

# When God Seems Silent: A Study of Habakkuk

## Lesson Ten: The Answer to Life's Dilemmas (2:4-5)

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### Introduction:

- I. No greater joy in life is found than when you discover the solution to a difficult problem. The scientist may struggle through repeated experiments only to find repeated failure but at last, when the proper formula is tested and success is discovered, there is great joy!
  1. This joy is illustrated by Archimedes. Hiero, King of Syracuse, ordered a massive crown of gold to be prepared and offered to the gods as tribute for success in war. It was suspected the goldsmith had used silver in the construction. Archimedes was called and required to test the purity of the crown without marring it. He was perplexed and pondered the problem for many days. One day he went to his bath. As he immersed his body the water ran over and suggested to him the solution of the King's question. He ran out of the bath house joyfully shouting "Eureka! Eureka!" He then fixed the relative weight of water, gold, and silver, and determined the proportion of gold and silver in the crown. (Foster, #8070, 257, Vol. 1)
  2. This joy of discovery accompanies the resolution of trials in life – the long-sought answer brings inescapable delight. Such is the situation with Habakkuk in our text.
  3. Habakkuk struggled to resolve the perplexing problem of life's inequities and God's justice. He confessed his inability to understand how God can tolerate evil and utilize evil to achieve His objective.
    - a. He tried one way and then another but no adequate explanation was discovered.
    - b. He finally decided to "wait" and allow God to reveal the answer. That long-sought answer is revealed in 2:1-20.
    - c. The prophet's joy of discovery is found in 3:1-19.
- II. 2:4, 5 is not only the essential answer to Habakkuk's perplexity, but it is also a text having a remarkable impact upon all Scripture.
  1. It is quoted three times in the New Testament (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).
  2. It calls for an absolute trust in God for all of life's activities.
  3. It provides the inspired solution to the dilemma of life's injustices. "In one short saying the two general aspects of the prophet's enquiry are dealt with: the pride and injustice of the invader are dealt with, and the just man is assured of life, i.e., preservation from evil and salvation, on the condition that he hold steadfastly to the principle of faith" (Canon Cook, quoted by F. W. Farrar, 168).
- III. When Habakkuk understood 2:4, 5 he discovered the answer to his questions.
  1. God responded to Habakkuk's query about life's inequities – the righteous (those who are just; saved) will live by faith that believes in God's ultimate justice.
  2. The answer calls for believers to maintain a faith that is focused upon God; to possess a radiant hope for a positive future; to trust in a divine vindication of all evil.
  3. This answer pointedly addressed the evil oppressors who trampled others with selfish greed. All such people will be used by God as instruments of His will to punish sin, but ultimately, they will be punished!
  4. The key in this answer is "HIS FAITH." This term refers to a strong fidelity, committed steadfastness, and integrity of purpose. [See *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1,

292–323. Especially notice the discussion of “EMUNAH” on pages 316-320.] Only those who maintain an ardent trust in God's justice will find “life.” Those who do not maintain trust in God find restlessness, ill-content, and emptiness in life (See 2:5b).

5. Thus, the answer to life's dilemmas is found within each person as he wrestles with personal faith (Each can quickly identify with the father's plea in Mark 9:24, “I do believe; help my unbelief!”). How each person views God is how he will answer the questions of injustices.

IV. This passage provides a contrast which must be studied. This contrast illustrates the two options, that men can utilize in order to reconcile life's inequities. God gives us a contrast in worldviews.

1. Those who are proud cannot be upright because they refuse to trust in God; refuse to submit to God; and refuse to admit human potential is inadequate.
2. Those who are righteous are able to find true “life.” They are “just” before God because they have humbled their pride and submitted to God's directions.
3. God's message is clear – pride may appear to be triumphant as it oppresses and greedily takes from others, but its strength will never last. Humility may appear to be cowering weakness but it provides the only true strength available (Matthew 5:5, 7). Those who live by steadfast devotion to God's will are the only ones to be triumphant in the end! Even though such a conclusion seems impossible at the present, it is verified by faith in God's power.
4. To illustrate the validity of this conclusion God gives Habakkuk a contrast. There are only two attitudes in life – belief and unbelief. The choice we make in these attitudes determines how we will live (Proverbs 4:23). You either live by faith or unbelief. Only those living by faith are able to discover the joyful solution to life's problems.
5. Habakkuk has been told that evil's injustice will continue for a time (See 2:3). This means the tension between good and evil will continue. However, this conflict will eventually end and injustice will be punished.
6. Habakkuk's choice is presented to us – if we want to make sure we find “life,” we must make sure we are directed by “faith” (fidelity to God). Notice how Habakkuk was urged to do this.

### Body:

- I. He was urged to consider the possible answers to life's dilemmas.
  - A. How can you resolve life's inequities? How can injustice be answered? There are only two possible ways:
    1. The “puffed-up” option relies upon a proud self-reliance which utilizes mortal strength. This knowledge “puffs up” one – giving him the “big head” and it only leads to greater injustice (1 Corinthians 8:1, 2; Proverbs 3:7; 16:25; Ecclesiastes 1:18).
    2. The “righteous” option relies upon God's directions by showing humility, submission, and dependence upon God's revealed commands (Deuteronomy 29:4; Job 11:5, 6; Psalm 32:8). It rejects the temptation to “explain” matters with a worldly wisdom (1 Corinthians 3:18).
  - B. When you are confronted with dilemmas in life you will have these two options from which to choose. Do not lean upon mortal wisdom; trust in God's wisdom!
- II. He was urged to consider the result of choosing how to explain injustices.
  - A. What results when we choose one of the above options? What consequences result from our choice? Those seeking to answer life's perplexities will want to know where their choices will lead. Once again God tells us that only two possible results exist.

