


- Evil’s prosperity will end in misery and ruin (Psalm 73:18-20).
- Evil’s reign will be terminated (Psalm 145:20; Matthew 21:11; 1 Corinthians 15:25).

“Shadow Soldiers” will plant suspicions to wound our faith because we are incapable of comprehending God’s plan. We must trust confidently and abide patiently whenever doubts plant suspicions about God’s justice (Psalm 73:17).

Is your honest heart struggling from attacks by the “Shadow Soldiers”?

This is the only paragraph in the prophecy without an answer from God! Total silence greeted Habakkuk’s cry! But this silence should not be understood as equivalent to God’s consent that evil was “just” (Psalm 50:21).

God is not silent to our cries today! In a sense God is silent for He does not audibly speak. But in another sense, He is speaking very plainly to us (Hebrews 1:1-2).



TAKE-HOME LESSONS

1. Beware of suspicions that cause confidence in God to waver.
2. God is not contradictory—He is consistently righteous.
3. The longevity of evil is only apparent and not factual.
4. God is never silent to our pleas in the midst of struggles.

Our Next Lesson: “Gaining Perspective in Life’s Struggles”

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LESSON 8 : Honest Struggles for Honest Hearts!

A Study of Habakkuk

WHEN GOD SEEMS SILENT

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“Doubt” is a “Shadow Enemy.” There is no substance to it. “If thou begin to suspect evil, the next thing is to conclude it, and the next is to report it. This suspicion is a strange shadow that is cast upon our minds. We take shadows and report them confidently as Truth, yet we never actually saw it but only imagined it in our fancies.”

Christians must beware lest they allow these “Shadow Soldiers” invade and destroy our faith by imagined fancies!

Habakkuk was struggling with doubt. He has seen the Lord’s answer but that answer has only caused greater pain (Jeremiah 45:3). The prophet is struggling for an explanation (Psalm 77:3, 7-9). It is this honesty that reveals a timely lesson for us.

The CAUSE for conquests by Shadow Soldiers.

First, hard questions that appear to have no answers (Habakkuk 1:13b-14).

Habakkuk vocalizes the perplexity that overwhelms us at times. While it is known that God cannot endure sin, He permits evil to arise. Habakkuk saw God tolerating what God despised. He could not resolve this conflict. Why does it all seem so confusing?

It seemed as if Jehovah God was committing treason against His chosen nation!

These hard questions fashion the historical argument of atheism - the affliction of the righteous seems irreconcilable with God's goodness; the tolerance of evil seems inconsistent with God's holiness. "If God knows about the innocents suffering, why doesn't He do something? Your God must not be omniscient, omnipotent, and all-good!" This fails because...

- It is not inconsistent with God's character for good men to suffer because good comes from suffering (Romans 5:3ff).
- It is not inconsistent with God's character for evil men to prosper because prosperity is not always a blessing.
- It is not inconsistent with God's character to use evil men to afflict others because He has purposed a plan that is being accomplished.

This mystery has always troubled saints (Job 12:6, 21:7-13; Psalm 17:14, 15, 73:1-13; Jeremiah 12:1; Ecclesiastes 7:15; 8:14).

Second, inhumane acts depreciating life (Habakkuk 1:15a). Habakkuk's metaphor compares human life to a cheap standard. No one worries about the life of a fish. The Babylonians regarded human life with as much concern as a fisherman hauling in a net full of fish. The prophet's question—"Lord, are human lives worth that little? Don't You care about the shameless way the value of life is treated?"

The image is of a people being totally helpless, without protection and then totally destroyed. "Treachery" refers to "breakers of covenant" (Isaiah 33:1). It refers to a sinister evil. "Wicked" refers to utter depravity and godless conduct.

Such inhumanity is deplorable. It shocks us. It plants suspicions about God's care. How can a holy God watch such inhumane acts? How can God keep silent and not avenge them? (Job 30:20; Psalm 22:2).

Watch out for the "Shadow Soldiers" planting suspicions via these points!

Third, rejoicing in the tragedies of others (Habakkuk 1:15b). Witnessing the pain that evil bring into other's lives is bad, but to watch the perpetrators of that pain find devilish delight from the suffering is horrible.

The selfish always treats others as a "fish" or "worms" rather than with respect. He will "break covenants" or deal wickedly to gain the "upper-hand." He then "rejoices" in his evil mischief and crime - gloating about his

"smart moves." (Isaiah 21:2)

Such was seen in the L.A. Riots of 1992. Scene after scene pictured innocent victims being beaten while the mobs laughed! Those pictures sent "Shadow Soldiers" into our hearts who sought to lead us to place God under suspicion.

Fourth, tolerance of flagrant irreligion (Habakkuk 1:16). Babylon's pride flaunted her disrespect. The image was a display of haughty arrogance.

Self-reliance, self-conceit, self-exaltation, self-seeking, self-worship are evils that blind men to God's power. These lead to an arrogant superiority toward all others (Proverbs 16:18). Such is contemptible to God (Proverbs 6:17).

Babylon thought she was "god." We must obey God and not self (Deuteronomy 6:17-18). Irreligion brings divine wrath (Isaiah 37:21-29). Why does God allow the arrogant to practice such a profane religion? This question is used by the "Shadow Soldiers" to plant suspicions about God!

Fifth, apparent longevity of evil (Habakkuk 1:17). Habakkuk saw no end to this evil - the net would be filled, emptied, and filled again. He knew that God could stop it, but He did not. Why?

Stout hearts are weakened as evil continues to advance and it only becomes bolder! We ask with Habakkuk's perplexity, "Will there ever be an end? Will we, too, get taken?" (Psalm 73:16-17)

Many Christians pray to God asking for divine intervention in the policies of evil rulers, only to see the maliciousness continue. It seems despots continue unchecked. The "Shadow Soldiers" invade our minds and silently plant suspicions which lead us to give up hope, quit praying, and give up all efforts to exert influence.

The CURE for the suspicions of the "Shadow Soldiers."

Recognize that God is the Sovereign God! Habakkuk's faith never wavered. He confidently asserted God's control (verses 13-14). He knew God was in control (1:12) and he relied upon known facts about God to strengthen his faith.

God's immutable character is consoling (Psalm 89:28; John 10:28; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Hebrews 12:10, 11). As we are besieged by the suspicions of the "Shadow Soldiers," let us magnify God's character (2 Corinthians 1:3; Deuteronomy 33:27).

Recognize that evil is never beyond God's sovereign control! Habakkuk believed that punishment would come (verses 17, 13). Habakkuk may have been confused/uncertain about many things, but one thing he knew - God and evil were incompatible!

God is the "Holy One," the "Rock," and thus evil will receive its recompense!

- Evil's triumph is short (Job 20:5; Psalm 37:35, 36).