reply and explain Himself.



The Response

And to God's credit, He provides a **response**! God is **not harsh** with Habakkuk for asking; instead, He shares **more of His plan**.

Habakkuk 2:4 contains the **most important** part of God's reply – probably the most important statement of the entire book, and we will come back to it in just a second. But the rest of God's message adds helpful details.



Though they will conquer, God tells Habakkuk, **Babylon will not** be left **unpunished**. There is no free pass, no playing favorites. God sees their evil and their insatiable appetite for conquest, and He will justly punish them for it in the future. Beginning in verse 5, God lays out a series of "**woes**" that will **repay** Babylon for her evils. These declarations of justice against Judah's future oppressors helped Habakkuk **feel a little better** about his situation.

*“At least God would hold the evil Chaldeans **accountable**, even if His use of them in the first place still seems confusing.”*

The message of equal justice would be important, yet the statement in **Habakkuk 2:4**, immediately before this section of taunting and woe, would have been the part that rung in Habakkuk’s ears. Even as he heard Babylon’s fate unfurl, the bigger point was God’s statement about **how to handle** this entire message:



“Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.”
(Habakkuk 2:4, NLT)

This is the verse to help Habakkuk find a **way out** of his confusion. While he had hoped for an **explanation** from God regarding the methods He chose or the timing He would use, instead God provided Habakkuk a **path of action**. Habakkuk doesn’t have to **understand** or **like** God’s plan; he just has to **live by faith**.



Live by Faith

How do we have faith when we are confused?

You and I often want to solve this dilemma by saying, *“I just need more information. I need more answers and explanations, God!”*

That’s what we assume; we assume we just need answers to our questions and then we’ll be fine.

Really? OK. Test it out.



Think about your biggest issue of uncertainty and loss. Why did God allow a loved one to die? Why did He allow the cancer? Why did He let me lose my job? Why won’t He allow me to find love?

*Imagine that God replies. “**Your loss allowed me to do _____.**”
To lead someone to Christ. To build your character. To stop a war that would’ve occurred in 2157. To remove a crutch you’d been leaning on.*

Do you feel better? Is your confusion satisfied?

No! It just opens a new set of questions. “Was that the only way? Couldn’t you have done something else? Why not later?”

Answers aren't the answer.



The real answer is this: **“When you are confused, have faith.”** Or, as Habakkuk phrases it, **“When you are confused...the righteous shall live by faith.”**

The righteous shall live by his faith. That quote is so powerful it is referenced in no less than three New Testament letters (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). It's not an outdated Old Testament concept...it is a spiritual truth we must embrace!

On one hand, it is a reminder that our spiritual life doesn't come from legalism.



“So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.”” (Galatians 3:11, NLT)

It is faith in Jesus that matters. HE is the one who makes us right, not our good works. This statement is a clear reminder of God's plan for salvation!

On the other hand, it is also a reminder that our best path is to have faith in the God who leads us, regardless of where we see the path going, or whether we see it in its entirety or not.



“Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see.” (Hebrews 11:1, NLT)

We might not see answers, but we trust that we have a **God who has acted in the past**. We can see how His plans worked out for people like Joseph and David, and we can have faith that He remains at work now.

We might not see answers, but we trust that **God loves us**. And if He loves, then we can have faith that He has a good plan for us...in the long run, if not the short term.

We might not see answers, but we trust that **God wins**. There is no reason to fight against Him, for His plans will always be achieved. We can have faith that He will be successful in His good plans.

Those three truths form the basis of Habakkuk's reaction in chapter 3. Habakkuk ends the chapter **no less confused** than when he started. He knows God **could** act powerfully now, and He **could** solve Judah's problems without using the Babylonians. He also knows that God **won't**. God still

intends to use what Habakkuk considers a strange course of action – a course that didn't and won't make sense.

However, the **path out of confusion** presented in 2:4 gives Habakkuk the opportunity to **trust God anyway**. He makes a conscious choice of faith despite not having all the answers he would like. He makes the decision to trust God and to “live by faith.”

Application

In practical terms, how do we live by faith? Galatians 2:20 gives the best answer.