1. ☞ Those who choose to rely upon human pride/wisdom will find that their soul is not "right." Perplexity will persist! (See 2:5).
  2. ☞ Those who choose to rely upon God will find "life" (Philippians 4:4-6).
- B. ☞ God has always urged man to consider these two results and choose appropriately (Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:19). When you are faced with the perplexities of life's inequities, remember your choice will lead you to one of the two results. Trust in God is the only choice that brings the desired results.
- III. ☞ He was urged to consider the contrast in the methodology for resolving inequities.
- A. How will we attempt to explain life's injustices so all of earthly experiences will make sense? There are only two methods ☞ available –
    1. Those who depend upon mortal understanding utilize mortal resources. These look to intellectual remedies; think that man's wisdom is able to answer all problems; and deify mortality. But human resources are woefully inadequate – they cannot provide a proper answer (Isaiah 5:21; 29:14b; Jeremiah 9:23; 1 Timothy 6:20).
    2. Those who submit to God ☞ utilize "faith" to resolve life's inequities (Proverbs 28:5). While "faith" in God does not offer explanations for the minute specific bad things in life, it does trust that God is able to correct injustices (Isaiah 33:6).
  - B. When faced with inequities in life there is only one sure way to discover peace – that is with faith in God. Only God has the strength and power to resolve inequities, mortality does not.
- IV. ☞ He was urged to consider why "faith" was the best method to use in resolving life's dilemmas.
- A. ☞ By faith one ACCEPTS life's trials.
    1. When one tries to explain life's trials without God there is only despair, uncertainty, frustration, and hopelessness found. Left to himself man is utterly incapable of any satisfying explanation.
    2. Faith in God enables man to accept life's dilemmas – they cannot explain them but they will accept them. This happens because of trust in God (Psalm 64:10; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 13, 16-18; 2 Timothy 2:11-13).
    3. Faith believes that God will deal with evil at the appropriate time. This faith enables saints to "wait" until that time comes. This faith develops attitudes that bring stability when trials strike. It forms a trusting covenant that cannot be broken (Hosea 2:20).
  - B. ☞ By faith one LIVES righteously.
    1. This is the practical manifestation of true faith.
    2. The arrogant will never be able to do this. Proud people do not trust anyone except SELF.
    3. In dramatic contrast with the worldly population are those with humble minds. They know they are not self-sufficient; they know they need God. They look at this sin-filled world and realize just how much sorrow exists and how incapable man is of surviving on his own.
    4. There is the answer Habakkuk discovered – the believer cannot explain all of life but the believer can confidently live because of faith. This faith supports a person in the deepest sorrows and comforts in the darkest times (Galatians 5:5; Jeremiah 17:5-8).
  - C. ☞ By faith one OVERCOMES obstacles.
    1. God told Habakkuk that those utilizing "faith" are the only ones to "live." "Live" means more than existing. It refers to being alive with vigor, security, and honor (Gowan, 42).

2. All facing life's perplexities with faith in God will not barely hang on and endure the tribulations of life – they will face life with a lively and vivacious outlook because they know the Almighty God is in control and thus all will be all right (Philippians 4:19; Romans 8:28).
3. This faith will not prevent trials in life but it will allow us to overcome their adversity (Psalm 73:26; 42:5; 1 Timothy 4:10; 2 Timothy 1:12).

D. ☞ By faith one ANTICIPATES REWARD.

1. Even though Habakkuk was told that evil would "tarry," he was told that "faith" would enable him to persevere.
2. This was the counsel given in Revelation 2:10 – endure because rewards are assured! In Romans 8 Scripture assures us that we are "more than conquerors" even though suffering is present.
3. "When it does not seem reasonable to believe in a good God, when God's justice and mercy are not evident to all, when the righteous do not get rewarded for their goodness – precisely then as in no other time do they prove their righteousness by continuing to be faithful." (Gowan, 46).
4. God assures us that we should never give up. He has not abandoned us. Look to the end and live by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).
5. This response is most practical. It does not deny evil's pain but it admits that God is the Ruler of all and those who follow Him will not be defeated! (Revelation 17:14).

E. ☞ By faith one discovers a wonderful SATISFACTION.

1. Without faith the inequities of life are overwhelming. Without God's resources our efforts to explain life's injustices are empty. Without faith solutions will never be possible and no adequate answers will be provided.
2. Those who choose faith in God will be able to discover contentment regardless of life's inequities (Philippians 4:11-14; 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9).

**Conclusion:**

- I. All struggling with life's inequities must answer a simple query – ☞ "What is the controlling principle in my life?" ☞ Is it faith that God will work out all things or is it confidence that I have the resources to work out all things?
  1. Those who look with faith will find an answer to life's dilemmas – evil does exist but it will not endure!
  2. Those who walk with faith will find peace even in adversity (John 14:27).
- II. When life seems unfair, realize that ☞ God does not leave us without comfort.
  1. He ☞ provides us with a choice which can lead to "life."
  2. He ☞ promises that He will be present with us always (Judges 6:16; Isaiah 41:10).
  3. ☞ He assures us of hope even when the world seems out of control and our "Whys?" are not answered. His response is that we are to live by faith and not sight.
- III. Isaiah 40:27-31 – ☞ This presents the "walk by faith" that is so critical for us to accept.
- IV. ☞ "Every difficulty is a test – a test to see whether you will believe God. A trial to drive you into His arms and His promises, where you find Him all-sufficient. That is what the book of Habakkuk is about. In Habakkuk we see the difficulty of wondering where God is when bad things happen, and then the delight of discovering He is there, ruling over all." (Arthur, 146).

🔗 Next Lesson: "The woeful cost of Pride"