



WEEK 8

## AN ATHLETE STUDY

### UNTRUSTWORTHY?

What challenges you to question God's goodness? Literally, while writing this Week, the news broke of flooding that took the lives of 135 people. Many of those lost were children, girls the same age as my daughters. My wife and I sat stunned as the story unfolded. These kinds of heartaches cause questions.

Habakkuk wrestled with these questions last Week. He cried out, pleading for God to act against the evil around him. God answered saying he would send Babylon to punish Judah's sin.

We don't have space to examine Habakkuk's response to God, but he had questions. Notably, he asked, *"You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"* In other words: "How can you use the wicked Babylonians to judge the more righteous Israelites?"

Our passage today picks up with Habakkuk bracing himself for his imprudence: *"I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what He will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint."*

#### HABAKKUK 2 (SELECTED)

<sup>2</sup> And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. <sup>3</sup> For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay. <sup>4</sup> "Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith. <sup>5</sup> "Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples."

<sup>6</sup> Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, "Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own—for how long?—and loads himself with pledges!"

<sup>9</sup> "Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!

<sup>12</sup> "Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!

<sup>15</sup> "Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!

<sup>19</sup> Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*There will be joy in the morning, If it's not good, then He's not done, No, He's not done with it yet. Giving in to your feelings is like drowning in the shallows, You got to keep believing even in the middle of the unknown, 'Cause grace will be there when you come to the end of your rope and you let go.*

We will face discouragement and suffering in this life. Scan the QR-code to worship and be encouraged.



### DISCUSSION

What are some experiences or truths that solidify your confidence in the Lord?

1. What did God say regarding the time and assurance of the events described? (3)

2. What comparison did the Lord make between the righteous and the wicked? (4)

3. What sins does God specifically condemn with his "woes"? (6, 9, 12, 15, 19)

4. How did God address the complaint that he could *"idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?"*

5. How would you respond to a person questioning, "Why does a good God allow so much suffering?"

6. How does the gospel inform your answer?

I hesitated to mention the tragedy in the introduction because some of reading this may have been impacted. But, *Habakkuk* speaks to our deep pain and loss. If you need help or support, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



## STUDY NOTES

### TRUSTWORTHY!

Like Habakkuk, we often fall into the trap of questioning God's character. As mentioned in the introduction, the "problem of evil" challenges what seem like irreconcilable truths of Christianity: (1) God is all-powerful, (2) God is completely good, and (3) evil and suffering exist—and are always bad and purposeless. Essentially: why does a good God allow bad things to happen?

For many, this isn't just a philosophical question—it's deeply personal, shaped by their own wounds. It's also one of the most common objections to belief in God. Yet only the Christian God offers a sufficient answer. No other worldview can fully address both justice and mercy as revealed in Christ.

Habakkuk first questioned the evil in Judah. Then, after hearing God's plan, he questioned the coming judgment through Babylon. If the story ended there, God wouldn't be good at all. But it doesn't. We can trust his character. As Romans 8:28 reminds us: *"We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* If it isn't good yet, it isn't over.

Christians affirm premises 1 and 2. Where we differ is on premise 3: while evil and suffering exist, God never wastes it. And, he will not let it go until his justice is served. Romans 12 offers the ominous warning to those who do evil, *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*

## GOD MAY JUDGE THOSE HE USES

After bracing for impact, **the LORD answered:** *"Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay."* In other words, God will allow for the success of Babylon for a time. But, he will also see to their destruction.

Habakkuk makes the comparison between the wicked, whose **soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him**, and **the righteous** who **shall live by his faith**. In the current context, to "live" may very well mean being spared death in the coming judgment carried out by Babylon. However, New Testament writers pick up on this profound statement applying it beyond this life, into eternity. Romans 1:16–17 says, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... For in it the righteousness of*

*God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"*

Adding to the sins of the wicked Babylonians, the Lord pointed out their drunkenness, greed, and injustice saying, **"Shall not all these [sins] take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him."** Now, these might not seem like fighting words to you, but make no mistake about this ominous warning. Especially when we consider the "woes" that follow.

First is the woe for intimidation (6–8): **"Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own—for how long?—and loads himself with pledges!"**

The second woe is for intemperance (9–11): **"Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!"**

The third woe is for iniquity (12–14): **"Woe to him who builds a town with blood and founds a city on iniquity!"**

The fourth woe is for indignity (15–17): **"Woe to him who makes his neighbors drink—you pour out your wrath and make them drunk, in order to gaze at their nakedness!"**

The final woe is for idolatry (18–20): **Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it.**

## HOPE LIVES FOR THOSE WAITING ON GOD

Patience doesn't come easy—especially when we long to see justice. Yet in our rush, we often forget how much we need mercy ourselves. Like God relenting at Nineveh's repentance, even here, as judgment looms, there's still a chance for Judah and/or the Babylonians to turn back. The same is true for us. We await Christ's return, when justice will come and the time for repentance will end. God delays judgment so more might repent—but when it comes, *it will not delay. Wait for it; it's closer than you think.*

In the meantime, repentance and restoration are always the preferred option. We don't always have a choice if we experience suffering, but we do have a choice how we respond to it. As the Apostle Paul wrote from prison in Philippians 1, *"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake."*