

Unanswered Questions

Is God good? Is He really there? If He is, why do bad things happen? It seems like many of us ask these questions, but these issues are not unique to this age.

A biblical prophet had some serious questions about God's goodness. He was a man who had a lot of questions, a man who prayed constantly and fervently about his concerns without seeming to get any response. In fact, the situation seemed to get worse. And when God finally did reveal Himself, His answers made no sense at all to his human thinking. The man's name is Habakkuk. There are only three chapters in the book of Habakkuk and they consist of an intimate exchange between God and the prophet Habakkuk. This profound conversation reads like a prayer journal, giving us a glimpse into the prophet's heart, as well as God's.

How many of you would say that you have had a situation in your life that you have prayed about for a long time, seemingly to no avail?

You've read passages in the Bible promising that God will hear and answer prayer. But isn't it true, if we are honest, that sometimes our experiences seem to contradict those promises? We have all had moments when we questioned God's presence because He didn't answer when we asked for His help. Anyone can maintain their trust in God through short-term situations. But when you have long-term suffering and you call out, "How long, Lord? I keep crying out to You, Lord, but You still don't do anything!" faith becomes more difficult to sustain.

The dark moments of our lives are very similar to those which Habakkuk experienced. He cried out to God and, in essence, he said that unless he gets some answers to his troubling questions, he cannot

trust God. Throughout his book, he shapes his perspective on what is happening around him. He goes directly to the Lord saying, "*O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, 'Violence!' And You will not save.*" (Habakkuk 1:2) You see, Habakkuk knows that God is the One who is in charge. He knows that the Lord is the only One who can actually address his worries so he rightly calls to Him in reverence saying, "O Lord." Then he presents his concerns, "*Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.*" (Habakkuk

1:3-4) Habakkuk clearly has a problem with the way God was running the universe, or rather, the way it seemed He was not running it. Habakkuk directs his prayer to the only One who can do something about the situation. This is a pattern we can emulate. Think about what's going on in your life and honestly ask the Lord, "Lord, what is going on here? What are You trying to say? What are You trying to do?" Pray about that situation saying, "O Lord, what do I do? What's Your perspective?" Seek Him. Listen to Him. We need to remind ourselves that ultimately the peace and the perspective and the answers we need to life's mysteries will not be found by going to a counselor or therapist or by reading a book or by pouring our hearts out to a trusted friend. They can only come from the wisdom of

the Wonderful Counselor that we call "Lord."

Habakkuk continued to cry out persistently and for an extended period of time without receiving an answer. It is apparent that although God heard Habakkuk, He did not answer when the prophet wanted him to or even in the way the latter expected. God had been listening to him, but Habakkuk needed to learn to listen to God in return. Ultimately, listening to God is what praying really means. Prayer is asking God our honest questions and then listening to what He has to say, hearkening for His perspective.

As you read through the book of Habakkuk, you'll see that God doesn't answer all of Habakkuk's questions. I want to tell you that God is not going to answer all of your questions either. If you knew all the answers, you would be God and you wouldn't need God. Instead God wants to give you a perspective that will enable you to face your situation and your circumstances without knowing all of the reasons. In the end, Habakkuk learns how to worship without understanding everything that is going on. Or in other words, he learned to have faith.

Having the kind of faith that allows us to worship, despite not knowing or understanding all the answers, is pleasing to God. So what it really comes down to is deciding whether or not God is worthy of our trust. I want to tell you that the answer is a resounding "YES!" He can be trusted and is worthy of your trust. As you ask your candid questions, humbling yourself to a position where God can reveal Himself to you and enlighten you with His perspective and wisdom, you will find that God really can be trusted. It is perfectly

acceptable, even encouraged, to ask God "why" as long as we ask with a searching heart not a clenched fist. There is a tremendous difference between asking earnest, honest questions and making accusations or demanding that God give us the answers we want in the way we want them. You will find that when you choose to trust God, you will have chosen the way to joy and peace.

Eventually, God responded to Habakkuk's prayer saying, "*Look among the nations and watch — Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you.*" (Habakkuk 1:5) In the Hebrew, the verb *look* is in its plural form. God is not just speaking to Habakkuk here, He is speaking to all of His people. He is essentially saying, "Y'all look. Y'all see. Not just Habakkuk, but all of you. Look and see." So often we only see our little piece of the whole picture. We see our health, our issues, our family, our church, our country, our circumstances; and we get totally engrossed in what is happening to us because we live as if life is all about us! We have this self-centered, myopic perspective on life, seldom thinking about anything or anyone outside our limited microcosm. If we could see what God sees and know what God knows, we would be dumbfounded, awestruck even, by what is happening in our world from His point of view. God's perspective is so infinitely greater, so radically different than ours. Recall Elisha's servant who saw their home surrounded by the Syrian army and panicked. Elisha prayed to God to open his servant's eyes to the truth. The servant saw the angels of God and chariots of fire surrounding the enemy (2 Kings 6:15-17). Once the servant had eyes to see the spiritual

reality, he was astonished! He was no longer in fear, no longer discouraged or depressed. If we could see the spiritual realities as God sees them, we too would wonder and be astonished.

However, what does God want Habakkuk to see? Let's look at the second half of verse 5: "*For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you.*" (Habakkuk 1:5) That verse has become one of my favorite phrases in the book of Habakkuk. Believe it. Take it by faith. God is always at work. He never slumbers or sleeps like us. He is always at work in every era, in every circumstance, in every season, and in every situation of life. God is working in our day. Whether you can see it or not, God is at work. He is not passive. On the contrary, He is present and active. He is engaged. He is involved. He is sovereign over the lives and the affairs of His people and of this world. The fact that we cannot see what He is doing does not mean that He is not working. Jesus said, "*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.*" (John 5:17) Jesus is at work building His church. He is bringing about His kingdom. The day will come when the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will fill and cover the earth as the waters fill the sea. Until that day comes, God's works - amazing, supernatural, and beyond human comprehension - continue to take shape. So the message here is to take heart. Have faith and be encouraged, for God *is* at work.

Someone recently handed me a verse that quickly became one of my favorites: "*Who among you fears the LORD? Who obeys the voice of His Servant? Who walks in darkness and has no*

light?" (Isaiah 50:10) This verse describes someone who is trying to please and serve the Lord but cannot comprehend what is going on. So what is God's response? "*Let him trust in the name of the LORD And rely upon his God.*" (Isaiah 50:10) We must walk by faith, not by sight. An airplane pilot does not fly by sight. He trusts the plane's instruments - even when he cannot distinguish where he is going. Trust the One who controls the instruments. Know that God is at work in our day and in our churches, desperate as our circumstances may seem. God is at work now as in the days of Habakkuk. God is at work in countries that appear to be closed to the Gospel. He has a heart of compassion and mercy that longs for nations to repent and come to faith in Christ. Take the servant's example and look among the nations and see. Wonder and be astounded. God is at work!

I hope that this article will inspire you to open your Bible to the book of Habakkuk and read it for yourself, making notes, looking for patterns, trying to understand what God is saying to you. You'll get so much more out of the Scripture if you will dig into it for yourself. Let the Holy Spirit be your guide. Now, let's pray. "Father, we thank You that You are at work in our day, that You never cease bringing glory to Yourself and redeeming this fallen world. You are making all things new. You are at work where we can see and where we can't see. So help us, Lord, when we can't see - not to judge you by what we can see - but to trust that what You have said is true and that You are always at work to accomplish Your purposes in our world. May that bring us joy. May that bring us wonder and amazement! Amen."