“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

(Galatians 2:20, NLT)

It's less about the **how** and more about the **who**. Faith actively chooses to rely on SOMEONE as better than SOMETHING.

SOMEONE is better than SOMETHING.

Jesus is better than evidence, explanations, details, roadmaps, guarantees, answers. So, when it doesn't make sense, choose to rely on Jesus instead. Pursue Him as your greatest treasure. Learn what He teaches. Obey what He commands. Go where He says to go.

Give up trying to maintain control and instead follow with reckless abandon!

Conclusion

How do we have faith when we are confused?

Habakkuk helps us see that our **faith won't come** by getting the **answers we want**. Answers won't satisfy. Even if God explains, that doesn't mean we will be automatically content. We must still live through the situation!

Instead, we must focus on the “faith” part of the question.

Habakkuk reminds us that it is **perfectly fine to be confused**. We need not **pretend** everything is fine and put on a mask of tranquility when we're really in turmoil. When we go through a difficult time due to business struggles, or



the death of a child, or an impossible financial mistake, the **questions** of “why?” and “how long?” are **okay** to ask. They aren’t signs of a weak relationship with God.

But while we **search** for answers, we must **hold tightly** to the **knowledge** that our **God is bigger than our questions and problems**. We need to trust that He is **ultimately good** even when we can’t comprehend His plans. This **faith is not blind** – it simply puts more **confidence in the character and nature of God** than the pain of our own experience. **We should trust that God is at work.**

*When you are confused, **live by faith.***

Prayer

Invitation

*You may be confused right now. I don’t know what’s going on in your life, but I’m almost certain you’re confused about something. You know what it is, and you know how that confusion is getting in the way of your ability to love and follow God. If any confusion is holding you back, **LIVE BY FAITH.***

Maybe you need to spend more time in prayer than in worry. Maybe you need to lay down your pride. Maybe you need to act. If so, during our invitation song, I invite you to come up and pray with me.

*Stop trying to understand and control your own life and instead...
LIVE BY FAITH.*

Let’s stand and pray!



Sermon Notes

How do we have faith when we are confused?

(Job 13:23-24; Exodus 5:22; Psalm 44:23-24)

Just the Facts

The Prophet

The Setting

“How Long?” (Habakkuk 1:2-4)

The Response (Habakkuk 1:5)

“Why Them?” (Habakkuk 1:13)

The Response (Habakkuk 2:1ff)

Habakkuk 2:4 – “The righteous will live by faith.”

Live by Faith

(Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 11:1; Galatians 2:20)

Sermon Discussion Questions

Fellowship—Relationship with a Purpose

- When you are confused, are you quick to search for answers or are you quick to give up? Why?

Growth—Thinking About Spiritual Matters

- As we wrap up this series on the Minor Prophets, which lesson/book did you find most helpful in your walk with God? Why?
- What can you tell about Habakkuk as a person? What clues in the text tell us about his character and faith?
- What are some of the injustices Habakkuk was seeing in his world? (Habakkuk 1:1-4). Do you witness similar injustices in your world today?
- Describe your prayer life in response to those injustices. How does it compare to Habakkuk's (see Habakkuk 1:2)?
- What was God's planned response to these injustices?
- Consider Habakkuk's line of questioning in 1:12-17. When is it appropriate to question God's plans? What kind of heart do we need to have when presenting such questions to Him?
- Why do you think God chose the Babylonians (a more wicked nation) to discipline Judah instead of another method?
- How does focusing on WHO God is help us when we don't understand WHAT He is doing?
- What are some practical ways to remind yourself of God's goodness during confusing or painful seasons?
- How can we encourage one another to trust God in times of uncertainty without offering shallow clichés?
- In what areas of your life do you need to stop seeking control and start trusting God more fully?
- Who are some examples of Christians you know who "live by faith"? What behaviors of theirs are worth following? What preparation do they make to be able to live in that way?

Prayer – Taking Your Thoughts to God

- How can Habakkuk's honesty in prayer inspire the way you talk to God during your own struggles?
- Pray for God's help as you strive to "live by faith."